

# SEMPER FIDELIS

*250 Years of U.S. Marine Corps  
Honor, Courage, and Commitment*



MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

SEMPER  
FIDELIS





# SEMPER FIDELIS

---

*250 Years of U.S. Marine Corps  
Honor, Courage, and Commitment*

Histories Branch  
Marine Corps History Division



Quantico, Virginia  
2025



## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Names: United States. Marine Corps. History and Museums Division. Historical Branch issuing body

Title: *Semper fidelis* : 250 years of U.S. Marine Corps honor, courage, and commitment / Histories Branch, Marine Corps History Division.

Other titles: 250 years of U.S. Marine Corps honor, courage, and commitment

Description: Quantico, VA : Marine Corps University Press, 2025. | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "The United States Marine Corps has had a storied history since its creation 250 years ago. Whether fighting for the nation's freedom against Great Britain in the colonial era, afloat as soldiers of the sea in the 19th century, as a potent land force in World War I, an efficient amphibious force in World War II, exemplars of small-war campaigning in Latin America, Vietnam, and the Middle East, or as today's Stand-in-Force, Marines have remained faithful to the Service's unique warrior culture and high standards. Institutionally, organizationally, and technologically, Marine Corps leaders have adjusted the Service to meet the needs of the nation and the changing character of war"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2025007427 (print) | LCCN 2025007428 (ebook) | ISBN 9798987849101 paper | ISBN 9798987849118 epub

Subjects: LCSH: United States. Marine Corps—History | United States—History, Military

Classification: LCC VE23.S47 2025 (print)| LCC VE23 (ebook)| DDC 359.9/60973 —dc23/eng/20250331

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025007427>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025007428>

---

This history is published for the education and training of Marines by the History Division, Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia, as part of the 250th anniversary celebration of the U.S. Marine Corps.

### LEGAL NOTICE

Marine Corps History Division is the Service history office of the United States Marine Corps. As a product of the U.S. government, no copyright protection is attached. However, authors, contributors, and designers may retain intellectual property rights to their work product. Users should check with the appropriate office of the U.S. government before altering and/or reproducing this material to ensure that such work does not violate intellectual property right protections. The information contained in this publication was deemed accurate at the time of printing. Comments and/or corrections should be sent to the Marine Corps History Division for consideration in future printings.

The production of this work and other History Division products is graciously supported by the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

1st Printing, 2025

This volume is freely available at <https://www.usmcu.edu/HDPublishing/>

# CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
Preface	ix
CHAPTER 1. Origins of the U.S. Marines, 1775–1820	5
CHAPTER 2. Archibald Henderson’s Corps, 1820–1859	33
CHAPTER 3. Toward a More Professional and Modern Marine Corps, 1860–1898	51
CHAPTER 4. Marine Expeditions in Support of American Foreign Policy, 1899–1920	72
CHAPTER 5. Between the World Wars, 1920–1940	112
CHAPTER 6. World War II, 1941–1945	136
CHAPTER 7. The Origins of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, 1945–1960	184
CHAPTER 8. U.S. Marines in Southeast Asia, 1954–1975	223
CHAPTER 9. Post-Vietnam Reforms and the Rise of the Joint Force, 1975–2001	263
CHAPTER 10. A Marine Corps for the Twenty-First Century, 2001–2025	304
CONCLUSION: The First 250 Years of Marines Making History, 1775–2025	365

---

## APPENDICES

Appendix A: Commandants of the Marine Corps	373
Appendix B: Sergeants Major of the Marine Corps	375
Appendix C: Marine Corps Medal of Honor Recipients	376
Appendix D: Chronology of Significant Events	386
Appendix E: U.S. Marine Corps Streamers	399
 Suggested Further Reading	 405
Index	411

# FOREWORD

For two and a half centuries, Marines have stood as this nation's expeditionary shock troops—ready to fight and win in every clime and place. From the beaches of Nassau to the mountains of Afghanistan, from Tripoli to Tarawa, Inchon, Hue City, Fallujah, and countless hills and trenches without a name, we have never shied from the hard fights. And we never will.

The legacy of the Marine Corps is not defined by the uniforms we wear or the weapons systems we operate. It is defined by the individual Marine. Our warrior ethos—discipline, aggression, mental and physical toughness, and a refusal to fail—is what binds today's Marines to the Continental Marines of 1775. It is what will bind us to the Marines of 2125. Our ethos does not evolve. It endures.

Over time, the character of war has changed, but its nature has not. Marines have fought with muskets, M-16s, and F-35s. We have charged strongholds under smoothbore cannon bombardment, and we have stormed beaches under withering machine-gun fire. Marine scout snipers have killed targets from 2,500 yards, and we have conducted precision strikes in the cyber domain. Yet, through it all, our focus remains: the Marine on the ground closing with and destroying the enemy. That Marine—disciplined and lethal—is the constant.

---

This book tells the story of the young men and women who raised their right hand and became part of something larger than themselves. It tells the story of a Corps that never stops learning and adapting, but also never forgets who we are. It is a history of battles and campaigns, yes; but it is also one of transformation, sacrifice, and a relentless drive to be the nation's force of choice when everything is on the line.

As Commandant, I have walked the deck plates, the flight lines, and the fighting holes. I have seen firsthand that the spirit of 1775 is alive and well in today's Marines. They carry forward the legacy with humility, but also the quiet confidence that comes from shared hardship and earned trust.

This book is both a tribute to the past and a torch passed to the future. May it remind every Marine, past, present, and future, that our story is far from over. As long as our nation calls, Marines will answer. We are—always have been—the First to Fight.

*Semper Fidelis,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric M. Smith". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "E" and "M".

Eric M. Smith  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps

# PREFACE

This book is Marine Corps History Division's contribution to the celebration of the 250th birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps and its long, distinguished lineage of service to the nation. The last time the division produced a comprehensive history of the Corps was in 1970, when it published *A Concise History of the United States Marine Corps, 1775–1969*. During the last 55 years, several excellent histories have been privately published, but the last of these was in 2002, and an entire generation of Marines began and ended their service during this time. This book is an extensive overhaul and expansion to the 1970 publication, incorporating new research and covering the events of the past half-century. It provides a complete account of the Corps' history that includes the activities and accomplishments of the Marines who served during the last few decades as part of the larger story. *Semper Fidelis* is designed to educate the American public about their Marines, to inspire some of them to become Marines, and to help those just beginning their service to better understand the legacy they are inheriting and bear responsibility for preserving. It does this by telling the stories of individual Marines, while also explaining the evolution of the Marine Corps and its core values and spirit. The outstanding record of success of our Corps throughout two and a half centuries is a product of the honor, courage, and commitment of Marines to prevail in



---

combat time and again, no matter the odds. It is also a product of our unique leadership emphasis at all levels, placing mission first while always taking care of Marines and striving for institutional flexibility. These traits have enabled the Corps to win its battles and consistently reimagine itself during 250 years in response to the nation's needs.

Marine Corps History Division's mission is to collect, preserve, and promote the history of the Marine Corps. This book is a product of the combined effort of all three branches within the division. Primary responsibility for the project fell to Histories Branch, led first by Dr. Brian Neumann and then by Dr. Seth Givens. The writing team included Dr. Lisa Budreau, Dr. Henry Himes, Dr. Joshua Schroeder, and Mr. Paul Westermeyer. The historians used important records from Archives Branch and the expertise of Mr. Dieter Stenger, who assisted with the appendices. Dr. Tyler Reed provided high-resolution digital scans of important Marine Corps photographs, including the cover image. Particularly important to this project among the priceless records in the Marine Corps Archives were those collected by the Marine Corps reservists of the Field History Branch throughout the last 35 years, during the course of many deployments for training, contingency, and combat operations.

The project also benefited from many partnerships between History Division and external agencies. The Communication Directorate of Headquarters Marine Corps and Marine Corps Recruiting Command were enthusiastic sponsors. The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation enriched this project by making it possible to connect with talented people. Through the foundation's support, Mr. Pete McPhail designed the bespoken maps; Mr. Matt Raffinbeul, a Marine Corps Heritage Foundation special assistant, managed the effort to locate and select suitable images to illustrate the text; and Mr. Shawn

---

Vreeland, a Marine Corps Heritage Foundation editorial assistant, proofread the text and provided production support. Our colleagues at the National Museum of the Marine Corps provided additional images of artwork and objects. Marine Corps University Press, led by Ms. Angela Anderson, edited and designed the manuscript and provided photographic support. Special thanks are due to two distinguished former members of History Division, Colonel Richard D. Camp, USMC (Ret), and Mr. Charles D. Melson, for their reviews of the manuscript. Collectively, this team has aspired to deliver a book that is an account of the U.S. Marine Corps' first 250 years, reflecting the pride of those who have worn the uniform but also inspiring those who will continue that great legacy by going on to write the next chapters in the history of our Corps.

Dr. Shawn P. Callahan  
Director, Marine Corps History Division

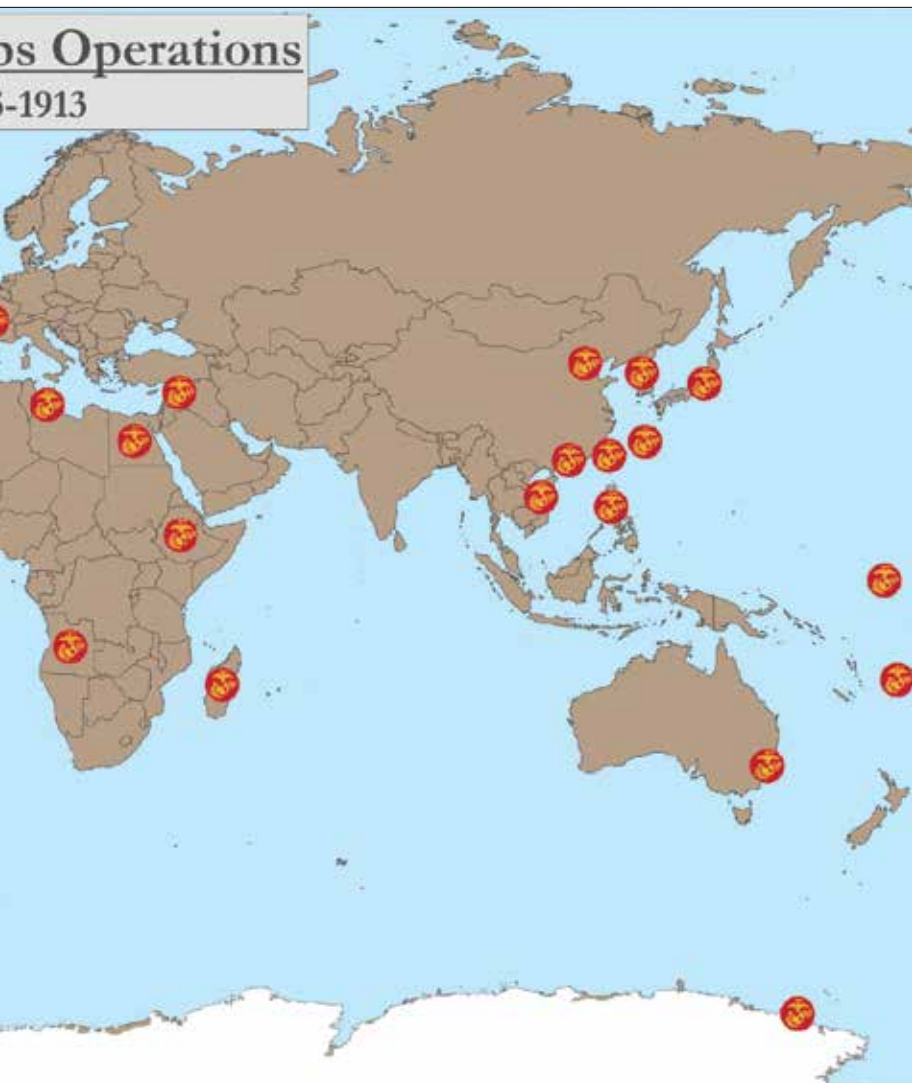


SEMPER  
FIDELIS



*Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP*

# Operations 1914-1913







---

# CHAPTER 1

## Origins of the U.S. Marines, 1775–1820

On 10 November 1775, just months after hostilities with Great Britain commenced, the Continental Congress formally established the Continental Marines. At the time, the British Royal Navy had virtually unfettered access to the entire North American coast. Congress recognized the need for a navy to contest the British at sea and understood that the best navies of that time needed Marines for internal security, musket fire, boarding parties during naval battles, and landing parties conducting limited operations ashore. Marines therefore became an integral part of the Continental Navy during the American Revolution, serving on land and at sea.

On 28 November 1775, the Continental Congress commissioned Samuel Nicholas of Philadelphia a captain in the Continental Marines. Nicholas remained the senior Marine officer throughout the American Revolution and is traditionally considered the first Marine Commandant. While Nicholas spent most of his time recruiting and raising a force, he also led Marines in action. On 3 December 1775, Congress commissioned the frigate *Alfred* (1775) with Nicholas commanding its detachment



The first amphibious action by the Continental Marines was during the New Providence raid of 3–4 March 1776. The climax of the operation is depicted in *Continental Marines Raid Fort Montagu, The Bahamas*, by Charles H. McBarron. *National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

of Marines. *Alfred* was part of the Continental Navy's small fleet of six ships that sailed for the Caribbean to attack enemy targets of opportunity. American forces suffered from a critical shortage of gunpowder and endeavored to raid British stocks in the Bahamas. On 3 March 1776, about 230 Marines and 50 sailors under Nicholas' command landed on the lightly defended British colony of New Providence and seized Fort Montagu, a small coastal fortification guarding the eastern approach to the capital. The next day, the raiding party captured the colonial capital of Nassau. The Marines and sailors reembarked on 16 March with captured guns and supplies. While sailing to Rhode Island, the fleet engaged in the first naval battle by an American squadron after encountering the British frigate HMS *Glasgow* on 6 April.

---

Continental ships *Cabot* (1775) and *Alfred* bore the brunt of the fighting against *Glasgow*, inflicting enough damage to force its return to Britain for repairs. While the ships traded cannonades, Marines fired their muskets onto *Glasgow's* deck, killing one and wounding three. During the battle, Marine Second Lieutenant John Fitzpatrick was killed along with several other Marines. The loss of Fitzpatrick marked the first Continental Marine officer killed in action.

After the Continental squadron returned from the New Providence raid and the Royal Navy began operating in greater force in American waters, prospects for another cruise in the immediate future dimmed, and the Marines were assigned to smaller vessels. Nicholas returned to Philadelphia, where he was promoted to major and instructed to recruit four more companies of Marines in anticipation of new frigates entering service. One of the captains appointed to the new companies was Robert Mullan, proprietor of Philadelphia's Tun Tavern. Mullan used the tavern as the rendezvous for his recruits.

These Marines never made it to sea. During December 1776, Nicholas organized approximately 300 Marines into a battalion and joined General George Washington and Continental Army troops prior to the 26 December Battle of Trenton. Marines remained on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River as a reserve force and did not participate in the famous Christmas night river crossing or the Battle of Trenton the next day. Nonetheless, this was the first instance in which Marines served as a part of the Army in a land campaign. While serving with the Army, the Marines provided both infantry and artillery personnel.

On 2 January 1777, a battalion of Marines under the command of Major Nicholas participated in the Second Battle of Trenton (Battle of the Assunpink Creek), where they were able to infiltrate enemy lines through the use of false campfires. Nich-

---

## ***Major Samuel Nicholas***

Samuel Nicholas was born in Philadelphia in 1744. A blacksmith's son, little is known of his early life, but he was likely connected to the city's elite. On 28 November 1775, Nicholas became the first commissioned officer of the Continental Marines. He is considered the first Commandant by tradition, though no such position existed in the Continental Marines. As the senior officer, responsibility for recruiting, provisioning, and other administrative tasks generally fell to Nicholas. He spent most of his time in service in

Philadelphia, where he attended to the Continental Marines' affairs and advocated on their behalf to the Continental Congress.

Nicholas commanded Marines at sea and on land during the war's early years. In January 1776, he took command of *Alfred's* Marine detachment as a captain. That March, Nicholas led a landing party of Marines during the New Providence raid, capturing Fort Montagu and Fort Nassau in the Bahamas. While sailing to New England from the Bahamas, Nicholas led *Alfred's* Marines during the ship's fight with the British frigate *Glasgow* in April 1776.

In December 1776, now-Major Nicholas led a small Marine battalion detached to assist General George Washington's forces during the campaign in New Jersey. After being prevented from crossing the Delaware River to join in the first Battle of Trenton, Nicholas and his Marines saw action against the British at Assunpink Creek and the Battle of Princeton. After his return to Philadelphia, Nicholas continued recruiting and carried out various administrative tasks that Congress assigned him. He returned to civilian life after the Continental Marines were disbanded following the end of the war in 1783. Major Samuel Nicholas died in Philadelphia on 27 August 1790.



*Portrait of Samuel Nicholas, 1st CMC by Col Donna J. Neary.*

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

---

olas led the Marines during the Battle of Princeton the next day when General Washington's army attacked the British flank and rear, scoring an impressive victory. Later, Nicholas' battalion accompanied Washington to his winter camp at Morristown, New Jersey, where the Marines remained with the Continental Army through the severe winter months. When General Washington reorganized the Army in spring 1777, he designated some of the Marines for artillery service while the remainder were assigned to naval duties. Throughout the rest of the year, Marines helped man the defense of Fort Mifflin in Pennsylvania and assisted in keeping the British fleet from using the Delaware River to support forces in and around Philadelphia in late 1777.

Continental Marines also served outside of North America, especially after U.S. diplomats secured an alliance with France on 6 February 1778. Among many benefits, the alliance provided the Continental Navy access to French ports. Lieutenant Samuel Wallingford, who led the Marine detachment aboard the sloop-of-war *Ranger* (1777), commanded by Captain John Paul Jones of the Continental Navy, sailed from France to conduct two raids on British soil. In April 1778, Marines and sailors raided the towns of Whitehaven and St. Mary's Isle. Twenty-four hours after the raids, *Ranger* defeated the British sloop-of-war HMS *Drake* in battle on 24 April. Lieutenant Wallingford was the only American officer killed during this hard-fought action. The next year, Captain Matthew Parke, who had previously served with Wallingford on *Ranger* and was now commanding Marines on the frigate *Alliance* (1778), put down a mutiny, placing 38 men in irons while en route to Brest, France, to join the small naval squadron commanded by Captain Jones.

Closer to home, Marines formed part of an expedition in summer 1779 to capture a British fort at Penobscot Bay, Maine (then part of Massachusetts), that defended anchorage for Royal Navy ships guarding military convoys. Three companies of





Continental Marines provided security, repelled boarders, formed boarding and landing parties, and conducted aimed musket-fire during ship-to-ship engagements in the Revolutionary War. Marines provide musket-fire during the 29 May 1781 fight between the Continental Navy frigate *Alliance* and the British sloops-of-war HMS *Atalanta* and *Trepassey* in *Fighting Tops* by Col Charles Waterhouse.

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

Marines under Captain John Welsh were part of two successful landings. They captured Banks Island, Northwest Territories, on 26 July to support the American fleet accessing the harbor of Bagaduce. Two days later, the Marines spearheaded an assault up the steep Bagaduce Heights against heavy British musket fire, eventually driving back the defenders. The Americans next besieged the fort until a British rescue fleet arrived on 14 August, compelling the expedition to withdraw, scuttle their ships, and return to Boston on foot.

To the south, in May 1780, Marines and sailors of Commodore Abraham Whipple's squadron landed to support Major General Benjamin Lincoln's defense of Charleston, South Car-

---

olina. The Marines manned guns along the shore until British forces overwhelmed the defenses, forcing the Americans to surrender the city. The last major Marine action of the war occurred in January 1783, when Marines serving aboard the frigate *Hague* (1778) helped capture the British ship *Baille* in the West Indies. *Baille's* capture marked the last significant prize taken at sea during the American Revolution.

On 3 September 1783, the United States and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Paris, ending the Revolutionary War. At the time, the Continental Navy consisted of only a handful of ships. No longer at war and facing enormous debts, Congress dismantled the Navy, selling off its remaining ships. Without a naval force to support, Congress saw no need to maintain Marines after the final member was discharged in 1783. Though dissolved, the Continental Marines left behind a rich legacy fighting on deck and on shore, and their accomplishments mark the beginning of the Marine Corps' storied 250-year journey.

### *U.S. Marines and the Frigate Navy, 1789–1820*

The United States had gained its independence, but it lacked the military and economic security that Great Britain once provided. In 1789, the new Constitution replaced the Articles of Confederation, greatly strengthening the federal government and its ability to control foreign policy and taxation. The country, however, remained economically vulnerable until it could conduct trade overseas without foreign interference. Fortunately, geography had blessed the United States with distance from Europe. This allowed the young nation to avoid the enormous costs of maintaining a standing military, but that meant it had limited power to deter aggressors at sea. American commerce suffered as a result.

Tension between European powers was the biggest threat to the international trade of the new American nation. This became

---

an acute threat in 1789, when a social and political revolution in France eventually expanded into neighboring countries and then into the greater Atlantic world. Europe was plunged into a series of continental wars that saw France fighting against a coalition composed of Great Britain, Austria, and Prussia. The French Revolutionary Wars created a chaotic international situation that impacted American commerce and threatened to draw the United States into the fighting. Despite U.S. neutrality, the French and British seized or otherwise interfered with American merchant ships on the high seas. In addition, the Barbary States of Morocco, Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli, subject states of the Ottoman Empire along the North African coast, preyed on the vulnerable American merchant fleet in Mediterranean and Atlantic waters.

In response to the threats against the commerce and sovereignty of the United States, Congress established a permanent Navy on 27 March 1794 and provided for the construction of six frigates. The War Department handled ship construction and the recruitment of the sailors and Marines who would serve on each ship. On 20 April 1796, Congress authorized the construction of the first three frigates—USS *United States*, USS *Constellation*, and USS *Constitution*—all of which were launched in 1797. The congressionally approved Act Providing a Naval Armament of 1 July 1797 determined the size of the Marine detachments aboard each frigate: 2 lieutenants and more than 50 Marines for each of the large 44-gun frigates, and 1 lieutenant and more than 40 Marines for each of the 36-gun frigates. As there was not yet a formally organized Marine Corps, these Marines were considered a part of the ships' crews.

In March 1798, Secretary of War James McHenry recommended that a Navy Department be created alongside the War Department and an organization of Marines be formally established. On 30 April 1798, Congress enacted legislation

---

that created the Navy Department, and Benjamin Stoddert was appointed as its first secretary. The formal establishment of the United States Marine Corps followed on 11 July 1798, when Congress passed An Act for the Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps. The act declared that Marines “shall take the same oath, and shall be governed by the same rules and articles of war, as are prescribed for the military establishment of the United States, and by the rules for the regulation of the navy, heretofore, or which shall be established by law, according to the nature of the service in which they shall be employed.” This part of the law created an “ambiguous jurisdiction” as to whether the Marines were under the Army or Navy when operating ashore. This vagueness continued until 1834, when Congress settled the matter by clarifying that the Marine Corps belonged to the Navy unless the president temporarily placed elements of it under Army control. In the meantime, there had been decades of bureaucratic tension between the Services and their respective department heads, but the Marine Corps had established itself as a flexible Service that presidents made use of throughout the nineteenth century.

President John Adams nominated Major William Ward Burrows as the first Commandant of the United States Marine Corps on 12 July 1798, just one day after the Corps was established in legislation. Congress confirmed the appointment four days later. Major Burrows initially established his headquarters in Philadelphia, then the nation’s capital. Two years later, in July 1800, the newly promoted Lieutenant Colonel Burrows moved Marine Headquarters to the nation’s new capital in Washington, DC. By 1806, the Marine Corps had built Marine Barracks Washington at 8th and I Streets, SE, the same address where the Commandant of the Marine Corps makes his home today.

---

## *The Marine Corps' Birthday*

On 21 October 1921, Major Edwin N. McClellan, the officer-in-charge of the Historical Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, sent a memorandum to Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune. He suggested that 10 November 1775, the day that the Continental Congress authorized two battalions of Marines be raised, was the proper birthday of the Marine Corps. Major McClellan suggested the date be declared a Marine Corps holiday to be celebrated throughout the Corps, including a commemorative dinner in Washington, DC.

Major McClellan's proposal was not a whim. It was in line with General Lejeune's intent to increase the cohesion and morale of the Marine Corps through a better understanding of and reverence for the Corps' history. Lejeune wanted Marines to see themselves as an elite military force and act accordingly. Pride in the Service's history was prerequisite for that intent. Accordingly, on 1 November 1921, Lejeune issued Marine Corps Order No. 47, Series 1921. The order included a summary of the history, mission, and tradition of the Corps, which was to be read to every command on 10 November. This order has been duly carried out every year since.

The exact form of celebration of the Corps' birthday has varied. Evidence of birthday cake ceremonies reaches back to 1935. From 1937, more extravagant celebrations—dinners, balls, pageants, parades, and even mock battles—have been held at various posts. Often, Marines appeared in historic uniforms, and the events were publicized to broaden appreciation for the Corps and its history. On 28 October 1952, Commandant of the Marine Corps General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. directed that the celebration be formalized throughout the Corps. He provided an outline for the cake ceremony and other formal observances. This outline was included in the *Marine Corps Drill Manual*, approved 26 January 1956. General Lejeune's message is read to the command, followed by a message from the current Commandant and the cake cutting. Traditionally, the first piece of cake is offered to the oldest Marine present, and the second piece to the youngest Marine present. Even in the field, Marines have taken the time to observe the birthday.

Since 1921, Marines have celebrated their birthday so well that the other Services have begun to emulate the Marine practices. The annual remembrance of the birthday and the reading of General Le-

---

jeune's message has become an honored tradition that binds all Marines to their legacy and those who served before them.

*Marine Corps Order No. 47 (Series 1921)*

*Major General John A Lejeune,*

*USMC Commandant of the Marine Corps*

*Date: 1 November 1921*

*759. The following will be read to the command on the 10th of November, 1921, and hereafter on the 10th of November of every year. Should the order not be received by the 10th of November, 1921, it will be read upon receipt.*

*(1) On November 10, 1775, a Corps of Marines was created by a resolution of Continental Congress. Since that date many thousand men have borne the name "Marine." In memory of them it is fitting that we who are Marines should commemorate the birthday of our corps by calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history.*

*(2) The record of our corps is one which will bear comparison with that of the most famous military organizations in the world's history. During 90 of the 146 years of its existence the Marine Corps has been in action against the Nation's foes. From the Battle of Trenton to the Argonne, Marines have won foremost honors in war, and in the long eras of tranquility at home, generation after generation of Marines have grown gray in war in both hemispheres and in every corner of the seven seas, that our country and its citizens might enjoy peace and security.*

*(3) In every battle and skirmish since the birth of our corps, Marines have acquitted themselves with the greatest distinction, winning new honors on each occasion until the term "Marine" has come to signify all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue.*

*(4) This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the corps. With it we have also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the Marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to flourish Marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our Nation will regard us as worthy successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as "Soldiers of the Sea" since the founding of the Corps.*

*John A. Lejeune,*

*Major General Commandant*

---

## *The Quasi-War*

While the United States established its naval Services, France disrupted U.S. commerce in the West Indies. President Adams attempted to avoid war by negotiating with France over the seizure of merchant ships and the failure to recognize American neutrality. Adams's diplomatic effort ended when it was publicly revealed that the French foreign minister demanded bribes and a loan before formal negotiations with U.S. representatives could begin. What came to be called the XYZ Affair outraged Americans and led to an undeclared naval war with France beginning in 1798, fought primarily in the Caribbean. The most prominent and successful actions of the war came when USS *Constellation* captured the French frigate *L'Insurgente* in 1799 and the frigate *La Vengeance* the following year. Marines fought bravely in each action and in several other duels with French warships.

U.S. Marines participated in several skirmishes and battles throughout the Caribbean in the Quasi-War. During the Haitian Revolution against French rule (1791–1804), the United States cooperated with revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture. Opposing Louverture was General André Rigaud, whose troops operated from large barges to prey on American shipping around the island. On 1 January 1800, Marines aboard the schooner USS *Experiment* (1799) fought in the defense of their ship lying near Saint-Marc, Haiti (a.k.a. Saint Domingue until 1804), against a heavy attack of about 500 of Rigaud's men. The Americans drove off the attackers after sinking several barges. Another noteworthy Marine Corps action occurred on 11 May 1800, when a group of sailors from *Constitution* and its Marine detachment, commanded by Captain Daniel Carmick, seized the French privateer *Sandwich*, held in Puerto Plata, on the north coast of Santo Domingo (later the Dominican Republic). Captain Carmick's Marines and several sailors transferred to the sloop *Sally*. Concealed aboard *Sally*, the Americans sailed

---

## ***Marine Barracks Washington***

Marine Barracks Washington—nicknamed “8th and I” in reference to its location at the corner of 8th and I Streets, SE, in Washington, DC—is the oldest post of the Marine Corps. It was established in 1801 after President Thomas Jefferson and Commandant William



*Courtesy of the Library of Congress (LCCN 2011661519)*

Ward Burrows rode on horseback together to select a site. The original structures, which included the Center House (officers' quarters), barracks, and the Home of the Commandants, were designed by George Hadfield, who also helped design and oversee construction of the U.S. Capitol, and completed in 1806. Every Commandant since Franklin Wharton has lived at 8th and I.

Marine Barracks Washington has held many roles over the years, including Marine Corps Headquarters until 1901. It served as the Corps' primary site for new officer instructions, was a major post for enlisted training, housed the Marine Band, and responded to emergencies. Marines from 8th and I took part in the 1814 Battle of Bladensburg, captured John Brown at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), in 1859, and participated in the First Battle of Bull Run in 1861, among other actions.

The Corps' needs outgrew the barracks in the early twentieth century. The original buildings, except for the Commandant's house, were demolished and replaced with the current structures. Headquarters relocated, while training moved to new depots and formal officer schools. As a result, Marine Barracks Washington adopted new missions, such as providing presidential security and guards for Camp David, Maryland, and other federal government entities. Notably, 8th and I transitioned into the Corps' premier ceremonial post, owing to its historic status. Marines selected for 8th and I's marching companies, along with musicians in the Marine Band and the “Commandant's Own” Marine Drum and Bugle Corps, must adhere to strict personal standards, demonstrate elite abilities in drill or music, and represent the Marine Corps at ceremonies of the highest significance.



---

into the port without alerting the privateers and took *Sandwich* by surprise, after which they captured the local fort, spiked all the cannon, and sailed away with the two ships.

The Convention of 1800 ended the Quasi-War and normalized American relations with France. Eight months later, Marines were involved in the parole process of French prisoners taken from captured ships during the war. Commandant Burrows arranged for a Marine guard to transport 69 French prisoners of war from Washington to New York on the merchant sloop *Hilliard* on 18 May. With the war concluded, Marines had compiled a successful record in the naval services' defense of American commerce and sovereignty.

In March 1801, Thomas Jefferson succeeded John Adams as president. He continued his predecessors' policies of neutrality, but he advocated for a reduction of the national debt and soon ordered the sale of naval vessels, stopped new construction of ships, discharged every shipbuilder, and had most of the retained frigates dismantled to save expenses. President Jefferson also directed Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith to reduce the enlisted strength of the Marine Corps to approximately 450 men.

### *To the Shores of Tripoli*

The United States had resolved tensions with France, but Marines were soon called on again when problems with the Barbary States persisted. The Barbary States considered themselves in a constant state of war against all non-Islamic nations and conducted piracy and ransoming of captured sailors as integral parts of their economies. They first captured an American merchant ship in 1784, subsequently forcing the defenseless United States to pay tribute to prevent harassment of American merchant shipping. Presidents George Washington and John Adams had hoped that the newly founded U.S. Navy would compel the Barbary States to uphold diplomatic agreements, which includ-

---

ed tribute payments from the United States. President Jefferson refused demands for additional tribute, however, prompting the leader of Tripoli, Bashaw Yusuf Karamanli, to declare war on the United States in 1801.

Despite reducing the size of the Navy considerably, President Jefferson determined that an armed response to Karamanli's demand was required. In June 1801, the first Mediterranean Squadron sailed for Tripoli under Navy Commodore Richard Dale. The conflict's first action occurred on 1 August 1801, when the schooner USS *Enterprise* (1799) encountered the Tripolitan polacca *Tripoli*. After a long fight in which *Enterprise's* Marines drove off boarders several times with musket fire and the bayonet, the Americans captured *Tripoli*. Despite this initial victory, Dale was unsuccessful in dealing with the Barbary corsairs. With no easier solution available, the United States declared war on Tripoli in 1802.

The following year, the spirited Navy Commodore Edward Preble took command of the Mediterranean Squadron and instilled an offensive spirit in his crews. While chasing Tripolitan vessels on 31 October 1803, the frigate USS *Philadelphia* (1800) grounded on a reef off Tripoli, and Navy Captain William Bainbridge and his crew, including 44 Marines, were captured. On the night of 16 February 1804, Navy Lieutenant Stephen Decatur, with a complement of men, eight of whom were Marines, sailed in the captured ketch USS *Intrepid* (1803) into the harbor at Tripoli. In a bold move, the raiding party boarded the captured *Philadelphia* and burned the ship to the water line. By the time the noise and flames aroused the waterfront inhabitants, the raiding party had returned to its own craft and made a safe departure.

In May 1804, a former Army officer William Eaton was named "U.S. Navy Agent for the Barbary Regencies" and sailed to the Mediterranean with a U.S. mandate to pressure Yusuf

---

## *The Mameluke Sword*

One of the Marine Corps' most persistent legends is that Hamet Karamanli presented First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon with a bejeweled Mameluke-style sword for his courage at Derna in the fight against Tripoli. According to the legend, years later Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Archibald Henderson chose the Mameluke sword style as the Service's official officer's sword to honor the bravery of his "old comrade" O'Bannon. Unfortunately, the facts do not bear out this romantic legend. While O'Bannon was presented with a Mameluke-style sword at the start of the expedition in Egypt, there is no record of Hamet presenting a sword or scimitar to O'Bannon after Derna, and it is unlikely that Henderson and O'Bannon were "old comrades," as their careers overlapped by less than a year.

Henderson's first description of the Mameluke sword, from the 26 April 1825 Uniform Regulations, did not explain why the style was chosen, only that:

*All Officers when on duty either in full or Undress Uniform, shall wear a plain brass scabbard and sword or sabre, with a Mameluke Hilt of White Ivory & a gold tassel; extreme length of sword, three feet one inch & a half curve of blade half an inch only, to serve as cut or thrust; the hilt in length (which is included in the extreme length of the sword) four inches & three quarters, width of the scabbard, one inch & seven eights, width of blade one inch.*

In fact, Mameluke-style swords were fashionable among Western militaries during the first half of the nineteenth century, leaving only speculation as to Henderson's motivations.

Nonetheless, the Mameluke-style officer's sword has become synonymous with Marine officers. It has stood out among the uniform swords of the U.S. military, and its design evokes the exploits of the Marine Corps' earliest heroes.



Henderson's personal Mameluke-style sword, the prototype for the M1826 Officer's Sword, currently held by the National Museum of the Marine Corps. *Courtesy of Jose Esquilin, Marine Corps University Press*



Following a nearly 1,000-kilometer trek across the Egyptian and Lybian deserts, 1stLt Presley O'Bannon leads his Marines and a band of mercenaries in an attack against Derna during the First Barbary War (1801–5) against Tripoli, as Navy Agent William Eaton urges them on in *The Assault on Derna* by Col Charles H. Waterhouse.

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

Karamanli by supporting his brother, Hamet, as the rightful heir. Eaton was given some assistance by Navy Commodore Samuel Barron, who took over command of the squadron. Barron ordered Marine First Lieutenant Presley N. O'Bannon to assist Eaton. The brig USS *Argus* (1803) took Eaton to Alexandria, Egypt, to meet Hamet. O'Bannon, Navy Midshipman Pascal Paoli Peck, and seven enlisted Marines accompanied Eaton as he and Hamet recruited 70 mercenaries and 300 men to confront Karamanli. In February 1805, Eaton, Hamet, and O'Bannon left Egypt with their motley expeditionary force on a westward 950-kilometer march across the Libyan desert to Derna.

The trip took seven weeks, and O'Bannon and his Marines were critical in maintaining discipline in the harsh conditions.

---

Three brigs—USS *Argus*, USS *Hornet* (1805), and USS *Nautilus* (1803)—met the force at Derna. Eaton, O'Bannon, and the Marines (alongside Navy Midshipman George W. Mann, who had replaced Peck) led the mercenaries in a bold charge into the city, seizing the harbor fort and turning the guns on the governor's palace before Hamet could advance and capture it, as had been the plan. Derna was in the hands of Eaton's forces within two hours. The attacking force had lost a dozen or so dead. Eaton and two Marines, Privates Bernard O'Brian and David Thomas, were wounded, while Private John Whitten was killed. In short order, Eaton and his expedition learned the United States had concluded a separate peace with Yusuf Karamanli, freeing the prisoners of *Philadelphia*. U.S. forces subsequently withdrew from Derna, and the First Barbary War ended.

### *Service in the South*

Back home, the United States attempted to mitigate the effects of war returning to Europe. The French Revolutionary Wars had ended in 1802, but peace lasted less than a year. Renewed tensions once again made the Western Hemisphere a space for competition between France, Spain, and Britain, all of whom had colonial holdings in either North America or the Caribbean. The United States remained neutral and advantageously offered to purchase European colonies and territory from the cash-strapped nations fighting each other. Doing so served the dual-purpose of expanding American territory, resources, and power while evicting the quarrelsome Europeans. For this reason, the United States acquired more than 2 million square kilometers from France in 1803. The addition of the western half of the Mississippi River basin due to the Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country and fueled westward expansion.

---

As the gateway to the Mississippi River from the Gulf of Mexico, New Orleans, Louisiana, immediately became an operational center of gravity for the United States. President Thomas Jefferson took advantage of Marines' flexibility as a force and ordered Captain Daniel Carmick to lead approximately 100 Marines to New Orleans and establish a barracks. Marines garrisoned the city for almost 12 years, helping the Navy combat piracy and maintain order, to include stopping slave revolts.

In the wake of the Louisiana Purchase, the United States unsuccessfully attempted to purchase the Spanish colony of Florida. U.S. leaders had sought to purchase Florida out of a fear that a new Anglo-Spanish alliance against France would lead to British naval bases in the territory. Acquiring the colony remained merely a desire until 1810, when the state of Georgia took advantage of France's victories over Spain and invaded West Florida, which included parts of modern-day Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Fear over the British or French seizing Florida led President James Madison's administration to send a naval force, including Marines, to support Georgia's efforts, in what became known as the Patriot War.

In 1811, a Marine force under the command of Captain John Williams arrived in East Florida to garrison Cumberland Island and support local Georgia militia who confronted Spanish colonial forces and their Native American allies. In September 1812, Captain Williams was commanding Marines and Georgia militia guarding a supply convoy when the enemy ambushed the column. During fierce fighting, Williams was wounded multiple times, and the convoy was forced to disengage. Williams succumbed to his wounds two weeks later. The Marines participated in raids on several camps and villages in the swamps of East Florida, but the fighting ended soon after Marine and naval forces were withdrawn in April 1813.

---

## *The War of 1812*

The American fear that Britain would meddle in Florida added to growing tensions between the two nations during this period. To economically injure their enemy in the Napoleonic Wars, Britain had restricted neutral nations such as the United States from trading with France. On the high seas, the Royal Navy blockaded and boarded ships, sometimes impressing American crews by claiming they were British deserters. On land, the British attempted to check American westward expansion by supporting Native American nations in the Northwest Territory (modern-day Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin), who were offering armed resistance. American leaders argued the British were a threat to the sovereignty and commerce of the United States and declared war on 18 June 1812. British military and naval forces dwarfed those of the United States. In the struggle with Napoleonic France, which had expanded throughout the world by then, Britain's resources were stretched thin, however, leaving the United States to face only a fraction of its rival's power when the war began.

British and American forces clashed in multiple theaters on land and at sea, from the Northwest Territory, Great Lakes, and Atlantic Ocean to the Chesapeake Bay, Gulf Coast, and Pacific Ocean. The ground war was fought mostly along the Canadian frontier and in the Northwest Territory, a critical piece of U.S. strategy to weaken Britain's control of its remaining North American colonial holdings and cut off their support for Native American nations. These efforts resulted in numerous disasters for American forces. An army was organized under Brigadier General William Henry Harrison, but he failed to win any significant victories. Eventually, it became evident to the Madison administration that the military defeats were due largely to the British domination of the Great Lakes. President Madison concluded that the situation would become progressively worse if

---

the United States did not gain control over Lakes Erie and Ontario. As a result of this urgent need, the Navy began accumulating materials in summer and fall 1812 for construction of vessels to be used on the Great Lakes. Navy Commodore Isaac Chauncey was placed in command of the naval forces on the lakes and established a base at Sacketts Harbor, New York, on the eastern end of Lake Ontario. The Navy also established a base on Lake Erie, where Navy Commodore Oliver H. Perry began rapidly forming a squadron that he later used effectively against British shipping in the area.

The Marine Corps hewed to its traditional naval function and played a supporting role to the Navy. Marines participated in the campaigns to control the waterways along the border with Canada and were integral members of the ships' crews that served on the lakes. On 10 September 1813, Marines participated in Commodore Perry's victory at the Battle of Lake Erie, the only squadron engagement of the war. Perry sought out British ships operating in the area, took them under fire, and destroyed Britain's ability to control Lake Erie. With the support of Perry's squadron, recently promoted Major General William Harrison crossed with his army into Canada near Detroit and defeated a British and Native American force in the Battle of the Thames before regaining control of Michigan Territory soon thereafter.

At sea, Marines were members of crews that harassed the Royal Navy and merchant shipping to compel Britain to recognize American maritime rights. Both the United States and Britain pursued the same objective of making the war so costly that the other side would sue for peace. The Americans had a much smaller fleet, however, which the British took advantage of by raiding coastal cities and towns, capturing vessels, and blockading ports. The small U.S. Navy and Marine Corps still saw success during the first year at sea, with American vessels scoring decisive victories. *Constitution* destroyed HMS *Guerriere*





During the War of 1812, Marines provided musket-fire and stability during ferocious ship duels. Here, Marines fire from USS *Wasp* at HMS *Reindeer* on 28 June 1814. The effective musket fire killed *Reindeer*'s commander, then *Wasp*'s sailors and Marines boarded and captured the British ship. Shown in *USS Wasp vs HMS Reindeer* by John Clymer.

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

off Nova Scotia on 19 August 1812. During the fighting, First Lieutenant William Bush, commanding *Constitution*'s Marines, called out "Shall I board her, sir?" before being mortally shot. He was the first U.S. Marine officer killed in action against the enemy. Later, *United States* captured HMS *Macedonian* off the Madeira Islands on 25 October, and *Constitution* destroyed HMS *Java* off Brazil on 28 December 1812. During these battles, Marines led and supported boarding parties and delivered deadly musket fire on the enemy that contributed to overall success.

The Navy was not as successful in engagements on the high seas the following year. Although *Hornet* and *Enterprise* were able to win victories over British ships, this was not accomplished without incurring considerable loss of men and damage to ves-

---

sels. One of the most disastrous encounters occurred on 1 June 1813, when the frigate USS *Chesapeake* (1800) engaged HMS *Shannon* off Boston. Although Navy Captain James Lawrence had been successful in several engagements with the British, his newly acquired and inexperienced crew aboard *Chesapeake* was no match for *Shannon*. The broadsides killed many of the ship's officers, including the commander of its Marines, First Lieutenant James Broom. Command of *Chesapeake's* Marines fell to Sergeant John Twiss, who "did splendid work" despite being wounded. The fighting was fierce, and the captains of both ships were mortally wounded. The British were able to board *Chesapeake* and subdue the crew. It was during this engagement that Captain Lawrence, mortally wounded, uttered the famous expression, "Don't give up the ship!"

One of the most unusual and heroic adventures of a Marine during the war was that of First Lieutenant John Marshall Gamble. Commanding a detachment of 31 Marines, First Lieutenant Gamble sailed with Navy Captain David Porter aboard USS *Essex* (1799), bound for the Pacific to disrupt British whalers. After a successful encounter and capture of a British vessel, *Essex* arrived in the Pacific at the Galapagos Islands in April 1813. There, Captain Porter found and captured three British whaling ships. Porter refitted the captured ships and manned them for combat. One of the vessels, *Greenwich* (1813), was put under the command of First Lieutenant Gamble with a crew of 14 men. During July 1813, while cruising near the Galapagos archipelago, Gamble engaged the British whaler *Seringapatam*, which was armed and fitted as a privateer. Despite being a Marine officer, Gamble won a decisive victory. He maneuvered *Greenwich* according to the best principles of naval tactics, frustrated his enemy's efforts to escape, and forced his adversary to strike his colors after delivering effective broadsides.

---

During October 1813, Captain Porter established a base from which to operate at Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands. He set sail for other conquests after repairing his ships, leaving Gamble with men, supplies, and three vessels to maintain the fortification during his absence. Porter and his crew never returned to Nuku Hiva, however. During the early months of 1814, he and his men were defeated in battle near Valparaiso, Chile, and taken prisoner by the British.

Soon after Porter left on his voyage, First Lieutenant Gamble was beset with difficulty. Hostile natives and mutinous sailors forced him, along with the few Marines he had and some trusted sailors, to withdraw from the garrison and flee for their lives. After 15 days at sea aboard the captured whaler *Sir Andrew Hammond*, Gamble and his small crew reached the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands. After the Americans landed, friendly Hawaiians and traders offered help, and the crew refitted the ship. At the request of the local chiefs, Gamble agreed to take several of the leading natives with their tribute to a neighboring island where the king resided. While sailing to the next island, they encountered HMS *Cherub*, one of the British vessels that had defeated Porter at Valparaiso. Escape was impossible, and having no means of resistance, Gamble surrendered. He and his men thereafter remained prisoners of the British until the end of the war. When released, now-Captain Gamble made his way back to the United States and reached New York in August 1815. He was temporarily promoted to major and later lieutenant colonel for his heroic service (called a brevet rank), and he remained in the Marine Corps until his retirement in 1834.

During his three years away from the United States, Gamble had missed much of the war in North America, including its climax. After defeating the French in April 1814, the British turned their full attention to the United States. In June, the British opened a naval campaign in the Chesapeake Bay that threat-

---

ened Washington, DC. During the next two months, British vessels skirmished with an American flotilla of gunboats that a detachment of 110 Marines from Marine Barracks Washington augmented. By August, a British task force landed roughly 4,000 troops near Benedict, Maryland, 50 kilometers southeast of the capital. The flotilla's sailors and Marines under the command of Commodore Joshua Barney and Captain Samuel Miller, reinforced a force of approximately 1,000 regular U.S. soldiers and 6,000 militia. The Americans met the British at a bridge near Bladensburg, Maryland, on 24 August to block the path to the capital. Most of the militia in the first and second lines of defense performed poorly during the engagement. The Marines and sailors fighting alongside them made a gallant stand in the third line. Ammunition ran low, a musket ball shattered Captain Miller's arm, and Commodore Barney was severely wounded. After both men were captured and it became clear that the larger British force was overwhelming their position, the Americans withdrew. British troops afterward praised the stand of the Marines and sailors. At conclusion of the Battle of Bladensburg, the British pushed on to the capital, where they burnt several public buildings before retiring to their vessels in Chesapeake Bay.

The British next attempted to follow up the victories at Bladensburg and Washington, DC, by seizing Baltimore. They landed a force on 12 September and ran into American troops south of the city attempting to fight a delaying action. During the Battle of North Point, militiamen exacted a toll on the approaching enemy troops before withdrawing to Baltimore, including killing Major General Robert Ross, the commander of all British forces on the East Coast. The next day, the Marine detachment that fought at Bladensburg, now under the command of Captain Samuel Bacon, rushed to join the defense. There, they joined Navy Commodore John Rodgers's naval brigade, which included sailors and Marines from Philadelphia and sev-

---

eral ships' detachments. At Hampstead Hill, the British ran into upward of 15,000 American troops who bent but did not break. Finding Baltimore's defenses on land too formidable, the British opted instead for a naval bombardment of Fort McHenry, which guarded the mouth of the city's harbor. Despite a major British bombardment on the night of 13–14 September, Fort McHenry stood firm, and the British withdrew, ending the Chesapeake campaign. The burning of Washington had wounded American pride, but the successful defense of Baltimore was a strategic and inspiring victory for the Americans.

After being thwarted in the Chesapeake, the British fleet sailed south for a campaign against New Orleans. Preparations took place against the backdrop of peace negotiations that had begun on 8 August at Ghent, Belgium. The United States and Britain finally signed a peace treaty on 24 December. Two weeks before, the British and Americans had clashed on Lake Borgne in the opening skirmish for the campaign against New Orleans. During the engagement, sailors and Marines of Navy Lieutenant Thomas ap Catesby Jones' gunboat squadron fought a fierce two-day engagement against British boats. Though defeated, the firm resistance of the Americans convinced the British to land their troops and advance overland to New Orleans. Unaware that news of the treaty was being slowly borne homeward by the stormy winds of the Atlantic, Army Major General Andrew Jackson prepared to defend the city.

When the fighting began, Marines under the command of Major Daniel Carmick and First Lieutenant Francis B. de Bellevue were serving in Major General Jackson's army, which consisted of almost every kind of hastily thrown-together military unit. Major Carmick was given tactical command of one of the city's militia battalions, while First Lieutenant de Bellevue commanded the Marines. On 23 December, the British established a camp at the Villeré Plantation. That evening, Marines

---

participated in a spoiling attack that General Jackson launched against the British camp. The British were obliged to wait for reinforcements before proceeding, while Jackson's troops formed a defensive line in front of the city. The British tested the defenses on 28 December. The American line held, but it was a dark day for the Marine Corps, as Carmick was severely wounded when a Congreve rocket struck him and his horse. He died a year later of these wounds.

On 8 January, the British launched their final attack on Jackson's defensive position. The Marines under de Bellevue and the rest of the line stood firm against the attacks and inflicted heavy casualties on the assault force. Major General Edward M. Pakenham, the British Army commander, was killed by grape-shot, and the British were forced to withdraw. Although only a small number of Marines took part in the defense of New Orleans, they fought gallantly while under fire, leading to Jackson and Congress highly commending them for their service.

Even after the Battle of New Orleans, Marines and sailors fought several more engagements at sea against the Royal Navy before news of peace reached all ships. A British squadron took the frigate USS *President* after a fierce fight on 14 January 1815. On 20 February 1815, *Constitution* captured HMS *Cyane* and HMS *Levant*. Finally, *Hornet* took HMS *Penguin* on 23 March 1815. The United States Navy and Marine Corps ended the war on a victorious note, having proven their ability to fight and triumph over the most powerful navy of the era.

### *The Commandancy*

Commandant Franklin Wharton died in office on 1 September 1818. On 3 March 1819, President James Monroe appointed Brevet Major Anthony Gale as Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Marine Corps. Unfortunately, his command was ineffectual. The adjutant and inspector of the Marine Corps,

---

Brevet Major Samuel Miller, who had led Marines at Bladensburg, charged Gale with habitual drunkenness, conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and signing a false certificate on 7 September 1820. He was arrested, confined to quarters, and a court-martial was held. After the court found him guilty, President Monroe upheld the verdict, and Gale was discharged from the Marine Corps on 8 October 1820. Gale remains the only Marine Commandant removed from command for cause.

Gale's removal cast an unflattering shadow over an otherwise successful era for the Marine Corps. Within 20 years, the Corps established the key characteristics that defined the Service for the rest of the nineteenth century. Marines made an able naval fighting force serving as ships guards, boarding parties, and guardians of naval property, but they also demonstrated vital flexibility as an effective ground force. Commandants Burrows and Wharton steered the Service through contentious political environments while administering a sprawling Corps with detachments at various navy yards, port cities, and on ships at sea. Moreover, Marines valiantly defended the nation's independence and sovereignty in the Quasi-War, Barbary War, and War of 1812, having fought with distinction at home and abroad.

---

## CHAPTER 2

# Archibald Henderson's Corps, 1820–1859

President James Monroe appointed Brevet Major Archibald Henderson as the Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Marine Corps on 17 October 1820. At the age of 37, Henderson began a tenure that spanned more than 38 years (1820–59), the longest of any Commandant. He introduced higher standards throughout the Marine Corps in personal appearance, training, and discipline and carried out rigid inspections to ensure the prompt execution of his orders. He rose to the brevet rank of brigadier general and served under 11 presidents while Commandant, leading some to refer to him as the “grand old man of the Corps.”

After the War of 1812, the Navy and Marine Corps remained active at home and abroad despite a reduction of American military forces. As Marines were often the only organized federal military force available, they were called to act beyond their routine duties. The ad hoc tasks Marines performed included fighting fires in New York City and Boston, Massachusetts, and quelling a prison riot at the Massachusetts State Prison.

Abroad, the Marine Corps continued to serve the Navy, pro-



---

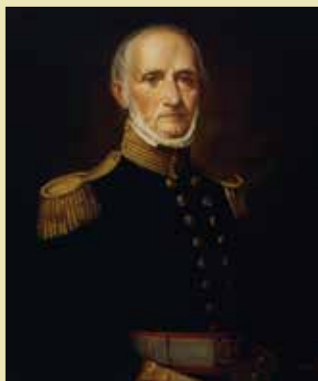
## ***Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson***

Archibald Henderson was born in Dumfries, Virginia, in 1783. Commissioned in 1806, Henderson was part of the second generation of Marine officers. As a young officer, he served aboard ship and commanded the Marine barracks at Charleston, South Carolina. Ambitious, he attempted to transfer his commission to the U.S. Army to see combat in the War of 1812. Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton rebuked him for the attempt. He was given command again of the Charleston Marines until reassigned in mid-1813 to USS *Constitution*.

He commanded the Marines in the celebrated final action of the war on 15 February 1815 against HMS *Cyane* and HMS *Levant*.

When Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Gale succeeded Franklin Wharton as Commandant in 1819, Henderson took command of the Marines in New Orleans. After Gale's discharge from the Corps, Henderson was promoted to Commandant of the Marine Corps on 17 October 1820. Henderson shepherded the Service through a tumultuous four decades. He protected the Corps from President Andrew Jackson's intentions to merge it with the Army in the 1830s. He successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps in 1834, clarifying its unique role as a naval Service sometimes serving ashore under Army command. He was promoted to colonel in 1834 and led the bulk of the Corps in the Creek and Seminole Wars in 1836 and 1837. For his service in the Seminole Wars, he was brevetted brigadier general in 1843, the first U.S. Marine promoted to general. During the Mexican War, he organized the Marine battalion that served with the Army in Mexico, including the Battle of Chapultepec. In 1857, Henderson faced down rioters attempting to interfere with elections in Washington, DC, by placing his chest against a cannon muzzle.

Henderson's death on 6 January 1859 ended the longest tenure of any Commandant of the Marine Corps at 38 years and 81 days, earning him the designation of "The Grand Old Man of the Corps."



*Portrait of Archibald Henderson,  
5th CMC by Reuben LeGrand  
Johnston.*

*National Museum of the Marine  
Corps Art Collection*

---

viding landing forces and boarding parties during naval cruises and expeditions. Marines' importance in these expeditions went beyond the immediate role they played on ships. Navy officers held tremendous responsibility in executing U.S. foreign policy. Often operating thousands of kilometers away in a time when communication was only as fast as human transportation, Navy squadron commanders and ship captains exercised wide latitude in carrying out orders and performed diplomatic roles representing the U.S. government with foreign officials. Consequently, Marines were at the leading edge of U.S. foreign policy, carrying out landings in foreign countries in response to threats to American lives and property or serving as ceremonial guards when officers met with foreign officials.

The bulk of the Navy and Marine Corps' attention between 1815 and 1825, however, was the suppression of pirates. Many American ships were lost to these predators, and American sailors periodically were murdered or forced into service with the pirates. Marines participated in the war against Algerian pirates (March–June 1815) as a part of the Mediterranean Squadron. The majority of antipiracy operations occurred in the Caribbean, however. In spring and summer 1822, Marines made landings from several Navy ships on the coast of Cuba in pursuit of pirates who had been preying on shipping. Two years later, Marines landed in Puerto Rico to avenge an insult by local officials to the American flag. In 1825, Marines from the schooner USS *Grampus* (1821) went ashore on a mission in the Virgin Islands to assist fighting a fire that threatened to destroy St. Thomas, marking one of the first humanitarian missions. In the South Atlantic, Marines landed in the Falkland Islands in early 1832 to protect American lives and property. In February, an expedition of Marines and sailors attacked Quallah Battoo in Sumatra, the East Indies, in reaction to harassment of American shipping. Within the next few years, parties of Marines and sailors landed

---

in Argentina, Peru, and several islands of the South Pacific, each time to protect American lives and property.

The role of Marines aboard Navy warships, and the Corps' larger role in the defense of the United States, changed as technological advances replaced the tall ships of the Age of Sail with the engineering marvels of the Age of Steam. Paddle and screw-driven warships became more prevalent, making sail ships gradually less common. More dangerous to the Corps, artillery increased dramatically in size, power, and accuracy. The necessity for Marines to aid in the conquest of enemy ships diminished as the modern Navy evolved. The Marine Corps' struggle to adjust to these changing conditions and its search for a relevant mission would shape its next 100 years. Although Marines did not immediately realize it at the beginning of this transformation, they were already playing the role that would cement their future—acting as landing parties that would project the Navy's power ashore.

### *The Creek and Seminole Wars*

On 30 June 1834, Congress passed an Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps. The legislation firmly established the Marine Corps as part of the naval establishment, ashore or afloat, except when detached for service with the Army by order of the president. For the Marine Corps, this period ranging from Andrew Jackson's presidency through the eve of the Civil War was one of maturation. Commandant Henderson moved to stabilize the Corps, emphasizing training, discipline, and competence standards to avoid the turbulence experienced by his predecessors. Following success in protecting American commerce in the Barbary Wars and in defending its sovereignty during the War of 1812, the United States began asserting its influence abroad, largely promoting American commercial access to foreign markets. Navy ships sailed across the world,



While ColCmndt Henderson led a battalion of Marines with the Army during the Second Seminole War, other Marines fought the war in the “Mosquito Fleet,” small boats of the U.S. Navy that patrolled the Florida swamps and coastal waterways. The Seminoles fought an irregular conflict, striking from ambush, as shown in *Marines Battle Seminoles* by John Clymer.

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

with Marines aboard forming landing parties to protect American interests. Closer to home, Marines also undertook larger and more organized expeditionary campaigns as land forces with the Army. The first major use of Marines as an expeditionary land force occurred when President Andrew Jackson ordered the Marine Corps to support the Second Seminole War (1835–42). After Jackson took office in 1829, he advocated for the Indian Removal Act, which he signed into law in 1830. Congress created the law to forcibly remove nearly all Native American tribes from the American east to lands west of the Mississippi River. The act violated previous treaties the U.S. government made with the Creeks and the Seminoles, starting the Second Seminole War in December 1835.

---

In response, President Jackson ordered the West India Squadron under Navy Commodore Alexander J. Dallas to cooperate with the Army in suppressing the Seminole uprising. The squadron's Marines soon became engaged in several phases of the war. A detachment of Marines and sailors from *Constellation* and sloop-of-war USS *St. Louis* (1828) were put under command of First Lieutenant Nathaniel S. Waldron and sent to garrison Fort Brooke, located at the head of Tampa Bay, Florida, until additional Army forces arrived. First Lieutenant Waldron and his men arrived at the fort on 22 January 1836. Army Brevet Major General Winfield Scott arrived in Florida shortly thereafter to assume overall command of the Florida campaign. During one of Scott's operations along the Withlacoochee River in March 1836, the Marines under First Lieutenant Waldron took part in several fights. During the same year, other Marines aboard vessels of the West India Squadron supported the Army and worked to protect settlements along the coast of Florida.

To the north, the Creeks in southern Georgia and Alabama continued to resist U.S. efforts to force them from their homes. President Jackson ordered General Scott from Florida to conduct the war against the Creeks, and the Army shifted its main effort from the Seminoles to the Creeks who occupied territory around present-day Columbus, Georgia. With the Army hard-pressed for men to fight in both areas, Colonel Commandant Archibald Henderson volunteered the services of a regiment of Marines for duty with the Army. On 23 May 1836, Jackson issued orders for all available Marines to report to the Army. Henderson stripped the barracks and navy yards of Marines and managed to move roughly one-half of the entire Marine Corps into the field, with 38 officers and 424 enlisted men forming a regiment of two battalions. By June 1836, the Marines were in Georgia searching for holdouts among the Creeks alongside the Army's soldiers.

---

With the assistance of the Marines and state militias, the Army forced the Creeks from their lands and displaced them into what was known as the Indian Territory, later Oklahoma, by late summer 1836. Jackson and the U.S. military subsequently turned their attention to Florida's Atlantic Coast and the Seminoles. The new Army commander, Brevet Major General Thomas S. Jesup, developed a concept of operations designed to wear down the Seminoles rather than defeat them in a single decisive battle. Jesup's operational concept was manpower intensive and required that Henderson's regiment of Marines attach to an Army force of roughly 9,000 troops. General Jesup gave Colonel Henderson command of a brigade that included Army artillery and infantry regiments, state militia, and the Marines. This was the largest force a Marine had commanded ashore to date. Henderson's brigade pressed the Seminoles until May 1837, when he and all but two companies of Marines returned to home stations. The remaining companies and the vessels of the West India Squadron continued to support the Army. Finally, after years of battling the Seminoles, the Florida naval expedition was disbanded between May and August 1842. The war officially ended on 14 August, and all Marines returned to their respective ships' detachments and other commands. For his services during the war, Henderson was later brevetted a brigadier general, becoming the first U.S. Marine to hold a general officer rank. The Seminole War foreshadowed the Corps' later counterinsurgency missions in Latin America.

### *Marines and Naval Expeditions*

While the Marine Corps supplied troops for the Second Seminole War, the Service continued performing its traditional naval roles. In August 1838, six ships comprising the United States Exploring Expedition sailed from Hampton Roads, Virginia, under the command of Navy Lieutenant Charles Wilkes. The

---

multiyear Wilkes Expedition looked to pave the way for American commerce in the Pacific by establishing diplomatic ties and providing sailing information to whalers and sealers. The expedition explored the Pacific Ocean, collected scientific samples, engaged with the indigenous peoples, and conducted scientific surveys while it charted the oceans, harbors, islands, and other oceanic features. The squadron carried artists and scientists with it to catalog, record, and preserve scientific findings.

Thirty-four Marines were part of the expedition, with Quartermaster Sergeant Simeon A. Stearns serving as the senior Marine of the squadron. The surveying and exploring expedition often clashed with the indigenous peoples they encountered. The Marines made landings in Samoa, Fiji, and the Gilbert Islands. Members of the Wilkes Expedition also explored the Sandwich Islands (today's Hawaii) and the coasts of what would become the states of California and Oregon before returning to New York in June 1842.

Two years later, the U.S. Navy was prepared to do more of what the Wilkes Expedition had accomplished but on a larger scale. In May 1844, the old and gallant frigate *Constitution*, with Navy Captain John Percival in command, embarked on a two-year circumnavigation of the globe. *Constitution's* mission was to project U.S. naval power while also collecting information on ports and waters and locating potential coaling stations in anticipation of building a steam-powered navy. By November 1845, *Constitution* arrived in the Sandwich Islands, where the ship's Marine officer, Second Lieutenant Joseph W. Curtis, conducted a survey of what would later become the Pearl Harbor naval base.

### *The Mexican War*

While at Honolulu, the crew of *Constitution* received orders to outfit for war and sail for Mexico. On 29 December 1845, the



*Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP*

United States annexed the Republic of Texas as the 28th state of the Union. Mexico did not recognize Texas's independence and refuted the American claim that the southern boundary of the new state was the Rio Grande rather than the Nueces River, farther to the north. On 13 January 1846, President James K. Polk ordered Army Brevet Brigadier General Zachary Taylor to move his 4,000 troops into the disputed area. Taylor quickly built a fort on the banks of the Rio Grande, antagonizing the Mexican government and the military forces stationed across the river in Matamoros. The two sides eyed each other warily, realizing that they were waiting for a pretext to war.



---

President Polk also sent First Lieutenant Archibald H. Gillespie as a secret courier to California. After his arrival, Gillespie reported to Navy Commodore John D. Sloat, commander of the Pacific Squadron, and delivered the president's instructions in the event of war. He then proceeded to find and deliver similar instructions to two United States agents in California, Consul Thomas O. Larkin at Monterey and Army Captain John C. Frémont, who was leading a mapping expedition in California. The catalyst for the California operations was President Polk's concern that Great Britain would use the outbreak of war to further their territorial claims along the Oregon territory and parts of California.

The United States declared war on Mexico on 12 May 1846 after Mexican cavalry troops skirmished with an American patrol at Palo Alto. The Gulf Coast Squadron under the command of Navy Commodore David Conner established a blockade and a naval base to support Taylor's march south. The Marines of the squadron, commanded by Captain Alvin Edson, the senior Marine officer, were organized into a battalion of about 200 men by combining all the ships' detachments. During October 1846, the battalion, augmented by sailors and supported by guns of the squadron, conducted successful raids against Frontera and San Juan Bautista. On 14 November 1846, the squadron's landing party, including Captain Edson's Marines, secured Tampico.

Fighting also erupted in the California territory. Gillespie joined Captain Fremont and fought to establish the Republic of California (a.k.a. the Bear Flag Republic). Sailors and Marines of the Pacific Squadron landed in Monterey on 7 July 1846, beginning the official campaign to conquer California. Utilizing the squadron's mobility and firepower, Navy Commodore Robert F. Stockton sailed his vessels up and down the California coast, sending parties of sailors and Marines ashore to seize



The Marines' fight at Chapultepec was memorialized by German illustrator and architect, Carl Nebel, who worked with war correspondent George Wilkins Kendall to illustrate the battles they observed during the Mexican War. *Battle of Chapultepec, Quitman's Actions*, by Carl Nebel and Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot. *Carl Nebel, The War between the United States and Mexico, 1851* (New York: D. Appleton, 1851)

the major ports of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. After months of occupation and rebellion, a small column of U.S. Army dragoons arrived in southern California to reinforce the naval troops. The combined force then fought its way north to Los Angeles, where they ended resistance with victory at the Battle of La Mesa on 9 January 1847. After its relief from occupation duty, the Pacific Squadron and its Marines moved south and established a blockade of Mexico's Pacific coast, securing its most significant commercial ports.

The war in Texas had not driven the Mexican government to surrender as President Polk desired. Taylor, in his southward advance from Texas, was unable to reach the central part of Mexico due to difficult terrain. Polk sent a second army under the

---

command of Major General Winfield Scott to capture Mexico City. On 9 March 1847, U.S. forces performed an amphibious landing at Vera Cruz, which Scott had selected as his entry point for the march on the capital. Gulf Squadron Marines under the command of Captain Edson assisted the Army in the siege and capture of Vera Cruz. Once the city was secured, the Marines returned to the Gulf Squadron.

During the siege, Navy Commodore Matthew C. Perry's Gulf Squadron provided mortar and naval gunfire support. After capturing Vera Cruz, Perry focused the squadron on securing Mexico's Gulf ports. The Americans captured Alvarado on 1 April and Tuxpan on 18 April 1847. In June, Perry captured the port at Frontera and occupied the city of San Juan Bautista on the Tabasco River, cutting off the Mexican government from key vital foreign trade. A shore detachment of 115 Marines and 60 sailors supported by 3 gunboats held the town until 22 July 1847, when the detachment returned to the squadron to avoid the yellow fever season. The capture of San Juan Bautista marked the final important amphibious operation of the Gulf Coast Squadron.

Scott's army meanwhile suffered from a manpower shortage due to the expiration of volunteer enlistments. As during the Second Seminole War, Commandant Henderson offered a Marine regiment for service with Scott's army. Navy leadership, however, rescinded Henderson's offer, arguing that the Marines with the two squadrons were critical for naval operations. As a result, only 366 Marines could be found for service with the Army. Formed into a battalion under Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Samuel E. Watson, the Marines joined Scott's army on 6 August 1847 in Mexico. They were assigned to the Army's 4th Division, commanded by Brigadier General John A. Quitman. They joined the assault on Chapultepec and Mexico City on 13 September 1847. When General Quitman's advance was halted

---

## *The Blood Stripe*

Another persistent story in Marine Corps lore involves the red stripe on the blue uniform trouser legs of Marine officers and noncommissioned officers. Marines have spread the legend that this “blood stripe” commemorates the courage and leadership of the Marines who fought at Chapultepec during the Mexican War, where Major Levi Twiggs and Corporal Hugh Graham were among the battle’s casualties. Some Marine uniforms had red stripes prior to the Mexican War, however. The scarlet stripe as it appears today was added in 1904, and there is no evidence it was chosen for a commemorative purpose.

The tradition took on a new life in the twenty-first century, when many Marine units began holding “Blood Stripe ceremonies” to honor new noncommissioned officers and impress on them the seriousness of their responsibilities. While lore may have eclipsed fact, the Blood Stripe nevertheless has come to represent the commitment and professionalism of those who lead Marines and the important role that noncommissioned officer and commissioned officer combat leadership have played in the success of the Corps in battle throughout its history.

by heavy enemy fire, Captain George H. Terrett, leading Company C as the right flank of the support, took the initiative and moved forward without orders, slicing through enemy batteries. The Marines pursued the fleeing artillerymen and broke up a counterattack the Mexican lancers were mounting. With the fall of the stronghold at Chapultepec and some fierce fighting by Marines and soldiers, Major General Scott’s forces took Mexico City on 14 September 1847. As a result of the Marines’ conduct in the Mexican War, the citizens of Washington, DC, presented Commandant Henderson with a blue and gold standard that bore the motto, “From Tripoli to the Halls of the Montezumas.” Later, Marine service during the war was immortalized in the opening line of the “Marines’ Hymn.”

---

## *A Global Naval Force*

Between the close of the Mexican War and the outbreak of the Civil War, Marines served aboard Navy vessels in protection of U.S. interests and an expanding global foreign policy. American involvement in international commerce expanded dramatically during this period, as the nation built up its merchant marine and became a sizable maritime power. With the growth of merchant shipping, the nation called on the Navy and its Marines to support global commerce and protect the lives and property of Americans and U.S. business interests abroad when threatened.

Among these varied activities was the suppression of the international African slave trade. The United States outlawed the importation of slaves in 1808. In 1842, U.S. representatives signed the Webster-Ashburton Treaty with Great Britain, which agreed that American warships would remain along the western coast of Africa to police the slave trade. From 1843 until the outbreak of the Civil War, the United States provided an African Squadron for such duty and placed vessels in the waters off Brazil and Cuba for the same purpose. Marines participated in boarding operations and made several landings to suppress the slave trade.

Marines on ships' detachments made other landings in support of various operations in the Atlantic during the 1850s. Marines aboard the frigate USS *Congress* (1842) and sloop-of-war USS *Jamestown* (1844) went ashore in 1852 at Buenos Aires, Argentina, to protect American lives and property against rioting Argentineans. A few days later, Marines of the sloop USS *Albany* (1846) were dispatched on a mission of mercy to assist putting out a fire that was sweeping San Juan del Sur (Greytown), Nicaragua. The following year, Marines made two more landings in Nicaragua to protect American lives.

Many Marines spent much of the decade involved in diplomatic and commercial missions in Asia. With the annexation of

---

California in 1848, the United States secured Pacific ports and looked to secure regular trade with Asian nations. On 24 November 1852, Marines under Brevet Major Jacob Zeilin, senior Marine officer of the squadron, sailed for Japan with Commodore Matthew C. Perry's East India Squadron. Most of Perry's squadron was composed of large modern steamships designed to conspicuously highlight American naval power. Perry's squadron arrived at Edo (Tokyo) Bay on 8 July 1853, and pageantry and ceremony soon followed the Marines' and sailors' landing. After presenting Japanese officials with President Millard Fillmore's request to open a trade relationship, Perry declared that he would return early the following year for their decision.

On 8 March 1854, Perry returned to Edo Bay with his squadron. After lengthy ceremonies and negotiations, Perry and Japanese officials signed the Treaty of Kanagawa, opening trade relations between the United States and Japan. During both of Perry's visits, Marines played a major role in the ceremonies and were commended for their military bearing, which added prestige to Perry's diplomatic overtures. Elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific, Marines landed at Hong Kong, Shanghai, and the Fiji Islands in 1855 to protect American property and lives from disturbances. China was torn by war at the time. Internally, a religious group rebelled against the Qing dynasty in 1850, resulting in the bloody and destructive Taiping Rebellion. Externally, the Qing struggled against the British, who initiated the Second Opium War in 1856 to gain further access to China's lucrative markets and products. With the American emphasis on trade with Asia, the United States also sought access and a commercial advantage in the competition with other Western powers.

From October until mid-November 1856, the Pacific Squadron sailed from Whampoa to Canton to protect property and citizens in China. Faced with four strongly defended "Barrier Forts" blocking access to Canton, a landing force of Marines



Marine ships' detachments served a ceremonial function in addition to their other duties, as depicted in *Landing of Commodore Perry, Officers and Men of the Squadron, to Meet the Imperial Commissioners at Yoku-hama, Japan, 8 March 1854*. Wilhelm Heine illustrates how effective the Marines in Perry's squadron were at ceremonial display. Heine was the official artist of the expedition, an eyewitness to the events he painted.

*Courtesy of Navy Art Collection, Naval History and Heritage Command*

and sailors launched an assault in the early morning of 20 November 1856. The American force of approximately 287 officers, sailors, and Marines met more than 4,000 Chinese troops and defeated them in three days of hard fighting. With the safety of Americans assured, the Marines and sailors withdrew.

While Marines served aboard ships across the globe in a variety of roles, the Service performed other duties at home. During the latter part of the 1850s, Marines in garrison were called on to suppress domestic disturbances as national politics increased in ferocity prior to the Civil War. In June 1857, President James Buchanan ordered out two companies of Marines to restore order during election riots in Washington, DC. In 1858,

---

a detachment of 65 Marines from the barracks at the New York Navy Yard and from the frigate USS *Sabine* (1858) was sent to occupy and protect government buildings on Staten Island.

Perhaps the best example of Marines suppressing domestic disturbances came in October 1859, when abolitionist leader John Brown seized the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, (now in West Virginia) and attempted to incite armed revolt among the slaves. He was unsuccessful in inspiring a revolt, and local militia forces surrounded and drove Brown and his followers into the armory's fire engine house. Realizing that the Marines in Washington were the nearest federal troops, Secretary of War John B. Floyd requested a force of Marines join Army Colonel Robert E. Lee, who was leading the federal response. Consequently, the Navy Department ordered all available Marines in Washington to the scene to quell the reported insurrection.

Under the command of Second Lieutenant Israel Greene, 86 Marines proceeded to Harpers Ferry by rail on 17 October 1859 and reported to Colonel Lee. Brown and his followers had taken hostages and found refuge in the fire engine house. Lee had Second Lieutenant Greene's forces surround the building, and he judged that the situation was contained. Lee decided that the militia would secure a perimeter to ensure none of Brown's followers could escape, while the Marines, the only regular federal troops available to Lee, would storm the engine house. The next morning, Lee's aide, Army First Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart, approached the engine house with a demand for Brown to surrender. When Brown refused, Greene and his Marines broke through the doors. Greene rushed forward and struck Brown with his sword, knocking him to the ground. The Marines relied on bayonets to avoid harming the hostages with stray musket fire. Brown's followers fired, killing one Marine and wounding another. As Greene later recounted, the storming party had come "rushing in like tigers." The troops "bayoneted one man skulking



---

under the engine, and pinned another fellow up against the rear wall, both being instantly killed.” Brown and his followers were subdued and the hostages freed. When Brown had sufficiently recovered from his wounds, Greene and his detachment escorted him to jail in Charleston, Virginia (now West Virginia). The State of Virginia later hanged Brown for treason.

---

## CHAPTER 3

# Toward a More Professional and Modern Marine Corps, 1860–1898

In the months following John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry, the nation became intractably split over the future of slavery. Between Abraham Lincoln's election as president in November 1860 and his inauguration in March 1861, South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas voted to secede from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America, with Jefferson F. Davis as its president. On 12 April, South Carolina troops fired on Fort Sumter, a federal fort in the harbor of Charleston, compelling the garrison to surrender the next day. With shots fired, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion. In turn, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Arkansas seceded and joined the Confederacy.

The Marine Corps began the war facing a personnel crisis, as did the Army and Navy. Nearly one-third of all Marine officers left the Service to serve with the Confederacy or avoid taking arms against the seceded states. These included notable Marines such as Second Lieutenant Israel Greene, who led Marines against John Brown at Harpers Ferry; Captain John D. Simms,

---

who had been breveted for his service in the Mexican War and had fought courageously at the Barrier Forts at Canton, China; and Brevet Major George H. Terrett, acclaimed for his actions at the Battle of Chapultepec in 1847. Owing to the resignations and modest wartime expansion that Congress and the president allowed in 1861 (the Marine Corps' total strength never exceeded 3,900 during the war), the Service began the war with raw recruits and untested new officers.

In early 1861, the Marines assisted the Navy and Army in securing strategically important installations throughout the southern states and near Washington, DC, although many naval stations in the South were lost to the Confederacy. That January, Florida and Alabama troops took the Pensacola Navy Yard in Florida and gained control of Pensacola's defensive positions except for Fort Pickens. A force of 110 Marines led by First Lieutenant John C. Cash, together with U.S. soldiers, occupied the fort until a larger garrison of soldiers arrived. Fort Pickens remained under U.S. control for the remainder of the war. On 20 April, Marines of the Gosport (now Norfolk) Navy Yard, Virginia, along with Marines and sailors sent from Washington, destroyed the navy yard to deny the enemy its use. Other Marines temporarily garrisoned Fort McHenry in Baltimore and Fort Washington, Maryland, on the Potomac River, just south of the capital, while on alert to defend the Washington Navy Yard if needed.

In summer 1861, Army Brigadier General Irvin McDowell led the United States' first attempt to capture Richmond, the Confederate capital, in the hopes of quickly defeating the rebellion. On 16 July, McDowell left Washington with a force of about 35,000 troops to capture Manassas Junction, Virginia, where rail lines from both capitals intersected. Attached to McDowell's forces was a Marine battalion under Major John G. Reynolds, numbering 12 officers and about 330 en-



The Marine battalion that fought in the First Battle of Bull Run was composed of raw recruits; many had been in the Service less than a month. Their officers were a mix of older veterans and new second lieutenants. Nonetheless, they rallied four times before finally joining the retreat to Washington, DC, as in *Marines at First Manassas (Bull Run)* by SSgt Kristopher J. Battles. *National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

listed, most of whom were new recruits with little training. By 21 July, McDowell reached Manassas Junction, where around 32,000 Confederate troops confronted him at the First Battle of Bull Run. General McDowell's troops attacked and initially pushed back the Confederate forces, but the enemy reformed their lines and rallied. U.S. forces broke under the pressure and began a disorganized retreat back to Washington, including Major Reynolds and his surviving Marines. For the United States, the defeat dashed hopes for a quick war.

As the United States settled into a protracted conflict, Marines assisted the Navy's efforts to blockade the South, control the southern coast, and secure major Confederate waterways. Marine ships' detachments helped secure forts and navy yards and boarded enemy vessels. With the Navy hard-pressed to re-

---

cruit enough sailors to man its ships, Marines were sometimes called to form crews to man ships' guns. On occasion, larger Marine expeditionary units were formed for more substantial operations. In August 1861, about 200 Marines with the Potomac Flotilla searched southern Maryland's countryside for Confederate arms. During the same month, Marines from ships' detachments formed part of a combined Army-Navy expedition to North Carolina and participated in the capture of Fort Clark and Fort Hatteras. The Marines served as a landing force and ship-borne gunners, helping secure the strategically important Hatteras Inlet. In October and November of the same year, Major Reynolds trained and led a Marine detachment assigned to an amphibious expedition to capture Port Royal, South Carolina, near present-day Parris Island. Reynolds's Marines did not participate in the assault, but a Marine detachment from the frigate USS *Wabash* (1856) landed and occupied Fort Walker at the entrance of Port Royal Sound. During December 1861, Marines from the sloop-of-war USS *Dale* (1839) landed and destroyed the Confederate headquarters for the Charleston area following a naval bombardment.

On 8 March 1862, CSS *Virginia*—formerly the USS *Merimack* (1856) refitted as an ironclad—attacked Navy vessels off Hampton Roads, Virginia. *Virginia* delivered crippling blows against several ships, including the frigate USS *Cumberland* (1842). Captain Charles Heywood (later the ninth Commandant of the Marine Corps) of *Cumberland* rallied his Marines and kept them at their guns despite *Virginia* ramming the Union ship. Although *Cumberland* eventually sank, its continuous fire weakened the ironclad. Two days later, the ironclad USS *Monitor* (1862) arrived and fought a five-hour engagement against *Virginia*, ending in a draw. After several more weeks of intermittent fights with *Monitor*, Confederates ran *Virginia* aground, and its crew scuttled the ship on the morning of 11 May. The

---

eventual defeat of *Virginia*, although at high cost, allowed Captain Charles G. McCawley (later the eighth Commandant of the Marine Corps) to reoccupy the Gosport Yard, providing key support for U.S. Army operations in Virginia.

As Navy forces advanced up the James River, several ships came under fire from Confederate shore batteries on Drewry's Bluff, about 12 kilometers south of Richmond. The ironclad USS *Galena* (1862) was hit while it returned fire, causing an explosion. Corporal John F. Mackie of *Galena's* Marine detachment rallied the survivors, carried off the dead and wounded, and got three of *Galena's* guns back in action. For his heroic actions, Mackie became the first Marine awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor. A total of 17 Marines ultimately received the decoration for actions in the Civil War.

In April 1862, Marines with the flotilla of Navy Captain David G. Farragut participated in the capture of New Orleans. The Marines manned guns during engagements with Confederate gunboats before the flotilla ran the batteries along the Mississippi River that defended the approach to the city. Captain John L. Broome led Marines into New Orleans and occupied the United States mint, the customs house, and city hall. By 1 May, the army under the command of Major General Benjamin F. Butler occupied the city, and the last of the Marines withdrew to their vessels. Marines afloat continued to aid the U.S. efforts to seize control of the Mississippi River for the next year. During August 1863, a Marine detachment of about 150 men from Port Royal joined a naval force under Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren to attack Fort Sumter. Captain Charles G. McCawley led the Marines during the assault. The landing was disorganized, however, and Confederate fire from the fort successfully repelled the Marines and soldiers. Fort Sumter remained in enemy hands until February 1865.

As the war progressed into 1864 and 1865, Marines contin-



Cpl John F. Mackie was the first Marine awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions aboard the ironclad ship USS *Galena* at Drewery's Bluff on 15 May 1862. *CPL John Mackie, USMC, MOH*, by Col Charles H. Waterhouse depicts Mackie returning musket fire from one of *Galena's* gun ports.

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

---

ued aiding the Navy's blockade and efforts to control southern waterways. In June 1864, Marines manned some of sloop-of-war USS *Kearsarge's* (1862) guns when it destroyed the Confederate commerce raider CSS *Alabama* off Cherbourg, France. In August, Marines with Rear Admiral Farragut's ships distinguished themselves in battle at Mobile Bay. Aboard sloop-of-war USS *Lackawanna* (1863) and flagship sloop-of-war USS *Hartford* (1859), Marines manned guns that delivered deadly fire and forced CSS *Tennessee* to surrender, leaving the United States in control of the bay. By December 1864, Wilmington, North Carolina, remained the only major port under Confederate control.

In January 1865, an Army, Navy, and Marine force assembled to take Fort Fisher, which guarded Wilmington's port. About 400 Marines under Captain Lucien LeCompte Dawson formed part of a 2,000-strong naval brigade that joined 8,000 Army soldiers for the operation. After a two-day naval bombardment, the ground assault launched on 15 January 1865. The smaller naval brigade was supposed to support the Army's main assault on the fort's northwest corner by attacking the northeast bastion. Miscommunication, however, led the naval brigade to attack first. The Marines and sailors suffered heavy casualties, but their ill-timed attack proved a successful diversion to the soldiers' late assault that caught the Confederate garrison by surprise. Fort Fisher's fall led to the U.S. capture of Wilmington, depriving the Confederacy of its last major port that could supply its remaining force.

On 2 April 1865, Jefferson Davis and his government fled the capital at Richmond. One week later, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, general in chief of the armies of the United States, at Appomattox, Virginia. While there were still Confederate armies in the field, Davis's retreat and Lee's surrender effectively ended the Civil War. The remaining Confederate



---

forces capitulated throughout the next month. Soon after, the Marine Corps reverted to its prewar strength and mission, as did the Navy.

### *Foreign and Domestic Duty after the Civil War*

With the war over, the Marine Corps returned to traditional peacetime missions. Unlike the Army, neither the Marine Corps nor the Navy were involved in Reconstruction, the process of politically reintegrating the Southern states into the Union. Marines continued forming ships' detachments, guarding naval bases, and assisting civil authorities during periods of civil disorder. Meanwhile, the Navy was shifting from wooden sailing vessels to modern steam-powered ships. While some flag officers such as Admiral David D. Porter believed that "a ship without Marines is like a garment without buttons," the change in technology led some to question the need for Marines aboard ships. As naval battles began to be fought at greater distances and the technology demanded more capable sailors, there was less need for Marines to serve as marksmen, in boarding parties, and as a shipboard security force.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, Marines landed in such places as Egypt, Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Panama, Nicaragua, Haiti, Trinidad, mainland China, Formosa (modern-day Taiwan), Korea, Japan, Samoa, Fiji, and the Hawaiian Islands. Most often, these landings were in response to rebellions, hostile governments, unrest, and natural disasters threatening American lives, property, and interests. Many constituted a show of force, where the sight of Marines dispelled the threat. Marines, however, occasionally engaged in combat to advance American interests in a foreign country, as they did in Korea in 1871.

Korea had forbidden virtually all contact with foreigners to insulate itself from Western imperialist interference. Occasional-

---

ly, Americans who violated Korea's isolationist policies were detained or even executed. In summer 1871, Frederick F. Low, the United States minister to China, traveled to Korea to negotiate opening the country to U.S. trade and ensuring the safety of Americans traveling there. Low arrived at the mouth of the Han River on Korea's west coast in May 1871 with ships of Navy Rear Admiral John Rodgers' Asiatic Fleet. Although Korean officials made clear that they did not consent to the Americans' presence, Rodgers sent a surveying party to examine the approaches to the capital at Seoul, which lay farther up the Han River. As the survey party approached the Han River, they came under fire from several forts. Korea refused to apologize for the engagement afterward, leading Rodgers and Low to retaliate.

On 10 June, about 105 Marines and 550 sailors landed to capture the forts. With the ships supplying gunfire support, Captain McLane Tilton led the Marines in spearheading the assaults, taking two without difficulty. The next day, Tilton led the Marines against the heavily fortified main fort of Kwangsonchin, nicknamed the "Citadel" by the Americans, after a naval bombardment. The fighting devolved into hand-to-hand combat, and the Marines succeeded in neutralizing the garrison and destroying the fort's guns. Among the six Marines awarded the Medal of Honor during the assault were Corporal Charles Brown and Private Hugh Purvis, who made their way to the flagstaff and tore down the enemy flag during the fighting. Rodgers subsequently withdrew the punitive force on 12 June and departed Korea. Although the sailors and Marines successfully destroyed the forts, it took the United States another 11 years to establish a treaty with Korea.

While detachments already on ships conducted most Marine landings, Marines executed others as part of task-organized expeditions. One of their largest expeditionary missions to date was sent to Panama in 1885 after a Panamanian rebellion against



During the late nineteenth century, Marines' major duty aboard naval vessels was to form the disciplined core of the landing parties. In Korea in 1871, Marines and sailors conducted amphibious landings and siezed Korean forts in response to Korean provocations, as seen in *Stormin Ft Cho'in, Korea* by John Clymer.

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

---

Colombian rule broke out. President Grover Cleveland authorized a Navy and Marine Corps expedition to protect American property and citizens as well as keep open the railway that connected the port cities of Colón and Panama City on either side of the isthmus. On 2 April, Colonel Commandant Charles G. McCawley placed Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Charles Heywood in command of a two-battalion brigade of more than 500 Marines, which the Marine Corps formed by reducing the East Coast barracks' strength by about one-half. The brigade landed later that month with a Navy artillery detachment. The force occupied Colón and Panama City and patrolled the railway. Colombian troops arrived at the end of April, and stability was regained shortly thereafter, allowing U.S. forces to depart in May. While the Marines and sailors had successfully restored order, some Navy officers praised the Marines' discipline but criticized their outdated tactics and the brigade's ad hoc formation. McCawley defended the Marine Corps' performance, noting that the expedition was successful but also outside the Corps' traditional roles. Although the Navy-Marine Corps relationship changed little in the near term, the Panama expedition revealed growing uncertainty around the Service's utility to modern operational needs.

Between assignments at sea, Marines lived in barracks on or near navy yards, and drill and guard duty dominated their time. Similar to the interventions abroad, Marines at home occasionally helped restore order during periods of unrest. As the nation industrialized rapidly during the late nineteenth century, labor strikes and urban disorder became common. Marine barracks were predominantly located in the urban port cities that the unrest affected most, making Marines often well-placed to assist. In New York between 1867 and 1871, Marines helped destroy illicit distilleries and enforced revenue laws. When fires swept through Portland, Maine, in 1866 and Boston in 1872, Marines aided

---

civil authorities in maintaining order and preserving public safety. In summer 1877, Marines assisted the Army in suppressing the Great Railroad Strike, which disrupted rail transportation throughout the country. A battalion of Marines from barracks in Washington, DC, under Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Charles Heywood protected railroad property in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Reading, Pennsylvania. After Heywood's battalion had departed, another battalion formed from ships' detachments and Marines from the Washington and Norfolk barracks, under Brevet Lieutenant Colonel James Forney, guarded the Washington Arsenal (later Fort Lesley J. McNair) and the rail lines between Washington and Martinsburg, West Virginia. At the same time, a Marine detachment from the Brooklyn barracks and the receiving ship USS *Colorado* (1858) guarded the Army's Watervliet Arsenal, New York. After this period, laws such as the Posse Comitatus Act and the development of the National Guard meant Marines were called on less during civil disturbances. Marines were still occasionally directed to protect federal property, however. During another railroad strike in California in 1894, a Marine detachment from the Mare Island Navy Yard, north of San Francisco, helped the Army protect federal mail.

### *Reforming the Marine Corps*

As Marines provided stability overseas and at home, Commandants in the era worked to improve the Corps. Brigadier General Commandant Jacob Zeilin insulated the Service from the post-Civil War drawdown's worst effects while improving Marines' quality of life. During Zeilin's tenure, the secretary of the Navy sent Brevet Lieutenant Colonel James Forney to Europe on a fact-finding tour to study how other nations, Great Britain specifically, used Marines during the era of new naval technology. Forney submitted a 400-page report when he returned, but it did little to influence the Navy Department. Zeilin's successor

---

as Commandant, Colonel Charles G. McCawley, focused on personnel improvements and fostering the Marine Corps' public image. To improve personnel quality, McCawley centralized control over enlisted promotions to ensure they were based on merit, convinced Congress to grant pensions for retired enlisted, and advocated for other measures such as mandatory retirement ages and examinations for officer promotions.

Marines also contemplated the Corps' institutional identity in the period. The Service made an effort to promote the unique nature of Marines' service. After having briefly borrowed from the Royal Marines' motto, "Per Mare, per Tarram" (By Land, By Sea), Commandant McCawley adopted "Semper Fidelis" (Always Faithful) in the 1880s. Marine officers also helped publish the first history of the Marine Corps in 1875, providing Marines and the public a compelling narrative of Marines' heroism dating to the nation's founding. Other changes had an eye on public appearance. These included new uniform regulations such as adopting Prussian-style helmets and reincorporating the Mameluke Sword into the officers' dress.

Colonel Charles Heywood succeeded McCawley as Commandant in 1891. Colonel Heywood's tenure, which lasted until 1903, saw dramatic changes for the Marine Corps. The Service's strength grew from about 2,000 enlisted and officers to nearly 8,000 in total, while the number of permanent posts increased from 12 to 21. To accommodate the influx of new Marines, Heywood secured funds to improve living conditions at the barracks. Much of Heywood's emphasis was on increasing the professionalization of Marines, chiefly through education. He instituted a system for officers' education at the barracks and placed a Marine instructor at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1891, the School of Application was established at Marine Barracks Washington, the Marine Corps' first school dedicated to professional military education and the

---

### ***“The President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band***

The Marine Band was founded sometime when Marine Corps Headquarters was in Philadelphia from 1798 to 1800. There, Marine field musicians started performing for entertainment and civic events at the behest of Commandant William Ward Burrows. The band moved with Burrows to Washington, DC, and was based at 8th and I, where it remains to this day. In the capital, the band found favor with President Thomas Jefferson, who frequently used the musicians for social and official events. Thereafter, the band’s stature rose, becoming a mainstay in major civic ceremonies and earning the moniker “The President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band. Since at least 1809, the band has performed at every presidential inauguration and has been present at major historic events, such as President Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address during the dedication of the battlefield cemetery in 1863.

Under the leadership of John Philip Sousa from 1880 to 1892, the Marine Band became nationally famous. Tours and Sousa’s own compositions, including the Corps’ official march, “Semper Fidelis,” brought the Corps widespread recognition. The Marine Band remains the preeminent U.S. military band, performing at White House state events and at military ceremonies, including funerals at Arlington National Cemetery. Both a Marine and cultural institution, the band supports musical education and provides free recordings and performances for the American public.



The United States Marine Band, led by John Phillip Sousa (first row, center).  
*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

forerunner of The Basic School in Quantico, Virginia. Heywood also established strict marksmanship standards and a regular system of examinations for officer promotions. To accompany the professionalization of the Marine Corps, the Commandant's billet was raised from a colonel to major general.

While Heywood instituted reforms to improve the Marine Corps, he also recognized the necessity of modernizing the Marine Corps' mission, bringing it more in line with the Navy's modernization efforts. Some Navy and Marine Corps reformers believed Marines should serve as an expeditionary force for the Navy, while others, such as Heywood, believed Marines should continue forming ship detachments and operate ships' secondary gun batteries. By the end of the 1890s, the Marine Corps stood at a crossroads. It had responded to the outside pressures of industrialization and the Navy's modernization by professionalizing and improving the quality of Marines, leading it to emerge from a period of stagnation following the Civil War. Its inherent fear of being subsumed into the Army or altogether abolished, however, led it to cling to its more traditional roles. Until it could find its path in a changing naval landscape, its future remained unclear.

### *The Spanish-American War*

As the Marine Corps evolved during the 1890s, the United States' relationship with Spain deteriorated. In line with the Monroe Doctrine, the United States' longstanding foreign policy disavowing European nations' right to reassert or expand colonial control in the Western Hemisphere, Washington officially condemned Spain's campaign against a renewed rebellion in its colony in Cuba. Two events in February 1898 led to war. First, a letter from Spain's ambassador to his government criticizing President William McKinley was leaked to the American press inflaming the American public. Then, on the night of 15 Feb-



---

## *Eagle, Globe, and Anchor*

From its birth through the Civil War, the Marine Corps went through various uniform insignia, often featuring an eagle, occasionally an anchor, and sometimes an embellished “U.S.M.” In November 1868, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Brigadier General Jacob Zeilin, determined the Corps needed an insignia unique to Marines and emblematic of the Service’s roles. Zeilin approved the recommendation of a board of Marine officers studying the issue, which was disseminated on 30 November 1868, of an insignia of a plate displaying a globe featuring North and South America, with an eagle standing atop, while an anchor intersected the hemisphere. The Marine Corps had borrowed freely from the British Royal Marines’ own “Globe and Laurel” emblem, which featured a globe and anchor as well. Nevertheless, each component of the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor highlighted a unique aspect of the Marine Corps: the eagle incorporated a traditional United States symbol, the anchor emphasized the Corps’ naval heritage, and the globe represented Marines’ expeditionary nature.

The design has been modified over the years, with differing versions for officers and enlisted, for different uniforms, and for inclusion with the Marine Corps’ official emblem. The basic symbols nonetheless have remained. The last major changes were made in 1955, which confirmed the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor as the Corps’ official emblem and included a ribbon with “Semper Fidelis” held in the eagle’s beak. For the official seal, the emblem sits on a scarlet background encircled by a navy-blue band with a gold rope rim, inscribed with “Department of the Navy” on one side and “United States Marine Corps” in gold on the other.



ruary, the battleship USS *Maine* (1895), sent to Havana Harbor the month prior to protect American interests, sank following an explosion, killing 232 sailors and 28 Marines. Many U.S. officials and the American public blamed Spanish sabotage, although Spain believed the explosion was an accident. (The U.S. Navy concluded in 1976 that accidental ignition of coal dust adjacent to the ammunition stores caused the explosion.) By 11

---

April, President McKinley no longer believed a diplomatic resolution was possible, and he asked Congress for the power to employ armed forces in Cuba. On 19 April, Congress passed a joint resolution recognizing Cuba's independence and authorized the president to use force to expel Spanish troops from the island. Spain subsequently declared war on the United States on 24 April. The United States reciprocated the following day, claiming a state of war had existed since 21 April.

Although Cuba dominated Americans' attention, the war's first major actions occurred in the Philippines, another Spanish colony in the western Pacific. Ten days after *Maine* sank, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt directed Navy Commodore George Dewey, commanding the Asiatic Squadron, to attack Spanish naval forces in the colonial capital of Manila once war with Spain was declared. In a swift and daring move, Dewey slipped into Manila Bay on 1 May and annihilated a Spanish squadron there. On 3 May, Marines from the cruiser USS *Baltimore* (C 3), commanded by First Lieutenant Dion Williams, occupied the naval station at Cavite, in Manila Bay. The Marines were the first Americans to land and raise the American flag on Spanish-held territory. Other Marine ship detachments landed to assist with the surrender of Guam, a Spanish-held island in the Mariana Islands, on 20 June and continued guarding Cavite while awaiting Army reinforcements from San Francisco. On 14 August, Spanish forces holding Manila surrendered following token resistance against a Navy bombardment and a U.S. and Filipino assault.

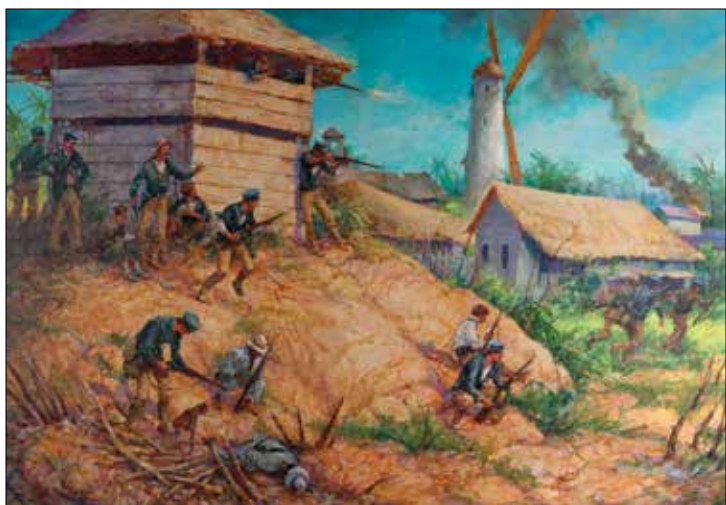
While Marines and sailors defeated Spanish forces in the Pacific, the Army mobilized to form an expeditionary force to land in Cuba and the Navy prepared to blockade the island. Sailors and Marines of Navy Rear Admiral William T. Sampson's North Atlantic Squadron severed transoceanic telegraph cables between Cuba and Spain to isolate Cuba and hinder the movement of

---

Spanish forces. In one such operation, a party of Marines and sailors set off in small boats on 11 May to cut cables offshore near Cienfuegos, a port on Cuba's southern coast. While locating and cutting the cables, the party came under Spanish fire from the shoreline. After more than two hours braving heavy fire and incurring eight casualties, including two killed, the party completed cutting cables and returned to the ships. Twelve Marines were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions.

In early June, Rear Admiral Sampson requested Marines seize Guantánamo Bay, located on Cuba's southern coast about 100 kilometers east of Santiago. Sampson already had trapped Spain's Caribbean squadron there, and he now hoped to seize the port to serve as a coaling and maintenance station for the blockade. Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long had anticipated this need and had ordered Commandant Heywood on 16 April to organize a Marine battalion for service in Cuba. The battalion was formed in the typical ad hoc manner of pulling available Marines from East Coast barracks. The Marines were commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Huntington. Within weeks, Marines were encamped at Key West, Florida, in readiness for an offensive operation. On 10 June, Lieutenant Colonel Huntington landed his battalion unopposed at Guantánamo Bay, becoming the first American troops to establish a beachhead on Cuban soil.

The first night passed uneventfully, but the enemy struck an outpost on the afternoon of 11 June, killing two Marines. After three days of intermittent fighting, Huntington decided to compel the enemy to withdraw by destroying their water supply, a well in the village of Cuzco about 10 kilometers to the southeast. On the morning of 14 June, about 50 Cubans and 2 companies of Marines, led by Captains George F. Elliott (later the 10th Commandant of the Marine Corps) and William F. Spicer Jr., started toward Cuzco. Captain Elliott, commanding the at-



In *Cuzco Wells, Guantanamo Bay*, by Col Charles H. Waterhouse, Marines of the First Marine Battalion assault and capture the blockhouse overlooking the Spanish base of Cuzco Well. Waterhouse depicts author Stephen Crane, who was with the Marines, sitting next to the blockhouse. Crane wrote an article, "Marines Signaling Under Fire at Guantanamo," which immortalized Sgt John H. Quick's signaling for naval gunfire support from USS *Dolphin*. For his actions, Quick was awarded the Medal of Honor.

*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

tacking force's main body, ordered Second Lieutenant Louis J. Magill and his men to bypass the objective and cut off any enemy retreat. As Magill led his men to the crest of a hill overlooking the well, the dispatch boat USS *Dolphin* (PG 24) opened fire from the bay with the Marines in the line of fire. In plain sight of the enemy, Sergeant John H. Quick stood up and waved an improvised flag to signal the ship to cease firing. Amid enemy fire and American shelling, Sergeant Quick calmly signaled until *Dolphin* lifted the barrage. During the confusion, the enemy retreated and abandoned their water supply point. Elliott's

---

forces destroyed the well and marched back to Guantánamo Bay that night. Quick emerged unscathed and was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions.

After the Marines secured Guantánamo Bay, the Army's V Corps, commanded by Major General William R. Shafter, landed unopposed at Daiquirí, more than 20 kilometers east of Santiago, on 22 June. Casualties mounted due to combat and disease brought on by the harsh climate and poor sanitation. While Sampson and Shafter met at Daiquirí on 3 July to coordinate plans for Santiago's capture, the Spanish squadron attempted to escape. U.S. ships gave chase and engaged the fleeing enemy. The Spanish squadron was already in a poor state of readiness, and the blockade did not help matters. By early afternoon, the U.S. Navy sank all enemy ships. During the battle, Marines serving with the squadron helped sailors shovel coal to maintain speed and manned the ships' secondary batteries. Despite the naval triumph, Shafter opted to besiege Santiago, as both he and Sampson remained wary of directly assaulting the city. The blockade, the destruction of the Spanish naval squadron, and the American and Cuban encirclement of Santiago led the Spanish to surrender the city on 17 July. Although Havana remained under Spanish control, the surrender of Santiago effectively ended major combat operations in Cuba.

In the meantime, the United States pursued the capture of Puerto Rico, another Spanish-held Caribbean island east of the Dominican Republic. On 25 July, an Army brigade under the command of Major General Nelson Appleton Miles landed near Ponce, a port on the island's south coast. On the night of 26 July and into the morning hours of 27 July, the Marine detachment from auxiliary cruiser USS *Dixie* (1898), commanded by First Lieutenant Henry C. Haines, landed at Ponce and received the town's surrender. Once Spanish troops vacated the city, the Marines set up a guard around the port, allowing Miles's reinforce-

---

ments to land. Several weeks later, a Marine detachment from the cruiser USS *Cincinnati* (C 7), commanded by future Commandant of the Marine Corps First Lieutenant John A. Lejeune, landed on Cape San Juan. A group of Puerto Ricans friendly to the United States had taken refuge in a lighthouse after Spanish forces attacked them. When Lejeune's men arrived, the Marines evacuated the civilians to Ponce.

On 12 August, the United States and Spain agreed to the peace protocol, formally ending hostilities while a treaty was negotiated. As most U.S. forces withdrew from Cuba and Puerto Rico, Huntington's battalion returned to the United States to great fanfare, marching in multiple parades. The United States and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris on 10 December 1898. Spain agreed to guarantee the independence of Cuba and cede Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States. It also agreed to sell the Philippines to the Americans for \$20 million.

The Spanish-American War was a defining experience for the Marine Corps. The United States' accumulation of overseas territory (including the 1898 annexation of the Hawaiian Islands) justified the enlargement of the naval establishment, including the Marine Corps. The Service's swift deployment of an expeditionary force and successful capture of Guantánamo validated reformers who professionalized and modernized the Service. The product of those reforms was a performance in the Spanish-American War that did not escape the notice of the nation. While there might have been confusion among the public before about the function of the Corps, the bravery and discipline of Marines during the war created a new image, one built on bravery, discipline, and a reputation of being the first to fight.

---

## CHAPTER 4

# Marine Expeditions in Support of American Foreign Policy, 1899–1920

Throughout the 1800s, the United States had expanded its borders across the North American continent. On the eve of a new century, the nation pushed its influence beyond its shores to secure access to global markets and resources. In the Caribbean, the United States annexed Puerto Rico and made Cuba a protectorate, part of a broad effort to establish American hegemony in the region. In the Central Pacific, Hawaii and Guam became territories. The annexation of the Philippines gave the United States a presence in the Western Pacific, from which it could influence events in Asia. These acquisitions initiated a transformative period for U.S. naval forces, which now had the mission of protecting a vast maritime sphere of influence.

Marines were immediately involved in securing American interests. In fall 1898, antforeign sentiment reached new heights in China. Marines of the Asiatic Fleet aboard the cruisers USS *Baltimore* (C 3), USS *Boston* (1884), and USS *Raleigh* (C 8) landed at Taku Bar in November and established consulate guards in the trading city of Tientsin and the imperial capital of

---

Peking (present-day Beijing). In February 1899, Marines landed in Nicaragua and again in Samoa in March. Both landings were made to protect American lives and property from hostile factions. In June 1899, Marines under the command of Major Allen C. Kelton sailed for Guam on USS *Yosemite* (1892) by way of the Suez Canal, Singapore, and Manila, and arrived on 7 August. Marines had previously taken the island, and Kelton's battalion was ordered to build and garrison a naval station there. After arriving and establishing friendly relations with the local population, Marines constructed fortifications and improved living conditions.

By early 1899, an insurgency among Filipinos eager for independence threatened U.S. control of the Philippines. On 9 March, Admiral George Dewey cabled a request for Marines to support the naval base at Cavite, Manila Bay. Marine leaders sent the 1st Battalion, consisting of 16 officers and 260 enlisted men and under the command of Colonel Percival C. Pope. The battalion sailed from San Francisco and arrived at Cavite on 23 May. Additional Marines were requested in July, leading to the formation of the 2d Battalion under the command of now-Major George Elliott with the arrival of 15 officers and 350 men in late September. Enough Marines followed during the coming months to form a regiment in December to fight the *insurrectos*, the name of Filipinos who had begun resisting U.S. rule of the Philippines. Reinforcements continued to arrive elsewhere in the Philippines into 1900. Before the year ended, the 1st Marine Brigade had formed, consisting of four Marine battalions organized into two regiments and two artillery companies.

With this increase in strength, Marines were distributed to several areas of the Philippine Islands. The Navy assumed control of the area around the Cavite Peninsula and Subic Bay before passing much of the responsibility for governing these areas to the Marines, who placed detachments in several of the towns



---

within Cavite Province and at the military prison at Olongapo. Throughout 1900, most Marines guarded naval installations and administered the military government in several districts.

In fall 1901, the Army faced intense resistance from *insurrectos* on the island of Samar, leading to one company almost being wiped out. Marines under the command of Major Littleton W. T. Waller left Cavite aboard the cruiser USS *New York* (ACR 2) and landed at Basey, Samar, on 24 October to assist the Army in pacifying the insurrection. During November, the Marines and soldiers conducted a vigorous campaign and restored peace to the island. During the short but bloody fighting in Samar, two Marine officers, Captains David D. Porter and Hiram I. Bearss, were awarded the Medal of Honor for gallant action on the field of battle.

With peace restored on Samar, Army Brigadier General Jacob M. Smith ordered Major Waller to organize a party and reconnoiter a telegraph route from Lanang to Basey on the west coast of the island, a distance of more than 50 kilometers across uninhabited jungle. Brigadier General Smith's intent was to link the coasts of the island and isolate the rebels. Disaster beset the ill-fated march almost immediately after setting out on 28 December. Boats foundered in treacherous rivers, provisions were lost, and bearers mutinied. Several Marines died of fever and exhaustion, and one man went insane. When the ordeal ended in mid-January 1902, 10 Marines had lost their lives and others were in a poor state of health. On 2 March, a detachment of soldiers relieved Waller's battalion, and the Marines withdrew from Samar to return to Cavite. It later became customary to toast any of the surviving officers of the Samar battalion in the messes of the brigade with the tribute: "Stand, gentlemen, he served on Samar."

After the march across Samar, small detachments continued to serve throughout the archipelago, but the bulk of the Marine

---

brigade shifted to Olongapo in 1903. The Marine Corps maintained the brigade as a ready expeditionary force for the naval commander or to support the Army. By 1906, Marine strength had been considerably reduced in the Philippines, and all but a few of the Marines were located at Cavite and Olongapo. The brigade was gradually reduced during the following years until 1914, when operations in the Caribbean led the Corps to dissolve the brigade and shift its duties to Marine Barracks Olongapo.

### *U.S. Marines in China*

Now with a presence in Asia, the United States pursued formal trade with China. Beginning in September 1899, Secretary of State John M. Hay had attempted to guarantee equal access to Chinese markets while preserving China's sovereignty. This Open Door Policy, as it was known, occurred at a time when foreign powers enjoyed concessions and spheres of influence inside China. In reaction, a nationalist, anti-imperialist group called the Boxers sparked an uprising that quickly grew into a mass movement. Supported by the Chinese government, the Boxers operated alongside Chinese troops and sought to expel foreigners. On 28 May 1900, they attacked and destroyed several railroad stations and shops near Peking. As anti-Western sentiment escalated, the International Legation in Peking (the area of the city where foreign diplomatic compounds were located, a.k.a. the Legation Quarter) requested military assistance. On 29 May, the United States sent a detachment of Marines and sailors from cruiser USS *Newark* (C 1) and battleship USS *Oregon* (BB 3) to Tientsin. In short order, British, Austrian, German, French, Italian, Japanese, and Russian forces also arrived.

On 31 May, a Marine force led by Captains John T. Myers and Newt H. Hall joined an international expedition traveling about 100 kilometers by train from Tientsin to Peking. After



A line of Marines stand at the ready in Peking, China, during the Boxer Rebellion. Throughout the conflict, Marines defended the International Legation compound in Peking and were part of the relief expedition that marched to Peking from Tientsin.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

their arrival, representatives of the Peking legation met the Marines while thousands of Chinese civilians silently observed the Marines march into the city. On 5 June, the Boxers cut off rail transportation between Tientsin and Peking. Five days later, a multinational relief force commanded by British Vice Admiral Sir Edward Seymour left Tientsin to break through to Peking. The Seymour Expedition encountered stiff resistance, became surrounded, and suffered more than 20 percent casualties. Unable to advance to Peking, the 2,000 troops (including 112 U.S. Marines and sailors) unsuccessfully attempted to return to Tientsin. The Westerners became trapped in two places and isolated from their port base of Tientsin for the better part of a month.

---

By the end of June, additional forces arrived in Tientsin to relieve the Seymour Expedition. Among them was a detachment of 8 officers and 130 Marines from the Philippines led by Major Waller. For two days, the Marines and a column of British and Russian troops attempted to fight their way to Seymour's force. By 26 June, the combined force rescued the expedition and returned to Tientsin. Within five days, Major Waller's Marines had marched more than 150 kilometers with little rest and one meal per day. Despite continued resistance, Western forces defeated the Boxer force in Tientsin by mid-July.

Meanwhile, on 20 June in Peking, Chinese rioters had killed a German diplomat, signaling the beginning of an all-out siege on the Legation Quarter. The next day, the Chinese government declared war on foreign powers. During the siege, Marines manned sections of the legation's walls in 48-hour shifts. The Chinese built barricades toward the walls and kept the defenders under continuous artillery and rifle fire while the Marines improved their positions, sometimes under fire. On the night of 15 July, Private Daniel J. Daly singlehandedly defended his position against Chinese attacks, a feat for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

By early August, 18,600 reinforcements arrived at Tientsin, including U.S. Army soldiers and more Marines from the Philippines, and began fighting their way to Peking. They reached the city's outskirts on 13 August and began their assault. By late afternoon, they had relieved the legation, ending the siege. The next day, allied forces attacked the imperial city (a walled section of Peking associated with Chinese imperial rulers and usually off-limits to foreigners), driving out the remaining Boxers taking refuge there. The Marines remained in Peking until 28 September, after which they departed for the Philippines. The U.S. Army established a legation guard in Peking, much to the displeasure of Commandant Charles Heywood, who had argued

---

that guarding the Legation Quarter should have remained a Marine Corps responsibility.

### *Operations in Latin America*

After 1900, Marines' involvement in the Caribbean and Latin America grew as the United States adopted an increasingly assertive foreign policy. President Theodore Roosevelt and his successors strengthened the Monroe Doctrine and proclaimed the right to intervene in Latin American nations' affairs to advance U.S. economic interests and to prevent other world powers from expanding their influence in the Western Hemisphere. The United States not only sought to protect its sphere of influence, but it also wanted unfettered access to its overseas holdings in the Pacific Ocean. Of particular interest was Panama's railway crossing—and later canal—which made the isthmus strategically vital to the United States' ability to project power into the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

For this reason, Marines landed in Panama in each of the first three years of the twentieth century amid heightened tensions between the isthmus' rebels and the Colombian government, which governed Panama. Forces derived from ships' detachments or the East Coast barracks landed in 1901 and again in 1902 to keep open the ports and railway. After Colombia failed to ratify a treaty granting U.S. rights to construct a canal across Panama, President Roosevelt ordered Navy ships and Marines off Panama to prepare to land in the event of a rebellion. Once the Panamanian revolt occurred in November 1903, the United States almost immediately recognized Panama's secession from Colombia. That same month, Panama granted the United States sovereign right to a canal zone 16 kilometers wide and the right to maintain order. In December, a Marine battalion under Major John A. Lejeune landed to deter Colombia or any other nation from interfering. Shortly thereafter, three additional battalions

---

arrived. The Marines' presence forced the remaining Colombian troops to leave, effectively guaranteeing Panama's independence. While the expeditionary force withdrew, the U.S. government permanently assigned Marines to the canal zone.

While Marines were busy in Panama, others conducted landings throughout Latin America during periods of instability to safeguard American interests. In 1903, Marines landed in Honduras during a contested presidential election. They arrived in the Dominican Republic in 1903 and again in 1904 to protect American interests amid political instability and threats to restrict foreign access to Dominican ports.

In 1905, the incumbent Cuban president, Tomás Estrada Palma, claimed victory in a rigged presidential election. Opponents prepared an open revolt against Estrada Palma's government and threatened violence against foreign property unless a free election was held. Scattered instances of violence broke out across Cuba, leading President Roosevelt to conclude that Estrada Palma's government was incapable of protecting American interests. Roosevelt authorized an armed occupation of Cuba as permitted by the 1901 Platt Amendment, a rider to the Army Appropriations Act of 1901 that had defined Cuban-American relations after the Spanish-American War.

By the end of September 1906, five Marine battalions totaling nearly 100 officers and 2,800 enlisted landed in Cuba as the 1st Provisional Brigade under the command of now-Colonel Littleton Waller. Marines guarded key government sites, infrastructure, and helped Cuban authorities disarm rebel forces. Shortly afterward, Estrada Palma resigned, and the United States established an interim government. In November, some Marines returned to their ships. The brigade was redesignated as the 1st Provisional Regiment and attached to the Army of Cuban Pacification after the U.S. Army assumed responsibility for the occupation.



A skirmish line of Marines from the 8th Company near Santiago, Dominican Republic, in June 1916. Marine companies were designated by number prior to 1918.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Marines remained in Cuba until the restoration of the Cuban government in 1909. In May and June 1912, the United States sent two Marine regiments to protect American sugar plantations threatened by a racially motivated Cuban rebellion. Marines secured trains and 26 towns near Santiago and Guantánamo Bay until the situation stabilized in July. Once Cuban authorities relieved them, both Marine regiments withdrew to Guantánamo Bay and then returned to the United States.

As with Cuba, Nicaragua had long been strategically vital to American national interests. American companies were heavily invested in the country's fruit, lumber, and mining industries. Beginning in 1909, an internal revolt against Nicaragua's government led to a series of Marine interventions throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Initially, the United States sent

---

several Navy ships with a battalion's worth of Marines as a show of force off Nicaragua's coast. In May 1910, two companies of Marines led by Major Smedley D. Butler occupied Bluefields, a town on Nicaragua's east coast with a high concentration of American and other foreign citizens. The United States tacitly supported the rebellion as a chance to replace the Nicaraguan government with one more amenable to U.S. foreign policy and economic aims. The rebels used Bluefields as a refuge from government forces while the occupation emboldened rebels elsewhere in Nicaragua. The Marines remained until September 1910, when the rebels took control of the Nicaraguan government.

In 1912, Adolfo Díaz, the American-backed president of Nicaragua, faced a new rebellion led by Luis Mena, the commanding general of the Nicaraguan Army. These rebels occupied several key cities and threatened to capture the capital of Managua. After rebels attacked the American Legation at Managua and endangered American lives and property, the United States sent a naval force to Nicaragua. In August, a battalion under Major Butler joined a detachment of sailors and Marines already landed from gunboat USS *Annapolis* (PG 10) to secure the legation. The next month, Colonel Joseph H. Pendleton arrived with more Marines and formed a provisional regiment consisting of the three Marine battalions. After Pendleton secured Managua and key transportation and communication sites, he and Butler pursued the remaining rebel forces. By late September, the last threat to Managua was a stronghold at Coyotepe Hill, just outside the town of Masaya, about 30 kilometers southeast of the capital. Although Nicaraguan government forces had surrounded Coyotepe Hill, they were unable to launch a frontal assault.

On 4 October, Butler's forces assaulted the position. After about 40 minutes, the enemy force withdrew. After conclusion



---

### ***Major General Smedley D. Butler***

Smedley Darlington 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, 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 Rivi re 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.

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.

---

of the battle, nearly 30 rebels were dead. The Marines and sailors lost seven men in the fight. The rebellion was largely extinguished after the American victory at Coyotepe Hill. The Marine regiment left Nicaragua shortly thereafter, leaving a legation guard of about 100 Marines. The Nicaraguan intervention signaled American willingness to commit forces to combat not just to protect property and interests but to ensure independent nations behaved according to U.S. foreign policy aims.

### *Creation of the Advanced Base Force*

The debate about the Corps' future continued at home while Marines remained busy in the Far East and Latin America. On 3 October 1903, Brigadier General George F. Elliott became Commandant of the Marine Corps. During Elliott's tour, which lasted until 30 November 1910, he prioritized improving the Service's combat capability and efficiency. He pursued the former objective by increasing the manpower level of the Corps and emphasizing rifle shooting by developing competitive marksmanship for national competition. To increase the Corps' efficiency, Elliott used tact and diplomacy to forge close relationships with Congress members and other government officials. His efforts led to successfully arguing that the Commandant should have the permanent rank of major general after the billet had been raised to brigadier general only a few years earlier, in 1899.

Commandant Elliott nonetheless struggled to meet the demand for numerous expeditionary forces in places such as Cuba, Panama, and Nicaragua while sparring with political antagonists and Navy officers who argued that developments in naval warfare had rendered Marines' traditional shipboard duties obsolete. These discussions about the Marine Corps' continued relevance occurred at a moment when Navy and national leaders contemplated strategies to defend the country's new overseas possessions and interests. Much of this discussion occurred within the Gen-

---

### ***Sergeant Major Dan J. Daly***

Sergeant Major Dan Joseph Daly, who Major General John A. Lejeune once proclaimed “the outstanding Marine of all time,” is one of only two Marines to have received the Medal of Honor twice for separate acts of heroism. Little is known about his early life other than being born in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York, on 11 November 1873. Daly enlisted in the Marine Corps on 10 January 1899 in the hopes of serving in the Spanish-American War. The war ended before he finished recruit training, and he was sent instead to China during the Boxer Rebellion. While there, he single-handedly defended a position against Chinese assaults, earning him his first Medal of Honor. Fifteen years later, he earned a second Medal of Honor while in Haiti, saving his company during an enemy action that lasted an entire night.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Daly deployed to France during World War I and participated in the major Marine offensives. His exploits during the war included extinguishing a fire in an ammunition dump, going from position to position to encourage his Marines while they endured a heavy artillery barrage, single-handedly attacking and seizing an enemy machine gun emplacement, and evacuating wounded while under fire.

Despite his slight build (5 feet, 6 inches tall and 132 pounds), Daly garnered a reputation as strong-willed and scrappy, leading Major General Smedley D. Butler to call him the “fightinest Marine I ever knew.” He was a strict disciplinarian, yet fair-minded and popular among officers and enlisted alike. Offered a commission on several occasions, he is said to have declined on the grounds that he would rather be “an outstanding sergeant than just another officer.”

Daly retired on 6 February 1929 and died at Glendale, Long Island, New York, on 28 April 1937. His remains were buried at Cypress Hills National Cemetery. His record as a fighting man remains unequalled in the annals of Marine Corps history.

---

eral Board of the Navy, a body that Secretary of the Navy John D. Long established in 1900 to make recommendations on naval policy. Admiral George Dewey was appointed as president of the board, a position he held until his death in 1917. Membership was made up of high-ranking Navy officers except for Colonel George C. Reid, who at the time was adjutant and inspector of the Marine Corps. The board generally held views that mirrored those of Alfred Thayer Mahan, a naval strategist who argued that successful great powers throughout history had maintained control of the seas for access to markets. To guarantee that access, Mahan asserted, a nation required a merchant fleet, a navy, and a network of naval bases.

In the subsequent discussions of new Navy strategic plans, the board considered a revised role for Marines. The vast distances between American overseas holdings necessitated advanced naval bases where ships could refuel and maintain communication when defending against potential threats. This, however, required a force to seize and hold such bases, as Marines demonstrated in their capture of Guantánamo Bay during the Spanish-American War. At its first meeting, the board recommended that the Marine Corps assume the mission of seizing and protecting advanced naval bases and the systematic development of advanced base personnel and equipment. Marines, the board believed, were “best adapted and most available for immediate and sudden call” for use in defending any advanced base. The board requested the secretary of the Navy to direct the Commandant to organize immediately a force to be used for such employment. The board’s request that the Marine Corps be organized and prepared to accomplish a specific task was the first of its kind. Shortly thereafter, a Marine battalion was organized for the advanced base mission, and special training in the capture and defense of advanced bases began in 1902.

Despite the Navy and Marine Corps’ cooperation regarding

---

advanced base operations, some factions in the Navy renewed their efforts to remove Marines from ships and remake the Corps into an overseas garrison and police force. Attempts at the end of the nineteenth century had been rejected, but the issue was revived in October 1908, when the Navy's chief of the Bureau of Navigation suggested to Secretary of the Navy Truman H. Newberry that "the time has arrived when all Marine detachments should be removed from United States naval vessels." Secretary Newberry agreed and issued the order with the support of President Theodore Roosevelt, who had been involved in the earlier efforts as assistant secretary of the Navy. On 12 November 1908, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 969, which defined the Marine Corps' responsibilities and specifically omitted service at sea. In late 1908, Marine detachments were removed from 13 warships by order of Secretary Newberry. The moves sparked questions about whether the Corps would remain a naval Service, and rumors abounded that Roosevelt supported folding the Marine Corps into the U.S. Army.

Congress came to the aid of the Marine Corps once again, however. In January 1909, the House Naval Affairs Committee held hearings on the issue, and members pushed back on the executive branch's efforts to redefine the role of Marines. On 3 March 1909, the U.S. Senate pressured Roosevelt to reverse course when it approved a potential amendment to a naval appropriations bill that required at least 8 percent of the enlisted men aboard battleships to be Marines. The same day, Roosevelt promulgated a new policy placing Marines on Navy vessels, but the ship's captain retained complete authority over them. The General Board of the Navy recognized problems with this command relationship and recommended returning to the pre-1908 status quo. On 26 March 1909, the new president, William Howard Taft, directed that "the amendments to the regulations adopted on March 3 in regard to the Marines should be revoked

---

and the old regulations should be restored.” The ships’ detachment’s issue therefore came to a close. The Marine Corps had survived a robust attempt to eliminate the Corps and radically change its traditional mandate.

By the early 1910s, the Marine Corps was secure enough in its mission and roles that Major General Commandants William P. Biddle and George Barnett took firmer steps toward fulfilling the advanced base force mission. The Marine Corps participated in extensive advanced base exercises, and the General Board of the Navy considered potential advanced bases in its war plans. These considerations were in addition to the permanent base at Guantánamo and the advanced base of Grande Island in the Philippines. The subject of advanced bases rapidly became popular, and officers across the Services wrote papers concerning how to secure and hold such positions.

In July 1910, the Marine Corps established an advanced base school in New London, Connecticut. The school moved to Philadelphia the following year. Although primarily an officers’ school, the first class included 40 enlisted Marines. Other Marine officers were assigned to Army specialist schools to learn skills applicable to advanced base operations. Additionally, Congress increased Marine Corps strength by more than 16 percent, and both the Marine Corps and Navy began a concerted effort to study the “advance base problem.”

By 1913, the Marine Corps had acted on the General Board’s recommendation to the secretary of the Navy to maintain advanced base forces permanently. That year, the Marine Corps activated the 1st and 2d Advance Base Regiments—a fixed defense regiment and a mobile defense regiment, respectively—which together later formed the 1st Advance Base Brigade. Simultaneously, Marine Corps training and education continued to evolve with changing technological advancements. Gasoline-powered

---

trucks facilitated faster transportation and supply, and telecommunications enhanced command and control. Improved artillery, more reliable machine guns, and automatic rifles gave Marine units greatly increased firepower, and the development of the airplane offered promise of unlimited possibilities.

### *Landings at Vera Cruz and the Beginnings of the Occupation of Hispaniola*

While the Marine Corps contemplated its contribution to naval strategy, operations in Latin America continued. In 1914, Marines returned to Mexico. A civil war had raged there since 1910, and U.S. officials were wary of instability along the border. President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize the Mexican government of President Victoriano Huerta, who had recently come to power after the assassination of the previous president. In April 1914, following a temporary wrongful detention of U.S. sailors at Tampico, Wilson demanded Mexican forces there render a salute to the American flag flying on Navy ships. President Huerta refused the demand. After the affront and the discovery that German vessels were carrying arms to Huerta, Wilson ordered the seizure of Vera Cruz, Mexico's most important port city on its eastern coast.

In response, the Marine Corps diverted the 1st Advance Base Brigade from Puerto Rico to Vera Cruz. On 21 April, Marines and sailors landed at Vera Cruz, seized the customs house, and intercepted a German arms shipment. Colonel Wendell C. Neville, who was later the 14th Commandant of the Marine Corps, led the initial expedition. Command transferred to Colonel John A. Lejeune after his regiment landed. On 22 April, Marines met resistance inside of the city. During house-to-house fighting to root out snipers, Major Smedley D. Butler distinguished himself while leading his battalion, earning him his first Medal of Honor. By 24 April, the Marines had pacified Vera

---

Cruz. Most of the sailors and many Marines departed, but the brigade remained. Composed of more than 3,000 officers and enlisted and under Lejeune's command until Colonel Littleton Waller arrived, the brigade secured the outskirts while the Army occupied the city. Huerta resigned that summer and, despite the new Mexican government refusing to hold elections, Wilson withdrew U.S. forces in November 1914. Although capturing Vera Cruz was not the advanced base seizure contemplated as part of a naval campaign, the quick deployment of the regiments demonstrated the value of ready force of Marines.

Within months, Marines were once again called to respond to instability in the Caribbean, this time in Haiti. The Wilson administration feared that European powers, especially France and Germany, could threaten American strategic interests by leveraging Haiti's immense foreign debt to build a presence on Hispaniola, the island Haiti and the Dominican Republic shared. Internally, government instability had generated chaos in Haiti. Political opponents often hired armed outlaw groups called *cacos* from the mountainous interior to fight the Haitian government. A series of violent overthrows of successive Haitian governments had stymied American and Haitian negotiations to resolve the debt issue.

In July 1915, in the face of another *cacos* revolt, Haitian president Vilbrun Guillaume Sam sought refuge in the French legation in Port-au-Prince, the capital. A mob stormed the legation and promptly dismembered Sam in the streets after capturing him. The U.S. State Department requested that the Navy and Marine Corps secure Port-au-Prince, restore order, and protect all foreign persons. On 28 July, the armored cruiser USS *Washington* (ACR 11) sailed to Port-au-Prince from Cap-Haïtien, a port on Haiti's northern coast with a significant foreign population. A Marine company from *Washington* landed the same day. By 15 August, Colonel Waller secured Port-au-Prince with





A color party of sailors and Marines raise the flag over Vera Cruz in 1914.  
*Courtesy of the Library of Congress (LCCN 2014695811)*

a provisional brigade composed of one company from Cuba and the 1st and 2d Regiments.

With Port-au-Prince secured, the Haitian Congress selected Philippe Sudré Dartiguenave as president. Dartiguenave negoti-

---

ated Haiti's debt with the United States. The eventual agreement called for U.S. control of Haiti's finances, restricted Haiti from selling land to any foreign government aside from the United States, and compelled the Haitian government to adhere to American public works and civil government reform for 10–20 years. Navy and Marine officers trained Haitian officials in many of these government functions. Marine officers directed vital services such as road building, communications, education, and other public activities. The *cacos* nonetheless remained the major impediment to Haitian stability. In 1915 and 1916, Marines worked to disarm the population, garrisoned towns and cities, and patrolled roadways. Marines also conducted combat operations against *cacos* strongholds and camps.

On the night of 24–25 October 1915, a force of 400 *cacos* ambushed a Marine patrol of about 3 officers and 35 enlisted at a river crossing. After defending their position all night, the Marines split into three groups, led by Captain William P. Upshur, First Lieutenant Edward A. Osterman, and now-Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Daly. The groups attacked in differing directions and dispersed the *cacos*. All three Marines were awarded a Medal of Honor, with Daly receiving his second. The next month, Major Smedley Butler and 700 Marines and sailors returned to clear the area. Within days, the Americans had pushed back the *cacos* to Fort Rivière, an old French stronghold. On 17 November, Butler led the assault on the fort. Butler and two enlisted Marines passed through a small hole in the wall while under enemy fire, leading to a short but intense hand-to-hand fight that destroyed the *cacos* force from the inside. All three Marines were awarded Medals of Honor. Daly and Butler remain the only Marines to have received the Medal of Honor twice.

By 1917, the Marines had reduced the *cacos* threat. The treaty with Haiti also established a constabulary force, the *Gendarmerie d'Haiti* (later named the *Garde d'Haiti*), to maintain

---

security throughout the country. The *gendarmérie* was a Haitian force designed to secure the country from *cacos* and other internal threats. Butler was named the first *gendarmérie* commander and quickly formed a force of several thousand Haitian enlisted led by more than 100 Marine officers and noncommissioned officers. While assigned to the *gendarmérie*, Marines were commissioned as officers while retaining their Marine Corps ranks. Butler was a major general, and his Marine sergeants were lieutenants and entitled to both Marine and *gendarmérie* pay.

In 1918, resentment toward the Haitian government and the American occupation led to a new *cacos* rebellion under the leadership of Charlemagne Masséna Péralte. The Marines launched an aggressive campaign to quash the rebellion. Relying on patrols to bait the *cacos* to fight, the Marines inflicted heavy casualties, but enemy activity remained strong. The Marines then switched to targeting rebellion leaders, Péralte especially. In fall 1919, Marine Sergeant Herman H. Hanneken, a *gendarmérie* lieutenant, and Corporal William Button snuck into Péralte's camp in disguise with the help of a Haitian cooperating with the Marines. The group shot and killed Péralte, escaping with the body to publicly display it and distribute photographs to demoralize the *cacos*. Péralte's death was a blow to the rebellion, particularly in Haiti's north. Despite Péralte's death, the Marines continued to face substantial *cacos* resistance in the south throughout the remainder of 1919.

As Marines worked to pacify Haiti, political instability in the neighboring Dominican Republic led to civil war in May 1916 and Marine Corps occupation. The United States feared that foreign powers such as Germany and France would leverage the Dominican Republic's enormous foreign debt to establish a military presence in the Caribbean. Given this threat, the nation sent Marines to occupy the island. As with Haiti, the United States obtained near total control over the Domini-

---

can Republic's public finances per a treaty. From 1907 through 1916, the Navy and Marines were sent to the country in shows of force amid periodic revolts. In May 1916, the U.S. minister to the Dominican Republic requested military assistance when a rebellion forced the Dominican president to flee the capital of Santo Domingo. Initially, several Marine companies landed to secure the American legation until the 4th Regiment under Colonel Joseph Pendleton arrived in June. As the Marines occupied Santo Domingo, the Dominican president resigned, leading to a collapse of the civil government. Colonel Pendleton advanced toward Santiago, a city about 120 kilometers northeast of Santo Domingo, where the rebels had garrisoned. Pendleton's Marines ran into enemy resistance but ultimately forced the rebels to surrender on 5 July as the column neared the city. The Marines occupied Santiago without incident the next day.

Dissatisfied with the interim government's reluctance to submit to further American oversight, the United States declared the Dominican Republic under U.S. military jurisdiction, with a Navy officer serving as military governor. The 3d and 4th Regiments formed the 2d Provisional Brigade, which functioned as an occupation force. Marines served in civil and military positions, often responsible for carrying out civil reforms and pacifying the country. The brigade faced persistent resistance, especially in the country's rugged and remote east. From 1917 through 1919, Marines mainly fought to varying degrees of success against groups akin to the *cacos* in Haiti. The Marines also established the *Guardia Nacional Dominicana*, a constabulary force that assumed increasing responsibility for securing the country. Pacification proved as difficult as the occupation, and the Marines' often heavy-handed tactics, which included accusations of atrocities, strained relations with Dominicans. Competition for resources and personnel hampered the 2d Provisional

---

Brigade's effectiveness, and resistance remained formidable into the 1920s.

The Marine Corps' experience in Latin America during this period was transformational. During a two-decade span, Marines transitioned from largely short-term landings to conducting major operations in places such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Vera Cruz while also conducting long-term security and occupation roles in Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. Marines' role assisting the Navy in foreign interventions changed as a result, and the Service became the United States' primary ground force for maintaining American power in the Western Hemisphere.

### *The Marine Corps in World War I*

While Marines became increasingly involved in Latin America, war in Europe raged. Starting as a regional conflict in July 1914, it expanded into a continental conflagration by the fall, split between the Triple Entente powers of the United Kingdom, France, and Russia against the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. Although officially proclaiming neutrality, the Wilson administration sympathized with the Triple Entente. U.S. relations with the Central Powers were increasingly strained but broke in 1917 after Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare led to the sinking of American ships and it was revealed that Germany had encouraged Mexico to go to war with the United States.

Prior to formally entering the war, the United States prepared to mobilize, which significantly expanded the Marine Corps. The Naval Appropriations Act of August 1916 raised the Service's authorized strength from around 10,000 officers and enlisted to more than 15,000. The act also allowed the Marine Corps to promote Colonels Littleton W. T. Waller, Joseph H. Pendleton, Eli K. Cole, and John A. Lejeune to brigadier gen-

---

erals. To facilitate the training of Marines and units, the Service established Marine Barracks Quantico in Virginia, renamed Marine Barracks Port Royal in South Carolina as Marine Barracks Parris Island, and worked to make Marine Barracks San Diego a permanent base in California.

By the time the United States declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917, the Corps' actual strength was less than 14,000 active-duty Marines. Roughly one-half were serving at 25 posts and stations in the United States. Additionally, there were nearly 5,000 Marines on duty beyond the continental United States, while about 2,200 were serving aboard Navy vessels. In addition, wartime increases brought the Marine Corps to its peak strength of about 75,000 officers and enlisted by December 1918. This figure included those who were members of the newly formed Marine Corps Reserve. To recruit volunteers, the Marine Corps stressed patriotism in its recruitment posters before launching a campaign that employed a line from the "Marines' Hymn," "first to fight." The slogan proved popular, as it appealed to those who wanted to be in the vanguard of Americans deploying to France. Despite the pressure to recruit many more Marines in the rapid buildup, the Corps prided itself on maintaining its high standards as an elite institution.

As thousands of young men rushed to volunteer and the draft gathered more steam, the labor potential of women became important. When wartime demands necessitated more Marines for deployment to France, Major General Commandant George Barnett requested authority on 2 August 1918 to enroll women in the Marine Corps Reserve for clerical duty to replace men who were qualified for service overseas. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels approved the request. Within days, Opha May Johnson enlisted and became the first woman Marine on 13 August. By the end of the war, 305 women Marines had answered



Women Marines first joined the Corps as reservists during World War I.  
*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

the call to “free a man to fight” and performed services that supported the war effort.

While the Marine Corps engineered its largest mobilization to date, the Service sought opportunities for Marines to make an impact. In June 1917, while still determining the precise role U.S. forces would play in the war, President Wilson sent the 1st Expeditionary Division (later redesignated the 1st Division) to France to boost Allied morale and show the American flag. Sensing the need to justify recent increases to the Marine Corps, Commandant Barnett convinced the War Department to accept the 5th Regiment for service with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). Additionally, Barnett reached an agreement with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker to provide an additional reg-

---

iment that would combine with the 5th Regiment to form a brigade within the U.S. Army's 2d Division. On 14 June 1917, the 5th Regiment, composed of about 70 officers and nearly 2,700 enlisted, left Philadelphia for France on USS *Henderson* (AP 1), *De Kalb* (ID 3010), and *Hancock* (AP 3). The regiment comprised one-fifth of the first American troops dispatched to France for service in the AEF.

The 6th Regiment and the 6th Machine Gun Battalion organized at Quantico in August and sailed for France in late September. The 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) formed from elements of the 5th and 6th Regiments on 23 October and was placed under the command of Brigadier General Charles A. Doyen as part of the Army's 2d Division. Notably, Doyen became the first Marine to command a Regular Army division, serving as the initial commander until the arrival of Army Major General Omar Bundy on 8 November. While some of the brigade's units began training for combat, various elements were detached for service in the AEF lines of communication. The full brigade did not begin training together until February 1918.

In March 1918, the Germans launched the first of a series of offensives along the Western Front. The 2d Division, including the 4th Brigade, which had been conducting training in the Lorraine region of France, moved into quiet sectors of the line to allow veteran French units to move to block the German attacks. The time for the Marines to get into the fight would come soon enough. Brigadier General Doyen was forced to relinquish command of the brigade in early May due to poor health. His replacement, Army Brigadier General James G. Harbord, would lead the Marines into their historic first engagement of the war in a small patch of woods just west of the French town of Château-Thierry.



---

### *Belleau Wood and Soissons*

The 2d Division was en route to the front by the end of May 1918 to help block the latest German offensive. As they approached the lines, they encountered French civilians and soldiers moving to the rear. In response to a French officer's advice to withdraw as well, Captain Lloyd Williams reportedly replied, "Retreat, hell! We just got here." This famous phrase captures the spirit of the Marines who would finally get a chance to test their mettle in battle. The Marines went into the line and blocked the last German attacks. The men of the 4th Brigade then prepared to make their own assault. Facing them was a small wood known as the *Bois de Belleau* or Belleau Wood, in which the Germans had established a strong defensive position. On 6 June, the Marines attacked. Legend has it that Gunnery Sergeant Daly—the two-time Medal of Honor recipient—shouted to his men as they stepped off, "Come on, you sons-of-bitches! Do you want to live forever?" Whether Daly uttered those words is uncertain, but the attack across the open wheat field that was swept with enemy machine gun and artillery fire would be remembered as the costliest in the history of the Marine Corps to that date, with 1,087 Marines killed, wounded, or missing by day's end. When the Americans reached the woods, they became engaged in savage close combat and had to use their bayonets and fists. The brutality continued for another three weeks, with the Marines advancing with support from soldiers of the 3d Brigade and the 2d Field Artillery Brigade. After the Americans wrested control of Belleau Wood from the Germans on 26 June, Major Maurice E. Shearer, commander of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, reported back to headquarters, "Woods now U.S. Marine Corps entirely." In the process, the division suffered more than 9,777 casualties, 1,811 of them killed.

Although the initial attack showed the 4th Brigade's inexperience, it captured the public's imagination. News reports,



Sgt Tom Lovell's *Belleau Wood*, WWI, depicts the fierce close-quarter fighting that took place during the battle in June 1918.

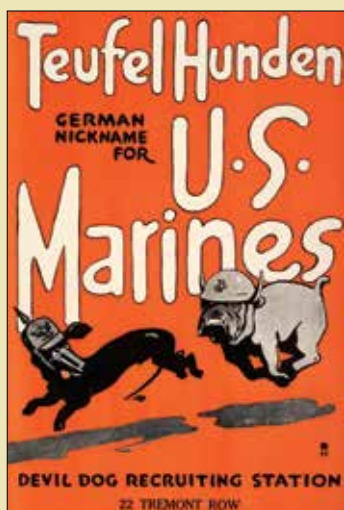
*National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection*

especially those of war correspondent Floyd Gibbons, who was gravely wounded on 6 June, enthralled American readers. The Marines benefitted from Army censorship regulations, which forbade reporters identifying specific units but not the Service.

### *Leathernecks and Devil Dogs*

Marines have had many nicknames, but two that have endured and are points of pride are “Leathernecks” and “Devil Dogs.” The origins of Leatherneck date back to 1776, when the Naval Committee of the Second Continental Congress mandated uniform regulations. Marines were to wear green coats with buff white (a light brownish yellow) facings, buff breeches, black gaiters, and a leather stock collar fastened around the neck. British soldiers first wore a leather or horsehair collar in 1755, meant to maintain the wearer’s military bearing, not to protect the neck against slashing or sword cuts, as a persistent myth claims. The origins of U.S. Marines being called Leathernecks is disputed. Some claim it came from U.S. Navy sailors, while others argue it was a Royal Navy sailors’ epithet for Royal Marines. Whether the origins were American or British, U.S. Marines wore the leather collar until it was dropped from uniform regulations in 1872. Even today, the distinctive Marine dress blue uniform harkens back to the stock collar.

“Devil Dogs” reportedly grew out of the legend of Marine exploits at Belleau Wood. Lore has it that the origins of the nickname came from German troops who commented on the aggressive nature of the Marines they faced, resembling dogs from hell, or *Teufelhunden*. There is no evidence that the Germans ever used the term, however, and it appeared on a recruiting poster prior to the battle. Regardless, the nickname has since become synonymous with Marines. Completing the mythic nature of the fight at Belleau Wood is a fountain in the village of Belleau, just north of the wood. Although the brigade did not take the town, generations of Marines have made the pilgrimage to drink from the “Devil Dog Fountain” in honor of their brethren.



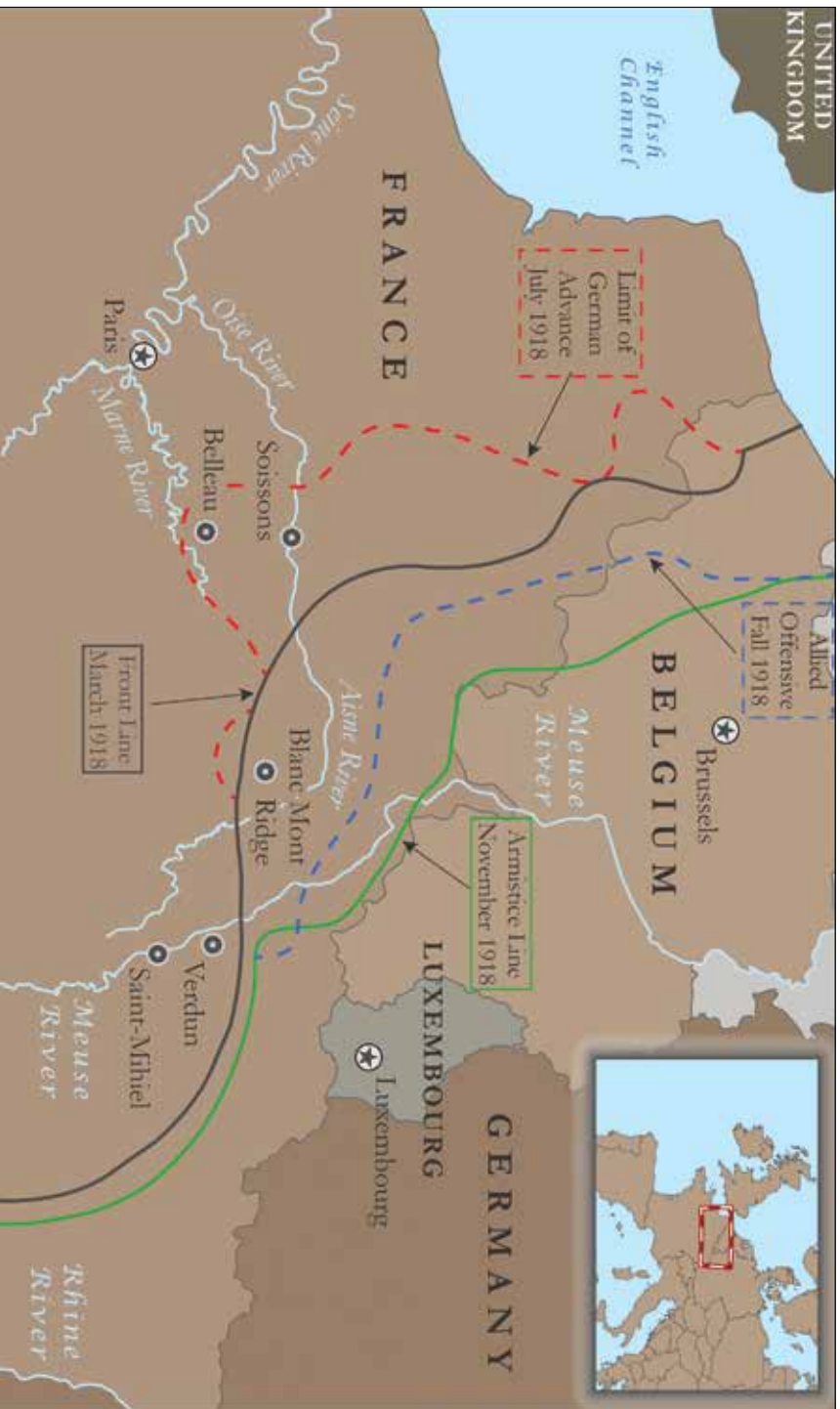
“Teufel Hunden” by C. B. Falls.  
*National Museum of the Marine Corps  
Art Collection*

---

As there was only one brigade of Marines serving in France, reporters spotlighted the brigade's grit, determination, and courage. The legend of the "Marine" Brigade was born. The French honored their achievement by changing the name of the forest to *Bois de la Brigade de Marine* (Marine Brigade Woods) and awarded the *Croix de Guerre* to this hard-fighting American unit.

Although battered, the Marines received little respite. The German offensives had created a large bulge, or salient, along the Western Front. Anticipating further attacks, the French were preparing a grand counterattack, with the Americans as the spearhead. The Allies blunted the last German offensive, which began on 15 July along the Marne River. The American 2d Division, along with the 1st Division and a French colonial division, launched a major counterattack on 18 July just south of the French city of Soissons. During two days of fighting, the 2d Division sustained 4,135 casualties, including more than 700 dead, with the 6th Regiment incurring the most casualties of any unit in the division. One of the junior officers whose unit suffered considerable casualties was First Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates, future 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps. "I have only two out of my company and 20 out of some other company," he reported. "We need support, but it is almost suicide to try to get it here as we are swept by machine gun fire and a constant barrage is on us. I have no one on my left and only a few on my right. I will hold."

Despite the losses during the offensive, the Marines and soldiers advanced eight kilometers, cutting a vital German supply line and undermining the enemy position in the salient. The initial Allied defensive, which the Americans called the Champagne-Marne, and the counterattack, labeled the Aisne-Marne, has collectively been known as the Second Battle of the Marne. It represented the turning point of the war on the Western Front, as the German Army never again mounted a large-scale offensive.



Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP

---

## *Fighting to the End*

The Marine Corps received a boost to its public image by its exploits at Belleau Wood and Soissons, and Congress also finalized a wartime end strength for the Service on 1 July 1918 of about 3,000 officers and 75,000 enlisted. Commandant Barnett hoped to use this increase and build on the 4th Brigade's reputation by sending another brigade to France for service in a Marine division. Although the Army showed little interest in the creation of a division of Marines, Barnett began assembling units for what would become 5th Brigade (U.S. Marines) in August. The brigade, initially under the command of Brigadier General Eli Cole, began embarking for France in early September. Despite Barnett's efforts, the brigade would never see combat. The dream of a Marine division would remain just that.

Barnett's efforts to create a Marine division had one unintended impact, namely the arrival of Brigadier General Lejeune in France. Initially dispatched to persuade the AEF commander, Army General John J. Pershing, to accept a Marine division, Lejeune, promoted to major general on 1 July, was assigned command of the Army's 64th Infantry Brigade, 32d Division, on 9 July. Later that month, he received command of the 2d Division, which contained the Marines of the 4th Brigade. Lejeune would command the division for the remainder of the war, becoming the first Marine to lead such a large unit in combat and one that was also technically an Army division.

After receiving much-needed rest and vital replacements, the Marines and 2d Division were once again called to action, this time as part of the first American offensive of the war. For the operation, which aimed to reduce a salient around the town of Saint-Mihiel, southeast of Verdun, General Pershing led the newly formed American First Army. The attack began on 12 September and included more than 200,000 Americans divided into three corps. The Marines and 2d Division served in the I

---

Army Corps under Major General Hunter Liggett. The division performed well, advancing more than six kilometers the first day and seizing the village of Thiaucourt. The Americans had little time to celebrate, as plans were already underway for a much larger assault 50 kilometers to the west.

Having participated in the initial attack at Saint-Mihiel, the 2d Division did not take part in the first attack of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which began on 26 September. Held in reserve while the lead divisions battered themselves against stiff German defenses, the Marines and soldiers of the 2d Division waited for their moment to go back into the lines. It finally came in early October. As the American First Army was fighting between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest, the French Fourth Army was attacking to the west. Its advance had stalled in front of German positions along Blanc Mont Ridge, four kilometers north of the town of Sommepey. In late September, Pershing agreed to send two divisions to assist the French. The 2d Division began its move westward on 28 September and eventually took over a three-kilometer section of the line by 1 October. Major General Lejeune and his staff developed a complicated plan that relied on close coordination between the infantry and artillery while the division's brigades made a converging attack against the ridge. The plan worked spectacularly when the battle began on 3 October. The veteran soldiers and Marines seized their objectives after three weeks of fighting at the cost of roughly 4,800 casualties. Among the heroism on display was Private John J. Kelly's actions on the first day. During an American artillery barrage, Private Kelly sprinted 100 meters forward to neutralize an enemy machine-gun position. He killed one of the crew with a grenade, shot another with his pistol, and ran back through the fire to friendly lines with eight prisoners. Private Kelly's actions earned him the Medal of Honor.

The American 36th Division relieved the 2d Division on

---

10 October and continued the advance north. Meanwhile, Lejeune's exhausted men withdrew to rest and recover. As the 2d Division recuperated throughout October, the American First Army continued the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which began on 26 September with an attack by nine divisions across a 30-kilometer front. The battle went poorly for the Americans. Many of the new, untried American divisions leading the assault faced formidable German defenses. The initial plan called for a drive of 16 kilometers. None made it more than 10 kilometers as they hammered against the German trenches. After reorganizing in mid-October, the Americans finally cleaved a hole into the vaunted Hindenburg Line, the German defensive barrier along the Western Front, by month's end. The breakthrough set the stage for a final push to the Meuse River.

Taking position in the middle of the American line as part of the V Army Corps, the 2d Division led the assault on 1 November. The division drove forward roughly 10 kilometers, nearly outpacing the divisions attacking on its flanks. During the next 10 days, the entire First Army advanced while the Germans withdrew to the Meuse. By this point, the German Army was collapsing, and the two sides agreed to an armistice beginning 11 November.

With the Armistice declared, the Marines remained in the 2d Division when it became part of the American occupation forces. They moved to Coblenz, Germany, by 11 December and took up positions along the Rhine River. The Marines continued in their occupation duties for another seven months before sailing back to the United States in August 1919. With its veterans returning home, the Marine Corps joined the other Services in a rapid demobilization. After reaching a wartime peak of more than 75,000, the Marine Corps was reduced to less than 17,000 officers and enlisted on active duty by 30 June 1920.



---

As a result of the Marines' performance in World War I, the French recognized their outstanding service. The 5th and 6th Regiments were cited three times in French Army orders for their courageous accomplishments in the Château-Thierry sector, the Aisne-Marne (Soissons) offensive, and the Meuse-Argonne campaign. The 6th Machine Gun Battalion was cited for its performance in the Château-Thierry sector and Aisne-Marne (Soissons) offensive, and the 4th Brigade received a similar citation for its achievements in the Château-Thierry sector. In January 1920, the War Department accepted the award of the French *fourragère* in the colors of the ribbon of the *Croix de Guerre* for several Army organizations and three units of the 4th Brigade. Since it took three French Army citations to make an organization eligible for the award of the French *fourragère*, the high standard of Marines' combat ability was obvious. In addition to these awards for service above and beyond the call of duty, eight Marines were awarded the Medal of Honor. Five received two Medals of Honor for the same action, as the Army and the Navy both awarded them for their act of heroism.

The Marine Corps had come a long way since the turn of the century. Marines had been catapulted into the public eye and had shown the world their combat effectiveness. For the Service, the war provided valuable experience to Marines who took part in major conventional operations on the front lines, on general staffs, and even in command positions that few Marines had performed before. During the next two decades, while the United States pondered isolationism and was buffeted by the Great Depression, the nation continually called on the Marine Corps to serve in troubled areas of Latin America, the Caribbean, and China.

### *The Early Days of Marine Aviation*

As the Marine Corps honed its combat abilities in the 1910s, it

---

also worked to incorporate aviation into its operational capabilities. A pioneer in Marine Corps Aviation was Marine Lieutenant Colonel Alfred A. Cunningham. Cunningham, who was designated Naval Aviator Number 5, was the first Marine aviator and thereafter became a member of the Chambers Board (Naval Aviation Policy Review Board) with six Navy officers. The board convened to draw up “a comprehensive plan for the organization of a naval aeronautical service.” With membership on this board, the Marine Corps had representation in naval aviation almost from the beginning.

Naval aviation’s early development owed much to its Marine members who took part in several of the early experiments, including bombing from naval aircraft (Colonel Bernard L. Smith), taking off by catapult from a ship underway (Lieutenant Colonel Cunningham), and looping a seaplane (Colonel Francis T. Evans). When the United States entered World War I, Marine Aviation had only 6 commissioned officers designated as naval aviators, 1 warrant officer, and 45 enlisted. Six months later, the Marine Corps organized the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company. In January 1918, the Marine Corps moved the company of 12 officers and 133 enlisted to Ponta Delgada on the island of São Miguel in the Azores, becoming the first American flying group to deploy overseas completely trained and equipped. There, the pilots flew seaplanes on antisubmarine patrol for the remainder of the war.

In the United States, Marine Aviation developed at a rapid pace. After using Army and Navy facilities at Mineola, New York; Cape May, New Jersey; Coconut Grove, Florida; and Lake Charles, Louisiana, the Marines finally acquired their own airfield. In April 1918, the Curtiss Flying Field at Miami, Florida, was renamed the Marine Flying Field. After the move to Miami, the Service organized the 1st Marine Aviation Force, composed of four squadrons and a headquarters company. The unit was

## ***Lieutenant Colonel Alfred A. Cunningham***

Alfred A. Cunningham was the Marine Corps' first aviator. He was born 8 March 1882 in Atlanta, Georgia. During the Spanish-American War, Cunningham served in the 3d Georgia Volunteer Infantry regiment and spent the next decade selling real estate in Atlanta. He accepted a commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps in January 1909 with the aim to become an aviator. By 1911, he was stationed at Marine Barracks Philadelphia Navy Yard and was experimenting with an airplane that he had leased from a civilian aviator for \$25 per month.

On 16 May 1912, Cunningham was detached from duty in Philadelphia and ordered to an aviation training camp that the Navy established at Annapolis, Maryland. He reported on 22 May 1912, recognized today as the birthday of Marine Corps Aviation. Flight training followed at Marblehead, Massachusetts. After less than three hours of instruction, Cunningham soloed on 20 August 1912, becoming Naval Aviator Number 5 and the first Marine Corps pilot.

Cunningham played a pivotal role in the development of naval aviation by determining how to utilize the new technology, and he even worked alongside the aviation industry to develop aircraft. During



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

World War I, he went to Paris to study French and British aviation activities. He used what he had learned when he deployed to Europe in command of the 1st Marine Aviation Force, which conducted 57 raids and shot down 8 enemy aircraft. Cunningham received the Navy Cross for his service during the war.

When he returned to the United States, Cunningham became officer-in-charge of Marine Corps Aviation. Due to Marine Corps policy, Cunningham was assigned to general duty after five years of aviation duty, and he spent the remainder of his career in various roles. With his health failing, he retired on 1 August 1935. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel while on the retired list and died in Sarasota, Florida, on 27 May 1939. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

soon ordered to sail for France. By 30 July 1918, three of the squadrons, composed of about 100 officers and more than 600 enlisted Marines, reached France, with the fourth squadron arriving in October, bringing its total strength to nearly 150 officers and 850 enlisted. After their arrival, the squadrons became the Day Wing of the Northern Bombing Group in northern France, while two Navy squadrons made up the Night Wing.

The Marine pilots, like most American airmen in France, faced the problem of having no aircraft to fly. While waiting for their De Havilland DH-4 observation and bomber aircraft to arrive, Marine pilots were assigned to British squadrons, where they got their first taste of air combat flying British DH-4s. It was not until 23 September that the Marines received the first of their bombers in France. The Marine pilots operated in the Dunkirk area of France against German submarines and bases at Ostend, Zeebrugge, and Bruges, Belgium. While their service was commendable, the war ended shortly after their arrival. Even though the period of action and shortage of aircraft hampered their participation in the war, Marine pilots and crew shot down at least 4 and possibly as many as 12 German aircraft.



The first aerial resupply mission in Marine Aviation history occurred on 2–3 October 1918, when Marine Capt Robert S. Lytle (right) and GySgt Amil Wiman (left) dropped food and stores to a French infantry regiment.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

They performed the first-recorded aerial resupply mission by dropping food to beleaguered French troops isolated for several days on the front lines. For that accomplishment, three pilots were awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, and their observers received the Navy Cross. In another air action, Medals of Honor were awarded to Second Lieutenant Ralph Talbot and his observer, Gunnery Sergeant Robert Guy Robinson, for shooting down two enemy aircraft in a battle against overwhelming odds.

During World War I, aviation played a minor role when compared to the clashes of mammoth armies. Although Marine Aviation was in its infancy, 282 officers and 2,180 enlisted served in the aviation branch of the Marine Corps during the war. Despite the lack of any direct support to Marine ground forces, innovators within the Service such as Lieutenant Colonel

---

Cunningham understood the role of Marine Aviation, leading him to comment that “the only excuse for aviation in any service is its usefulness in assisting the troops on the ground to successfully carry out their operations.” Such thinking was basic to the Marine Corps’ later development of the air-ground team concept.

After the war, Marine Aviation demobilized. In February 1919, the Marine Corps disbanded the 1st Marine Aviation Force at Miami, and the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company in the Azores disbanded a month later. Remaining personnel at Miami were subsequently transferred to Parris Island and Quantico in summer 1919. The following year, Marine Aviation had only 67 pilots. After further reductions in 1921, the number dropped to 43. This, however, did not prevent the Marine Corps from theorizing, planning, and developing along with the rest of naval aviation.

---

## CHAPTER 5

# Between the World Wars, 1920–1940

On 1 July 1920, Major General John A. Lejeune became Commandant of the Marine Corps. Under his leadership, the Marine Corps finally made the transition from nineteenth-century naval infantry to a modern military force, owing to Commandant Lejeune's emphasis on organizational change, tough realistic training, modern equipment, and improved professional military education across the force. The Service made this transformation at a time when the public had little interest, if any, in maintaining a well-trained and well-equipped permanent military force. With the election of Warren G. Harding to the presidency in 1920, and a national sense that peace and prosperity would forever prevail following the "war to end all wars," the nation entered a period of military disarmament and isolationism.

In February 1922, the United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, and Italy, signed the Washington Naval Treaty (a.k.a. the Five-Power Treaty) to prevent an arms race following World War I. The treaty limited the naval tonnage of future ship construction and restricted fortification of certain possessions in the Pacific. Specifically, the United States agreed under the nonfor-

---

## *Lieutenant General John A. Lejeune*

Lieutenant General John A. Lejeune drove fundamental changes that created the modern Marine Corps while serving as the 13th Commandant. He was born near Lacour, Louisiana, on 10 January 1867. He attended Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, for three years before securing an appointment at the United States Naval Academy, where he graduated second in his class in 1888. At the expiration of a two-year cruise as a cadet midshipman, he commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on 1 July 1890 and reported to Marine Barracks New York the next month.

For the next 20 years, Lejeune held a variety of roles that were representative for the era, spending the bulk of his time aboard warships as part of Marine detachments or commanding units in Cuba, Panama, the Philippines, and Mexico. He was a brigadier general by the time the United States entered World War I. In France, he commanded the 4th Marine Brigade and then the U.S. Army's 2d Division. When he returned to the United States in October 1919, Lejeune became the commanding general of Marine Barracks Quantico for a second time.

On 1 July 1920, Lejeune was appointed the 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps. Throughout the next nine years of his commandancy, Lejeune presided over significant changes. He sought to expand the Marine Corps' relevancy to the U.S. Navy and the nation, doing so by prioritizing the doctrinal development, training, and implementation of amphibious assault and defense and advanced base operations. Lejeune also prioritized high standards, efficiency, and the expansion of Marine Corps professional military education, establishing Marine Corps Schools at Quantico in 1921. Here, the Marine Corps would not only educate Marines in warfighting competency but also emphasize the importance of leadership at all ranks. Moreover, Lejeune stressed leadership themes that remain today, such as special trust and confidence and paternal leaders as teachers. Finally, Lejeune understood the importance of history and heritage and diligently worked to formalize important Marine Corps traditions.

Major General John A. Lejeune stepped down as Commandant and retired in 1929. He was promoted to lieutenant general on the retired list in 1942, just before his death on 20 November. Lejeune's life, career, and vision established the bedrock on which the modern Marine Corps rests today.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History  
Division*



---

tification clause not to fortify any of its Pacific Islands west of Hawaii. Great Britain made the same agreement regarding Hong Kong, Borneo, the Solomon Islands, and the Gilbert Islands. Japan, which American military leaders at the time saw as a future enemy, agreed not to fortify Formosa or any of the former German possessions in the Pacific Ocean north of the equator that it had acquired in the World War I peace settlement. This area included the Caroline Islands and all the Mariana Islands but Guam. Reaction within the Navy Department to the treaty, especially the nonfortification clause, was negative. While developing contingency plans for possible future engagements, the General Board of the Navy had considered the possibility of a war with Japan. In 1920, the Navy Department had directed its respective agencies to prepare plans for a prospective war with Japan, identified as a potential threat to American possessions and interests in the Pacific. The general sense was that the treaty would allow Japanese naval strength to grow unchecked in the Far East, making it more difficult to win in any such war.

The prevailing mood of the nation impacted all branches of the military. The government reduced the size of all the Services and appropriated minimal funds for equipment, training, and education. As a result, it was a period of conserving resources, studying, and experimenting for those hardy souls who had chosen the military as a career. It was also a time of increasing awareness and development for the Marine Corps. Many Marine leaders realized that, in the event of future war, the Marine Corps could not duplicate the mission of the Army and hope to survive as an organization as had happened in World War I. It was, therefore, necessary to develop a mission that was uniquely its own.

---

### *Organizational Changes and Development of Professional Military Education*

Even before adopting a new mission, Commandant Lejeune's priority was reshaping the Marine Corps' antiquated administrative structure to prepare for and support a major offensive naval campaign in a future conflict. In 1920, Lejeune ordered the reorganization of the Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) staff system. The Planning Section, created in 1918, was expanded into the Division of Operations and Training, composed of operations, training, military education, and military intelligence sections. A Marine Aviation section was also added, which advised on matters related to the Marine Corps and to the director of naval aviation on aviation matters generally. A War Plans Committee was established in 1924, which eventually became its own section within the division. Lejeune also added personnel, educational, and recruiting sections to Headquarters. The Adjutant and Inspector Department, Quartermaster Department, and Paymaster Department all remained as before with their respective generals administering each department and reporting to the Commandant. Outside of reforming HQMC, Lejeune directed the formation of standing East and West Coast Expeditionary Forces—in 1923 and 1925, respectively—to avoid the often improvised way the Service formed units for expeditionary service prior to World War I.

One of the centerpieces of Lejeune's post-World War I reforms involved education and training. After the war, the Marine Corps concluded it required its own professional military education system and should modernize its training for the twentieth-century battlefield, especially if the Service was to develop a unique mission. The Marine Corps had tried to establish its own schools previously, but limited budgets and pressing

---

manpower needs for expeditionary operations left Marines dependent on the Army and Navy for education. During the war, Quantico emerged as a centralized training site for new officers.

In 1920, Lejeune established Marine Corps Schools, which administered the Basic Course (later The Basic School) for new second lieutenants, the Company Officers' Course, and the Field Officers' Course. In 1923, The Basic School relocated to Philadelphia due to a lack of facilities at Quantico, where it remained until returning to Quantico after World War II, though it remained under the Marine Corps Schools' purview. In 1925, Congress passed an act that formally established the Marine Corps Reserve and created an active reserve that HQMC could manage. As a result, Marine Corps Schools developed correspondence schools to serve reservist officers who had limited time to attend resident courses and training. The Marine Corps also stood up several schools and programs throughout the Service for various specialties, such as the Signal School at Quantico, a Quartermaster's School of Administration at Philadelphia, and a School for Cooks and Bakers at Parris Island, among others. Throughout the 1930s, Marine Corps Schools continued adding and revising courses, especially as the amphibious assault mission provided tactical, operational, and strategic shape to the education that Marine officers required.

Enlisted education was also reformed under Lejeune, beginning with the Marine Corps Institute in 1920. The institute was initially a resident school at Quantico, but it later converted to a correspondence school based at Marine Barracks Washington to provide vocational and general education to enlisted Marines wherever they were stationed. Over time, the institute's emphasis expanded to include military education and began including courses for officers. Similar to Marine Corps Schools' correspondence courses, the institute eventually played an important role

---

### *Marine Corps Base Quantico*

Marine Corps Base Quantico was established in May 1917 around a small town located about 55 kilometers south of Washington, DC, on the Potomac River in Virginia. Chosen to house the Corps' advanced base force, Quantico quickly turned to training and organizing the thousands of Marines preparing to fight in France after the United States entered World War I.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Quantico transformed into the Corps' intellectual center. It was there that instructors and students of the Marine Corps Schools developed the amphibious doctrine used to defeat Japan. During World War II, Quantico's training mission expanded to meet wartime needs. Officer training was handled almost entirely at Quantico, as were an ordnance school, a field artillery school, a communications officers' school, and aviation training.

After World War II ended, Quantico became the home of officer training, professional schooling, and doctrinal development for the Marine Corps. Although the bulk of aviation training moved away from Quantico in 1947, Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 (HMX-1) was activated at Marine Corps Air Station Quantico as the Corps' primary helicopter experimentation unit and provided transportation for the president of the United States, a mission it retains today.

Among the tenant commands at Quantico are Combat Development and Integration, Marine Corps Systems Command, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Manpower & Reserve Affairs, Marine Corps Embassy Security Group, and Weapons Training Command. Training and education remains a core part of Quantico's mission, as evidenced by Training and Education Command's tenancy. Among the schoolhouses are Officer Candidates School, The Basic School, Command and Staff College, the School of Advanced Warfighting, and the Expeditionary Warfare School, among many others. As a result, Quantico is known as the "Crossroads of the Marine Corps," as most Marines will pass through at some point during the careers.

supporting reservists' careers as well as the many Marines deployed throughout the world.

### *U.S. Marines in Latin America*

Even as the Marine Corps demobilized after World War I, Ma-

---

rines remained committed to ongoing operations in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua. In the Dominican Republic, Brigadier General Harry Lee's 2d Brigade continued supporting the U.S. military government and worked to pacify the country. Marines assisted the *Guardia Nacional Dominicana*, which it also trained and officered, to combat lawlessness, largely in the country's east. In October 1921, Colonel William C. Harlee's 15th Regiment, which had arrived with the 1st Air Squadron in 1919, turned to cordon operations in place of patrolling with mixed results. During these operations, every male inhabitant within the area was detained and interrogated. The cordons removed more than 600 individuals accused of *banditry*, the term used to describe the combination of outlaw groups and rebels that resisted American or Dominican authority. The Marines ultimately discontinued the practice, since few enemy leaders were apprehended, lawless activity actually increased, and Dominican leaders opposed the harsh treatment of civilians. Marines instead formed and trained five home guard units composed of local Dominicans who patrolled under Marine leadership. The aggressive patrolling by Marines and the home guard units led Brigadier General Lee to declare an end to organized insurgency in late May 1922. In the meantime, the 2d Brigade renewed efforts to improve the *Guardia* (renamed the *Policia Nacional Dominicana*) so it could secure the country following a prospective American withdrawal. As the U.S. military government transferred power to a Dominican provisional government in October 1922, the 2d Brigade ceased operations in the countryside and garrisoned in major cities to serve as a reserve force. After the Dominican Republic established a constitutional government on 12 July 1924, the 2d Brigade withdrew from the country, with the last contingent of Marines departing on 16 September 1924.

In the early 1920s, the Marines remained busy combatting



*Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP*

an uprising that had begun two years earlier by armed groups prevalent in Haiti's remote regions. In January 1920, Marines and Haitian *gendarmes* began an aggressive six-month-long campaign against the *cacos*. After nearly 200 encounters, practically all the remaining *cacos* were believed to have been killed, captured, or surrendered. Only a few small, scattered, ineffectual groups remained, and Haiti was largely pacified by the end of 1921. Reports of Marine mistreatment of Haitians, however,

---

caused public and political controversy in the United States. Investigations revealed instances of abuses against Haitians and even unlawful killings of civilians and prisoners. Although the Marine Corps and Navy Department concluded the incidents were isolated and did not reflect the nature of the occupation generally, the controversy compelled Marine leadership to police behavior and take proactive steps to treat Haitians as partners rather than an enemy population.

In February 1922, the U.S. government appointed Brigadier General John H. Russell the high commissioner to Haiti with the rank of ambassador alongside his military position. He functioned as the diplomatic representative of the United States, directed the work of treaty officials, and commanded the Marine brigade and *gendarmerie*. Throughout this period, public work and roadbuilding projects continued, and many reforms were made that improved the living conditions of the people, although most Haitians remained impoverished. The *gendarmerie* was reorganized and enlarged several times, reaching a strength of more than 2,700, and its name was changed to the *Garde d'Haiti* in 1928. As this force grew and assumed more responsibility, the Marine brigade shrank to about 500 and served as an emergency reserve for the *garde*.

Haiti was relatively peaceful for the next seven years until widespread rioting and strikes broke out in 1929. The Great Depression exacerbated long-running tensions among the Haitian poor and elites, and there was popular anger over the Haitian president's decision not to hold new national elections. To restore order, Marine reinforcements from Guantánamo Bay briefly reinforced the brigade. In one instance, an angry mob of around 1,500 people wielding sticks and machetes surrounded a *garde* barracks. When a Marine detachment responded, the mob threw stones and charged. Marines fired, which halted the mob and restored order. The riot spurred President Herbert Hoover to

---

contemplate ending the occupation, believing the Marines' presence had become potentially counterproductive. For the next few years, Marines performed garrison duty, accelerated efforts to turn the *garde* over to Haitian control and held themselves in readiness for any emergency. In August 1934, the last Marines of the 1st Brigade departed Haiti, ending nearly 20 years of occupation.

Similarly, Marines became drawn into events in Nicaragua. Since 1912, the Marines maintained a 100-strong Legation Guard in Managua, the capital, as a show of force to keep peace between the Conservative and Liberal political factions. The 1924 elections resulted in a coalition government, with a Conservative president and Liberal vice president, but tensions remained. In 1925, the United States withdrew the Marine guard as a gesture of recognition of Nicaraguan sovereignty but also out of concern that the guard's presence might be more polarizing than helpful. Just weeks after the guard's withdrawal, however, Conservatives purged the government of Liberal politicians, provoking a Liberal revolt. With a civil war fully underway, Marines and sailors landed under the auspices of the Navy Special Service Squadron to protect American and foreign lives and property. Lieutenant Colonel James J. Meade's 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, arrived at Bluefields from Guantánamo Bay on 10 January 1927, followed by the remainder of the 5th Marines and an aviation squadron. Brigadier General Logan Feland took command of all forces ashore and constituted the 2d Marine Brigade.

The United States brokered a political resolution—the Tipitapa Agreement—in May 1927, permitting the Conservative president to remain in power until the next election in exchange for the president reinstating purged Liberal politicians. The treaty also stipulated that both factions would disband their forces and make way for a new *Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua* to be trained and led by Marines. Marines set about disarming the





Counterinsurgency warfare in support of American foreign policy remained a major duty of the Corps between the World Wars. Marine legends 1stLt Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller (second from left) and GySgt William A. Lee (second from right) pose with Carlos Gutierrez and Carmen Torrez, members of the *Guardia Nacional*, ca. 1931. A year later, Puller and Lee would each be awarded the Navy Cross when 150 rebels ambushed the 40-man Nicaraguan National Guard Patrol the Marines were leading.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

population, training the *guardia*, and preparing for new elections. However, one Liberal general, César Augusto Sandino, refused to sign the peace agreement and continued fighting from the country's mountainous north. Sandino's forces proved difficult for the Marines and *guardia* to defeat. The Marines struggled to navigate the mountainous terrain quickly enough to pin down Sandino's forces adept at hit-and-run tactics. Although unable to decisively defeat Sandino, Captain Merritt A. Edson's Marines patrolled on land and on the Coco River, thereby preventing Sandino from disrupting the November 1928 presidential elections that Liberal candidate José María Moncada won.

Despite the successful election, the occupation was set to continue through the next election in 1932. Again, the Marines and the *guardia* conducted extensive patrolling and made numerous contacts with the enemy. In 1930, Sandino returned from Mexico after securing more resources and launched renewed attacks against vulnerable Marine, *guardia*, and Nicaraguan government positions. From 1930 onward, the Marines and *guardia* focused their limited personnel on protecting population centers and infrastructure from Sandino's attacks while also conducting patrols to whittle down the opposing forces. Captain Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller's troops, which averaged about 32 men, became famous for their successes engaging Sandino's troops when scouring the jungles near the Honduran border.

While Marines like Captain Puller weakened Sandino's forces, others protected the seaports, secured the railroad from Corinto to Granada, and safeguarded the agricultural and mining industries. These activities were accomplished with the able assistance of the *guardia*, which had become a decisive force throughout the country. By 1932, President Hoover, who had come into office wary of constant interventions, believed Sandino's forces weak enough that the *guardia* could handle them without the Marines. A general election was held in November

---

1932, and the Marines withdrew two months later. Sandino had disbanded his forces on the promise of amnesty and land for himself and his officers. *Guardia* chief Anastasio Somoza, however, ordered Sandino's assassination in February 1934. Three years later, Somoza deposed the president and installed himself in power, beginning his family's dictatorial rule of Nicaragua that lasted until 1979.

The Marines' departure from Nicaragua and Haiti in the 1930s ended several decades of constabulary and occupation duty in Latin America. After taking office, President Franklin D. Roosevelt instituted the so-called Good Neighbor Policy, promising better relations with countries in Central and South America while disavowing the right to armed intervention in violation of national sovereignty. Although the United States' interventions produced a controversial legacy rather than the enduring, stable democracies as hoped, the Marine Corps gained valuable operational experience. Major Samuel M. Harrington, while a student in the Field Officers' Course in 1922, undertook a detailed study of small wars. His treatise, "The Strategy and Tactics of Small Wars," was published in shortened form in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, the Service's professional journal. Colonel Ben H. Fuller, commanding Marine Corps Schools, incorporated Harrington's work on small wars into the curriculum. Others later expanded his work into a publication first for students at Quantico in 1936 and in 1940 as the *Small Wars Manual*. The manual underscores the distinctive nature of small wars, which unlike conventional military campaigns, rely heavily on the simultaneous coordination of military and diplomatic power to achieve desired outcomes. Aside from doctrine, prolonged service in Latin America meant Marine leaders such as Puller and Edson had considerable combat experience when the United States later entered World War II.

---

### *Marine Aviation in the Interwar Period*

Marine operations in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua provided Marine Aviation with a valuable opportunity to develop tactics, techniques, and procedures that later came to define the Marine air-ground team's operating concepts. Among them were bombing techniques. In Haiti in 1919, Second Lieutenant Lawson H. M. Sanderson discovered that by diving his aircraft toward the target at a 45-degree angle and releasing his bomb at an altitude of about 75 meters, he could strike a target with far greater accuracy than the then-standard technique of manually releasing a bomb from a horizontal flight path.

During the Nicaraguan intervention in 1927, Major Ross E. Rowell, commanding Marine Observation Squadron 7/M, further experimented with dive-bombing techniques by training his Marines to conduct coordinated dive-bombing attacks. In July 1927, a Marine and *guardia* patrol under Captain Gilbert D. Hatfield became pinned down by a larger force of Sandino's rebels near Ocotal. To signal aircraft flying overhead, Marines laid out colored cloth indicating the direction and range of the enemy. In response, Major Rowell and four other aviators flew to Ocotal, and conducted bombing and strafing runs that scattered the enemy troops and allowed Hatfield's forces to repel the remaining rebels. This was one of the first examples of ground forces directing an air attack.

Marine pilots had already gained experience evacuating wounded in Haiti and the Dominican Republic during the early 1920s, but one of the best-known examples of early medical evacuation occurred in Nicaragua. In January 1928, Sandino's forces trapped two Marine patrols in the village of Quilalí. From 6–8 January, Marine Observation Squadron 7/M's First Lieutenant Christian F. Schilt responded to the stranded Marines' request for relief by making 10 landings and takeoffs from a makeshift airstrip in Quilalí while under fire with a heavily

---

loaded aircraft. He evacuated the wounded and returned with ammunition, supplies, and even personnel, earning a Medal of Honor for his actions.

Back in the United States, Marine pilots continued developing new tactics and experimenting with new aircraft, especially to support amphibious operations and the fleet. Two Marine air squadrons, Marine Scouting Squadrons 14 and 15, served aboard the carriers USS *Saratoga* (CV 3) and USS *Lexington* (CV 2) in the early 1930s. They were later disbanded and reorganized as Marine Observation Squadron 8 and transferred to San Diego, California. To better integrate aviation into Marine operations, the Commandant removed the HQMC aviation section from the Division of Operations and Training and elevated it to its own division, whose director now advised the Commandant on all aviation matters and served as a liaison officer between the Marine Corps and the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics.

Throughout the remainder of the decade, Marine Aviation continued to grow. On 30 June 1939, there were 210 officers, including 173 pilots, and 1,142 enlisted on active duty with the Marine Aviation branch. In less than a year, that number grew to more than 400 Marine pilots and 3,000 enlisted. In June 1940, Congress authorized the Navy's 10,000 Plane Program, out of which the Marine Corps was allotted 1,167 aircraft. Plans were then drawn up for establishing 4 groups of 11 squadrons each. After landing exercises in early 1941, it was projected that a single division making an amphibious landing required at least 12 fighter, 8 dive-bomber, 2 observation, and 4 utility squadrons. Organizing and developing these squadrons, however, was a slow process. The Marine Corps established the 1st and 2d Marine Aircraft Wings in July 1941, though each wing had only one group by December 1941.

---

### *Marines in China and Rising Tensions with Japan*

While the United States deployed Marines to restore order throughout Latin America in the 1920s, the nation also called on Marines for similar duty in Asia during this period. In August 1927, civil war erupted in China between the governing Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and the Chinese Communist Party. The United States dispatched a reinforced Marine brigade to Shanghai under the command of Brigadier General Smedley Butler. After their arrival, the 3d Brigade consisted of 238 officers, 18 warrant officers, and 4,170 enlisted. The standing order was to avoid conflict with Chinese forces unless necessary.

No engagements occurred, and the Marines remained alert for potential emergencies. During spring and summer 1928, Kuomintang forces under the commander in chief of the National Revolutionary Army, Chiang Kai-shek, continued to fight the Communist Red Army for control of the country. By 10 October, Chiang's forces had secured most of China. With the political situation stabilized, U.S. troops began to withdraw. In January 1929, the United States recalled all units of the 3d Brigade stationed at Tientsin. The Marine legation guard in Peking increased to 500, and the 4th Marines in Shanghai expanded to 1,150.

After years of attempting to land a fatal blow, Kuomintang forces finally encircled the Red Army in October 1934. The Communists broke out of the encirclement and began a retreat known as the Long March that lasted a year, reducing their forces to about 7,000–8,000 troops from 90,000–100,000, and traveling an estimated 10,000 kilometers to the remote interior, where they recuperated. External threats from the Empire of Japan led to a truce between the nationalists and Communists in late 1936. Five years before, Japanese troops had occupied Manchuria, creating a client state as a first step toward regional hegemony and access to desperately needed natural resources,

---

which Japan euphemistically termed the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. In July 1937, Chinese and Japanese troops clashed near Beijing, sparking the Second Sino-Japanese War. Japanese forces captured Beijing in July and all of Shanghai except the international settlements in August. In December, Japanese troops marched on the Kuomintang capital of Nanjing, where they committed atrocities against military prisoners and the civilian population, massacring somewhere between 100,000 and 300,000 people.

The United States opposed Japanese militarism but was wary of a war with Japan. U.S. leaders had sent additional Marines to Asia to protect American citizens and property. News of Japanese atrocities, however, compelled officials to reevaluate their stance on the war. Public outrage was exacerbated when Americans learned that Japanese aircraft had bombed and sunk the river gunboat USS *Panay* (PR 5), killing three aboard, as it was attempting to evacuate Americans from Nanjing. Eager to avoid armed confrontation, the United States accepted the Japanese government's apology and an indemnity for the damages. Meanwhile, Japanese forces pushed farther into China.

In September 1939, war broke out in Europe when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. One year later, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Fascist Italy that formed the Axis Powers. This alliance compelled President Roosevelt to provide aid to China and begin constricting and eventually embargoing the delivery of oil, steel, iron, and other materiel that the Japanese military relied on. Rather than withdraw from China or cease hostilities, Japan began devising a strategy that would make their empire the undisputed power in the Pacific, setting a collision course with the United States.

### *Development of the Amphibious Warfare Mission*

The Marine Corps had been preparing for a conflict with Japan

---

in the Pacific. Major Earl H. “Pete” Ellis, assigned to the Operations and Training Division in the early 1920s, crafted a major component of the Marine Corps’ contribution to operational plans for use in a future war with Japan, or what became known as “War Plan Orange.” The Commandant approved Ellis’s document, *Operation Plan 712 (Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia)*, on 23 July 1921. Ellis theorized that Marines would need to seize numerous small Japanese-held islands for the Navy to build a network of support bases for its fleet during an offensive campaign across the Pacific Ocean. The Japanese could be expected to anticipate these moves and would defend the islands, so Marines likely would have to conduct amphibious assaults on enemy-defended beachheads.

Ellis’s writings drove the Marine Corps’ development of amphibious warfare doctrine in the 1920s, and Lejeune worked to have the mission formally assigned to the Marine Corps. The Commandant argued that a mobile force in support of fleet operations ashore would be vital in a war with Japan, as the United States had no developed naval bases between Hawaii and the Philippines. To study and develop the necessary capabilities for amphibious assault operations, the Marine Corps conducted several important landing exercises with the Navy during the 1920s. In the first exercise, from January to April 1922, Marines led by Lieutenant Colonel Richard M. Cutts undertook landings at Guantánamo Bay and Culebra, Puerto Rico. These exercises tested the feasibility of landing heavy equipment, such as 5-ton and 10-ton tractors as well as 75mm and 155mm field guns. Valuable experience was gained, especially in protecting landed equipment and resolving communication issues during a landing.

From December 1923 through February 1924, more than 3,300 officers and enlisted Marines under the command of Brigadier General Eli Cole participated in Fleet Exercise Number IV.





Marines of the Expeditionary Force wade ashore from a landing boat at Culebra, Puerto Rico, during fleet maneuvers in 1924. Exercises like these are why LtGen H. M. Smith wrote that “the Japanese bases in the Pacific were captured on the beaches of the Caribbean.”

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

This exercise, among the most ambitious to date, was conducted at Culebra and around the Panama Canal Zone and included both defensive and offensive training. To better understand landing supplies and equipment under stressful circumstances, a detachment of 25 Marines and 1 officer assigned to the freighter USS *Sirius* (AK 18) worked out how to properly load combat cargo to allow for efficient unloading. Finally, these exercises experimented with specialized landing craft, as standard ships' boats proved difficult for Marines to disembark under fire on an active beach. About 1,500 Marines also took part in the Joint Army-Navy Exercises held in April 1925 off the Hawaiian Islands.

---

Successful landings were made against the opposing force, more equipment was tested, and landing tactics were improved.

Manpower commitments prevented Marines from taking part in Fleet exercises for the rest of the decade. Alongside persistent commitments in Latin America and China, Marines were twice called on for emergencies in the United States. For about six months from 1921 to 1922 and again in 1926–27, more than 2,000 Marines were organized to protect the U.S. mail after a series of high-profile robberies resulted in millions of dollars in theft. Armed Marines guarded post offices, distribution centers, and railcars to ward off robberies. In both instances, the Marines' presence curbed the robberies within a matter of months.

Although unable to take part in naval exercises, the Marine Corps still progressed toward its amphibious assault mission. In 1925, Lejeune ordered overseas expeditions and ship-to-shore operations incorporated as subjects in the tactical course of study in both the Field and Company Officers' Schools. By 1926, landing operations comprised 49 total hours of instruction as compared to just 5 hours the year before. In 1927, the Joint Army and Navy Board assigned the Marine Corps responsibility for providing and maintaining forces to seize advanced naval bases necessary for a future naval campaign. This *Joint Action of the Navy and the Army*, which outlined responsibilities between the Services, called for Marines to receive special training in amphibious assaults to capture and establish beachheads before being relieved by Army forces during prolonged operations ashore. These plans were updated routinely in the following years. The Marine Corps retained the mission of conducting amphibious assaults and supporting land operations for the Fleet as its primary mission through the 1930s and into World War II.

With amphibious operations a formal priority, and as American foreign policy evolved to reduce commitments in Latin

---

America and China in the 1930s, the Marine Corps focused on refining tactics, equipment, and logistics for amphibious operations. Marines resumed participation in landing exercises in the 1930s. They conducted landings in the Caribbean in 1931 and participated in the Joint Army-Navy Exercises on Oahu, Hawaii, in 1932.

In 1933, Major General Commandant Ben Fuller redesignated the East and West Coast Expeditionary Forces as the Fleet Marine Force (FMF), which referred to Marines maintained for service with the Fleet. In December 1933, Secretary of the Navy Claude A. Swanson went further when he issued *General Order 241, The Fleet Marine Force*. While the Marine Corps had already been tasked with the amphibious assault mission, Secretary Swanson's order formally integrated the FMF with the Fleet, giving the commander in chief of the Fleet, a Navy officer, operational control of Marines while embarked during operations and exercises. Although some Marine officers chafed at permanently placing Marines under Navy command, the order also recognized the Corps' vital role in a modern naval campaign. These changes proved critical to carrying out amphibious assault operations whose sheer complexity required intense collaboration between Marines and sailors.

As Marines continued to gain practical experience, the Service worked to establish formal doctrine. On 14 November 1933, Commandant Fuller directed Marine Corps Schools to discontinue classes and prepare instructors and students to immediately begin work drafting a manual on landing operations. The completed manual, first titled the *Tentative Landing Manual*, was issued on a limited basis in 1934. In the following years, it was revised and retitled before the Navy Department made it official doctrine, issuing it as *Fleet Training Publication 167* in 1938. The manual represented one of the most important contributions the Marine Corps made toward the art of warfare. The



The ceremonial role remained an important duty of Marine ships' detachments well into the twentieth century, even as the Fleet Marine Force came to the forefront of the Corps.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

manual covers all aspects of landing operations, including training, planning, tactics, command and staff functions, communications, and the role of support units. Critically, it addressed ship-to-shore movement considerations and recognized that logistics before, during, and after a landing were critically important to success. In subsequent years, the Marine Corps and Navy frequently revised the manual as additional exercises, experimentation, and operational experience during World War II yielded more expertise. The manual defined basic doctrine for Marine operations in the Pacific during World War II and became the major guide that all Services followed when making amphibious landings in North Africa and Europe.

From 1935 through 1940, innovations and changes con-

---

tinued to improve the quality of Marine officer education. The Corps constructed new buildings at Quantico to meet the growing needs of Marine Corps Schools. In 1935, the Marine Corps created the Platoon Leaders Class as a means of evaluating and training new lieutenants. It further expanded The Basic School, which was drawing students from four sources: the U.S. Naval Academy, the enlisted ranks, Platoon Leaders' Classes (Reserve), and directly from colleges and universities. In October 1939, the Marine Corps began offering resident advanced training for reserve officers, with the initial Reserve Officers' Course consisting of reserve first and second lieutenants.

The Marine Corps started World War II mobilization as early as 8 September 1939, when President Roosevelt first declared a state of limited national emergency following Germany's invasion of Poland. Between September 1939 and November 1941, the Corps' total strength rose from 20,000 to about 65,000, which included the mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve to active duty. Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, as well as The Basic School in Philadelphia, used existing educational infrastructure to meet the need to train and educate new Marines. The Basic School created a Reserve Officers' Course to parallel the work of the Quantico Reserve Officers' Course. To further meet the demand for new Marine officers, the 17th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General Thomas Holcomb, on 8 October 1940, ordered Brigadier General Philip H. Torrey, commandant of Marine Corps Schools, to prepare for several hundred new officer candidates. Torrey organized a special detachment to run the Candidates for Commission Class. Eventually, increased numbers of officer candidates were brought into the educational programs from every source available, and all Marine Corps training facilities were taxed to the limit. After 20 years of focus, the Marine Corps had devised and refined

---

amphibious warfare doctrine, formulated a more efficient staff system, and created a viable training and educational infrastructure, all of which prepared the Service for the war that was on the horizon.

---

# CHAPTER 6

## World War II, 1941–1945

At the beginning of 1941, the Fleet Marine Force was spread thin around the globe. In February, the Marine Corps redesignated the 1st and 2d Marine Brigades as divisions, but their Marines were stationed everywhere from Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and Parris Island, South Carolina, to Quantico, Virginia, and San Diego, California. By the summer, events in Europe and Asia began to drive deployments. In July, the Marine Corps pulled the 6th Marines out of the 2d Marine Division to form the basis for a Marine brigade ordered to relieve a British garrison in Iceland. The 4th Marines remained on duty in China but soon withdrew. Other Marines were in the Philippines, the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, Wake, Midway, American Samoa, Panama, and several British islands in the Caribbean. In addition, Marines were serving at posts and stations in the United States and aboard ships of the Navy. All told, nearly one-third of the Service's strength was overseas in late 1941.

There were more Marines on the way, however, as the Corps' authorized strength was increased in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's gradual rearmament and buildup. The addition of at least

---

two Marine infantry divisions and two supporting aircraft wings required a vastly increased supporting establishment and more space. The Service ran out of training areas in June 1941, when there were around 3,600 officers and 41,400 enlisted Marines. Within a year, that number would double. Commandant Holcomb worked to build a balanced force of all arms and searched for space to train the expanding Marine Corps. Major General Holcomb's search eventually led to the opening of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, that summer followed by Camp Pendleton, California, a year later. Owing to the Marine Corps' roles and experiences since the early 1900s, the new Marines received training from veterans of extensive foreign and expeditionary duty before being stationed throughout the world. The veterans and new Marines alike stood ready, as Holcomb said in a speech broadcast over the radio in November 1941, to "do duty as the frontiersmen of the nation's huge new defense network." Two weeks later, Holcomb's words rang prophetic, and the Marine Corps was put to its greatest test to date.

On the morning of 7 December 1941, Japan launched a devastating attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii. Japanese military leaders intended to destroy the American Pacific Fleet while it was at anchor and thereby compel the United States to sue for peace and abstain from interfering in Japan's conquest of the Western Pacific. The Japanese took the Fleet by surprise and subjected it to nearly two hours of attacks. The Marine detachments aboard the battleships fought back alongside their shipmates. Of the eight battleships present, two were sunk, and the remaining six were out of action for months or years before they returned to service. Crucially for the Pacific Fleet, all three American aircraft carriers were out to sea and spared from the attack. Moreover, the Japanese did not target repair facilities or oil storage at Pearl Harbor, allowing the Pacific Fleet to quickly begin rebuilding efforts.



---

The Japanese also conducted simultaneous attacks on Marine, Navy, and Army Air Forces airfields. They managed to destroy all but one of the aircraft at Marine Corps Air Station Ewa. The Marines of Marine Aircraft Group 21 organized and directed the defense of the airfield to keep it operational. Their efforts allowed Navy and Army aircraft unable to reach their own stations to land for servicing. The other Marines on the island quickly moved to defend the beaches against a Japanese landing that never came.

When the attack was over, approximately 2,400 Americans were dead, including 109 Marines. The next day in Washington, DC, President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress, calling 7 December “a date which will live in infamy.” Immediately after the speech, Congress declared war on Japan, bringing the United States into the conflict that had been expanding for more than two years.

### *Defending Advanced Naval Bases*

Within a few hours after the Pearl Harbor attack, Japanese ships and aircraft attacked Marines garrisoned at the outlying American-held islands of Guam, Midway, and Wake. On Guam, which the United States had annexed in 1898, there were more than 150 Marines, around 400 Navy personnel, and local militia armed with nothing larger than .30-caliber machine guns. For two days, the Japanese bombarded Guam before landing approximately 6,000 troops. The defenders fought a hard and bitter battle against overwhelming numerical odds, but the island commander was forced to surrender on 10 December 1941. Guam became the first American outpost to fall to the Japanese.

Three hours after the initial attack on Guam, Japanese aircraft began bombing Wake Island. After three days of heavy bombardment, the Japanese fleet debarked a landing force to take the island. Major James P. S. Devereux's Wake Island de-

---

tachment of the 1st Defense Battalion and Major Paul A. Putnam's Marine Fighting Squadron 211 drove off the initial attack, sinking two Japanese destroyers and damaging several more ships. The enemy withdrew after the first attack but continued to bomb the island. They returned with a landing force of about 1,500 men. By 22 December, Marine Fighting Squadron 211 had lost all its aircraft, so the squadron picked up weapons to reinforce Devereux's defense battalion, proving the adage, "Every Marine a Rifleman." After a courageous fight against overwhelming odds to defend the island, the commander of Wake surrendered the island on 23 December 1941. Among the dead was Captain Henry T. Elrod from the squadron, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his actions defending Wake Island in the air and on the ground. Today, the main road at the Marine Corps Officer Candidates School at Quantico is named after him.

Just 10 hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese began invading the Philippines. The month before, the 4th Marines had been ordered from Shanghai, China, to the Philippines, completing the movement one week before the Japanese invasion. Army General Douglas MacArthur directed the Marine regiment to take over the beach defenses of the island fortress of Corregidor in Manila Bay. Marines of the 1st Separate Marine Battalion manned antiaircraft batteries at Cavite Navy Yard. On 10 December, the Japanese attacked General MacArthur's force of Americans and Filipinos, pushing them back onto the Bataan Peninsula, where they fought a fierce defensive action. From 23–29 January 1942, a naval battalion of Marines and sailors defeated a Japanese force that had landed at Longoskawayan Point, to the rear of the American and Filipino forces on the peninsula. Despite that success, the Philippines was cut off from any realistic chance of resupply or reinforcement. General MacArthur was ordered to withdraw to Australia

---

and turn over command to Army Major General Jonathan M. Wainwright. Bataan fell on 9 April after months of fierce fighting. Marines were among the 75,000 U.S. and Filipino forces on Bataan who were forced into the infamous “Bataan Death March” after being taken prisoner. The following month, the Japanese took Corregidor despite a fierce defense from the 4th Marines. Approximately 1,400 Marines of the regiment subsequently became prisoners of war. Nearly 500 of them would die in captivity. The loss of the already vaunted 4th Marines was a blow to the Marine Corps’ morale. Just five months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the American defenders had been overrun, and the Japanese occupied the Philippines.

On 7 May 1942, the aircraft carriers, cruisers, and destroyers of Task Forces 11 and 17 searched for a Japanese invasion force headed for New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The carrier aircraft of the opposing forces clashed in the Battle of the Coral Sea, the first major naval battle fought entirely between aircraft carriers. Although both sides took heavy losses, the Japanese invasion force was turned back and prevented from capturing Port Moresby, New Guinea. To the Allies, holding Port Moresby was essential for the security of Australia and could be used as a springboard for future offensives. After the disaster at Pearl Harbor, the Battle of the Coral Sea fully demonstrated that the Pacific Fleet was back in the fight, even if it was not ready to begin a sustained offensive

### *Expanding the Marine Corps*

During the six months after Pearl Harbor, enlistments in the Marine Corps exploded, going from 2,000 per month before the war to 8,500 in December, 13,000 in January 1942, and 10,000 in February. By June, the strength of the Service had more than tripled. None of the Americans inducted into the Marine Corps in that period were Black, however. No African

---

## ***Marine Raiders***

When preparing for war against Japan, the Marine Corps refined its amphibious assault doctrine and practices. Some Marines, however, believed the Corps would benefit from specialized units able to conduct reconnaissance and strike quickly at targets behind enemy lines, especially against Japanese defenders ensconced in difficult to penetrate jungle terrain.

To accomplish this, the Marine Raiders were formed, conceived as light infantry battalions trained to land from rubber boats, move quickly through jungle terrain behind enemy lines. Two battalions of Raiders were formed in 1942: the 1st Raider Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A. Edson, and the 2d Raider Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson. Carlson's battalion conducted the Makin Raid on 17 August 1942. Meanwhile, Edson's battalion landed on Guadalcanal on 7 August, secured Tulagi, then earned immortality in the defense of Bloody Ridge on Guadalcanal on 13–14 September 1942. Carlson's Raiders landed on Guadalcanal in November 1942 and conducted the Long Patrol, clearing Japanese forces from jungle outside the Guadalcanal perimeter.

Two additional Raider battalions were formed in late 1942, and a regiment was formed in March 1943. The Raiders participated in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville campaigns in 1943. By 1944, however, Navy and Marine Corps leadership decided that the war called for additional standard units, which meant the Raiders' specialized missions no longer justified the resources needed for other missions. The units were disbanded, and the 1st Marine Raider Regiment was redesignated the 4th Marines in February 1944.

The Marine Raiders were reborn in the twenty-first century. U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command was activated on 24 February 2006. From its inception, there was a movement to claim the title "Raiders" for these Marines. In 2015, the Marine Special Operations Regiment was redesignated the Marine Raider Regiment.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

Americans had served as Marines since the American Revolution, when at least three Black men are known to have enlisted in the Continental Marines. Beginning in 1798, the Marine Corps had forbidden Black men from serving in any capacity, including in segregated units as the Army and Navy had done previously. In June 1941, when partial war mobilization of the nation created millions of jobs in the defense industry, African American labor and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph met with President Roosevelt to demand the government end discrimination in federal employment, including military service. In the wake of that meeting, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, barring government agencies from refusing employment based on creed, color, or ethnicity and establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee to oversee the implementation of equal opportunity in federal employment and the opening of the Services to African Americans. EO8802, however, did not desegregate the military.

The Marine Corps began recruiting African Americans on 1 June 1942 and trained the new recruits at Montford Point, located within Camp Lejeune. Among the first African American drill instructors was Field Sergeant Gilbert Johnson. The initial Montford Point Marines were assigned to two segregated combat units commanded and staffed by White officers, the 51st and 52d Composite Defense Battalions. While these defense battalions saw limited combat in the Pacific theater, the Montford Point Marines assigned to ammunition and depot units became engaged in savage fighting at places like Guam, Saipan, and Iwo Jima. By the close of World War II, 19,168 African Americans had served in the Marine Corps, with about 13,000 serving overseas. Ten African Americans had been killed in action, and more than 80 were wounded in battle. Frederick C. Branch, a Montford Point Marine, graduated from Officer Candidates School on the Marine Corps' birthday in 1945 to



Drill instructor Cpl Edgar R. Huff faces his platoon of recruits at Montford Point, Camp Lejeune, NC.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

become the first African American Marine officer. In the end, Montford Point Marines were pathbreakers who led the long and difficult struggle against discrimination and segregation in the United States.

Unique to World War II, the Marine Corps found ways to leverage the nation's varied cultural and ethnic composition for an advantage on the battlefield. Since the advent of radio transmissions at the beginning of the twentieth century, militaries developed methods to intercept and decipher messages. To maintain the security of communications, the Marine Corps employed an idea from Philip Johnston, the son of a missionary to the Navajo Nation. As a rich, unwritten language that was unintelligible to anyone but native speakers, Navajo promised communications security. After a successful demonstration at Camp Elliott in February 1942, where Navajo radio teams



Cpl Essie Lucas and PFC Betty J. Ayers, graduates of Motor Transport School, replace a bus engine at Camp Lejeune, NC.  
*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

transmitted simulated field combat messages in tribal dialect, the Marine Corps established a pilot program in April 1942 and an official program five months later.

Each Navajo recruit underwent basic training at the Marine

---

Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, before assignment to the Field Signal Battalion Training Center at Camp Pendleton. While learning communications procedures and equipment, the 29 Navajos comprising the first group also devised Navajo words for military terms that were not part of their language. For example, the word for turtle was used to represent tanks. Alternate terms were provided in the code for letters frequently repeated in the English language. To compound the difficulty of the program, all code talkers had to memorize both the primary and alternate code terms, as security precautions meant no printed material could be produced.

The code talkers were sent to combat divisions in the Pacific after completing training. Almost immediately, they made a positive impact. In May 1943, division commanders reported to the Commandant that excellent results had been achieved to date in the employment of Navajo code talkers in training and combat situations, and that they had performed in a highly commendable fashion. This high degree of praise concerning the Navajo Marines' performances prevailed throughout the war and came from commanders at all levels. There is no evidence that the Japanese ever deciphered code talker messages.

Eventually, Marine recruiting teams were sent to the Navajo territory, and a central recruitment office was set up at Fort Wingate, New Mexico. By August 1943, a total of 191 Navajos had joined the Marine Corps for the code talker program. Estimates have placed the total number of Navajos in the program by the end of the war at upward of 420 Marines. While the exact number is unknown, more Navajos volunteered to become code talkers than could be accepted. In addition, Navajos served honorably in a variety of military occupational specialties throughout the Marine Corps during the war.

As in the previous World War, the Marine Corps also expanded opportunities for women to serve during the buildup



---

for World War II. On 30 July 1942, President Roosevelt signed a law that created a women's reserve as a branch of the U.S. Naval Reserve. Within months, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve formed, with Major Ruth Cheney Streeter as director. Like the women who had so ably served their country and the Marine Corps during World War I, the Women's Reserve played a key role in World War II. More than 23,000 women entered active duty, relieving males for assignment to combat and other duties. Training facilities were established at Parris Island for recruits, and classes were conducted at Quantico for officer candidates before all training for women was consolidated at Camp Lejeune. Although duties for women Marines during World War I had been clerical in nature, World War II created a demand for many women to be assigned as aviation mechanics and truck drivers as well as performing other tasks that men normally accomplished. Commandant Holcomb was questioned about what special nickname he thought women Marines should have, "There's hardly any work at our Marine stations that women can't do as well as men," he replied. "They do some work far better than men. . . . What is more, they're real Marines. They don't have a nickname, and they don't need one. They get their basic training in a Marine atmosphere, at a Marine Post. They inherit the traditions of the Marines. They are Marines."

### *High Tide for the Japanese*

Victory at the Battle of Coral Sea in May 1942 was the first instance where the Allies checked the Japanese advance across the Pacific, but the Americans were still on the defensive. The fall of other outposts made Midway the forwardmost American base by the end of May 1942. Only six square kilometers of land, the atoll (a circular coral island with a lagoon in the center) was important for the Americans as a base for long-range aircraft and as a refueling point for ships. For the Japanese, seizing the

---

atoll would blind the Americans, making Hawaii vulnerable and crippling attempts to launch a counteroffensive against Japan's conquest of the Central Pacific. On the night of 7–8 December 1941, a pair of Japanese destroyers arrived off Midway and bombarded the outpost. Marines of the 6th Defense Battalion delivered accurate counterbattery fire from their shore guns. After taking several hits and discovering that two American submarines had arrived, the destroyers broke off the attack. Among the casualties was First Lieutenant George Cannon, who remained at his post while mortally wounded. He became the first Marine in the war to receive the Medal of Honor.

U.S. leaders understood that Midway's strategic importance meant the Japanese would return, and they began sending reinforcements. Detachments from the 3d and 4th Defense Battalions and the 2d Raider Battalion arrived to augment the 6th Defense Battalion, which had suffered four Marines killed in the first Japanese attack. Throughout the winter of 1941–42, aerial reinforcements from Marine Aircraft Group 22 arrived at Midway, with 17 Marine Vought SB2U Vindicators of Marine Scout-Bombing Squadron 231 and 14 Marine Brewster F2A-3 Buffaloes of Marine Fighter Squadron 221. Naval intelligence soon discovered that the enemy was planning another attack on Midway. In May 1942, more Marine aircraft arrived along with Navy and Army Air Forces squadrons. When the battle occurred, there were more than 100 U.S. aircraft operating from the atoll.

Early in the morning of 4 June 1942, the garrison on Midway received word that a massive wave of Japanese aircraft was approaching. The defenders, along with carrier aircraft from USS *Enterprise* (CV 6) and USS *Hornet* (CV 8), rushed toward the enemy formations. Midway anti-aircraft batteries opened fire as the Japanese aircraft came within range, and the first bombs began to fall at 0630. Within the next half hour, nearly everything aboveground was damaged: fuel tanks were set afire, a hangar

---

was destroyed, and the powerhouse was hit. Only the runways escaped damage. The air battle lasted only 20 minutes. The outnumbered Marine fighters put up a savage defense, but only 10 survived the first brief encounter. The Marine bombers attacked the Japanese carrier unsuccessfully, losing 11 in the process.

The Navy's carrier-based squadrons pounced on the Japanese carriers and exacted revenge. On the second day of the battle, Marine Captain Richard E. Fleming led the attack that sank the Japanese cruiser *Mikuma* (1934), for which Fleming was awarded the Medal of Honor. When the two-day battle was over, the Americans had sunk four Japanese carriers and downed hundreds of the enemy's finest pilots, though at the cost of U.S. Navy carrier USS *Yorktown* (CV 5). The Battle of Midway represented the high point of the Japanese advance across the Pacific. While Japan would still conduct local and regional offensives, it never regained the strategic initiative.

The early holding actions in the Pacific provided the United States with the opportunity to gird for a long struggle. The Marine Corps had been expanding for war before the Pearl Harbor attack and numbered approximately 65,000 officers and enlisted. It continued to expand until it reached its maximum strength of 485,833 in August 1945. In that time, the Marine Corps Schools commissioned 15,000 second lieutenants and gave specialized and advanced training to about 20,000 additional Marine officers. Before the war ended, the Marine Corps would number six divisions and five aircraft wings, the largest force in the Service's history.

### *Marines at Guadalcanal*

The Japanese advance had been stopped at Midway, but it was not clear at the time. The Japanese had driven the Americans from the Philippines, the British from Malaya, and the Dutch from the East Indies. Throughout spring 1942, they enclosed



A patrol of Marines crosses the Lunga River on Guadalcanal in 1942. This photograph was taken by 2dLt Karl Thayer Soule, assigned as an intelligence officer for photography to the 1st Marine Division.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

their new empire with a massive defensive perimeter of strategically important positions that stretched from the Aleutian Islands of Alaska to Burma in Southeast Asia. Segments of the perimeter were made up of islands such as the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, which the Japanese took in May 1942. On one of the islands, called Guadalcanal, enemy troops began constructing an airfield from which they could threaten Allied lines of communication between the United States and Australia. It also seemed possible that the Japanese would advance from Guadalcanal to the New Hebrides, Fiji, and Samoa to cut off or invade Australia, 1,700 kilometers away. To prevent these potential outcomes, the United States launched its first major offensive in the Pacific, signaling a change in Allied strategy. The initial step of the Solomons campaign, Operation Watchtower, was an attempt to pierce the enemy defensive perimeter by seizing Guadalcanal and the surrounding islands.

---

After months of training, the 1st Marine Division, under the command of Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, future 18th Commandant, began to arrive in the Pacific during summer 1942 to serve as the landing force for Operation Watchtower. They went ashore on 7 August 1942, landing on the beaches of Guadalcanal and the nearby islands of Tulagi and Florida. These landings marked the 1st Marine Division's first amphibious assaults against enemy forces. The initial landings went smoothly, with little resistance on Guadalcanal. Fighting was fiercer on Tulagi, the seaplane base across the bay. The 1st Marine Parachute Battalion fought dug-in Japanese sailors on the island of Gavutu in the Americans' first contested amphibious landing in the Pacific War. The fierce, suicidal defense of the Japanese from cave strongpoints was a preview of the amphibious battles to come. The Marines nonetheless secured the islands after three days and began a long ordeal of combatting enemy attacks, tropical disease, and a lack of supplies.

After securing Guadalcanal, engineers completed the enemy airfield, naming it Henderson Field after Marine Major Lofton Henderson, who was killed in action commanding Marine Scout Bombing Squadron 241 at the Battle of Midway. The new Marine airfield was home to the "Cactus Air Force," named after the island's code name, which proved to be a vital asset in the 1st Marine Division's efforts to fight off Japanese attempts to recapture the island in the coming months. Captain Marion E. Carl from Marine Attack Squadron 223 became the first Marine ace of the war on 26 August 1942. Captain Carl had already earned a Navy Cross during the Battle of Midway, but he received a second one for extraordinary heroism during the fighting for Guadalcanal. In October, Marine Attack Squadron 121 relieved Carl's squadron. Captain Joseph J. Foss from the squadron shot down 16 enemy aircraft within his first 12 days flying from Henderson Field. After three months, he shot down



Then-PltSgt John Basilone, 1943.  
*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

26 Japanese aircraft, tying the American record that Army Captain Eddie Rickenbacker set in World War I.

During the period that Carl and Foss became aces, the Japanese attempted several times to collapse the Marine perimeter that defended Henderson Field. In the Battle of Alligator Creek

---

on 21 August, the 1st Marines killed approximately 800 Japanese soldiers who assaulted the perimeter at the Ilu River, nearly wiping out an entire detachment from an enemy regiment. Japanese attacks at what was called “Bloody Ridge” or “Edson’s Ridge,” along the Matanikau River, followed three weeks later. In the Battle for Henderson Field on 23–26 October, an entire Japanese regiment assaulted the perimeter. Sergeant John Basilone and his two sections of heavy machine guns proved integral in holding their sector. For two days, Sergeant Basilone directed fire, moved an extra gun into position, and resupplied his Marines with ammunition. By the end of the battle, he was forced to use his pistol and machete against charging enemy soldiers. For his leadership, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. During all these engagements, the Japanese dramatically underestimated the size of the Marine force, attacking with insufficient numbers and failing to coordinate their ground offensives with air and sea support.

The U.S. Navy fought several major naval battles in and around the island during the campaign, contesting control of the seas with the Japanese. Almost nightly, Navy patrol boats fought skirmishes with Japanese vessels attempting to resupply enemy troops on the island that the Americans nicknamed the “Tokyo Express.” The Marines suffered under air attacks, daily artillery shelling, and several bombardments from the Imperial Japanese Navy. The valiant efforts of aviators and sailors meant that Japanese forces never outnumbered or outgunned the Marines, however, nor did they have more to eat. Marines grumbled, but they fared better than the approximately 15,000 Japanese who, all but cut off from the outside world by the end of 1942, suffered from malnutrition and disease so badly they named it “Starvation Island.”

In December, the exhausted 1st Marine Division withdrew after operating in Guadalcanal’s inhospitable environment for

---

four months. Taking their place was a corps composed of the 2d Marine Division as well as the Army's 23d "Americal" Infantry Division and the 25th Infantry Division. The fresh American forces soon went on the offensive. Constant fighting in the steaming tropical jungles for the next month convinced the Japanese that they were beaten. By 9 February 1943, they evacuated approximately 11,000 survivors of a force that once numbered more than 31,000 troops.

The capture of Guadalcanal marked another turning point of the Pacific war. Japanese losses during the campaign were listed at approximately 14,800 killed or missing in action while another 9,000 died of wounds and disease. Marine and Army casualties within the ground forces amounted to nearly 1,600 officers and men killed and 4,700 wounded. Marine Aviation losses were 55 dead, with 127 wounded and 85 missing. General Vandegrift later summed up the importance of the victory at Guadalcanal:

We struck at Guadalcanal to halt the advance of the Japanese. We did not know how strong he was, nor did we know his plans. We knew only that he was moving down the island chain and that he had to be stopped.

We were as well trained and as well armed as time and our peacetime experience allowed us to be. We needed combat to tell us how effective our training, our doctrines, and our weapons had been.

We tested them against the enemy, and we found that they worked. From that moment in 1942, the tide turned, and the Japanese never again advanced.



---

### *Operation Cartwheel and the Solomons Campaign*

Guadalcanal provided a beachhead for American, Australian, New Zealand, and Dutch forces in the South Pacific under the command of Admiral William F. Halsey Jr. to drive northwest from the central Solomon Islands and seize and occupy the rest of the island chain. Meanwhile, U.S. Army and Australian troops under General MacArthur, now Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, moved west along the northern coast of New Guinea. In what was known as Operation Cartwheel, both forces were to converge on Rabaul, New Britain, the major Japanese air and naval base that anchored enemy defenses in the Southwest Pacific. Shaping operations began on 21 February 1943, when the Army's 43d Infantry Division and the 3d Marine Raider Battalion seized the Russell Islands to secure a vital staging area. Five months later, Army units reinforced by the 1st Marine Raider Regiment (1st and 4th Raider Battalions) and the 9th Defense Battalion fought a vicious battle to capture the New Georgia Islands and an airfield at Munda that Japanese aircraft had been using to attack Guadalcanal. Taking Munda moved Allied airpower some 300 kilometers nearer to Rabaul, within range of heavy bombers, though still beyond the reach of most Allied medium bombers and escort fighters. Nevertheless, this allowed Allied forces to pursue isolating Japan's air base at Rabaul.

To cut that distance nearly in half and complete the isolation of Rabaul, the Allies aimed to seize Bougainville, the largest island in the Solomons chain. On 1 November, Major General Allen H. Turnage's 3d Marine Division, under the operational control of the I Marine Amphibious Corps, the senior Marine echelon in the Southwest Pacific, landed on Bougainville against heavy opposition. Prior to the landing, the Marine 2d Parachute Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Victor H. Krulak executed a diversionary raid on Choiseul, southeast of the major target

---

area, and New Zealand troops attacked Mono and Stirling Islands in the Treasuries southwest of Bougainville. Within three weeks, the beachhead had been pushed inland 4,500 meters. Marine and Army forces would go on to fight several bloody engagements against the Japanese before fully securing the island. In December, Army troops began relieving the Marines at Bougainville. By the end of 1943, much of the 3d Marine Division was off the island and preparing for future operations. During the Bougainville campaign, Marines sustained 423 men killed and 1,418 wounded, but they inflicted a heavier cost on the enemy.

Throughout the campaign, Allied forces adapted their tactics, techniques, and procedures, especially in the areas of combat loading and logistics, all of which immeasurably added to the success of the assault operation at Bougainville. Marine Aviation played a significant role providing air support to Marine ground forces from airfields recently constructed by Marine Engineers and Naval Construction Battalions on Bougainville. The Allies also used the Bougainville airfields to launch aerial attacks on Rabaul, isolating the forces there and gradually eroding their ability to project power. The Japanese soon found themselves on the defensive and isolated from Imperial forces elsewhere in the Pacific.

The 1st Marine Division, now under the command of the “Rifleman’s Creed” author, Major General William H. Rupertus, returned to the fight after nearly nine months of rest and refitting in Australia. In December 1943, the division was the main effort in the operation to establish a beachhead on the western peninsula of New Britain, at the opposite end of the island from the Rabaul naval base. Within three weeks, the Marines had neutralized enemy resistance in the west and secured two airfields from where aircraft could continue attacking Rabaul. In the fighting, Major Gregory “Pappy” Boyington, the squadron commander of

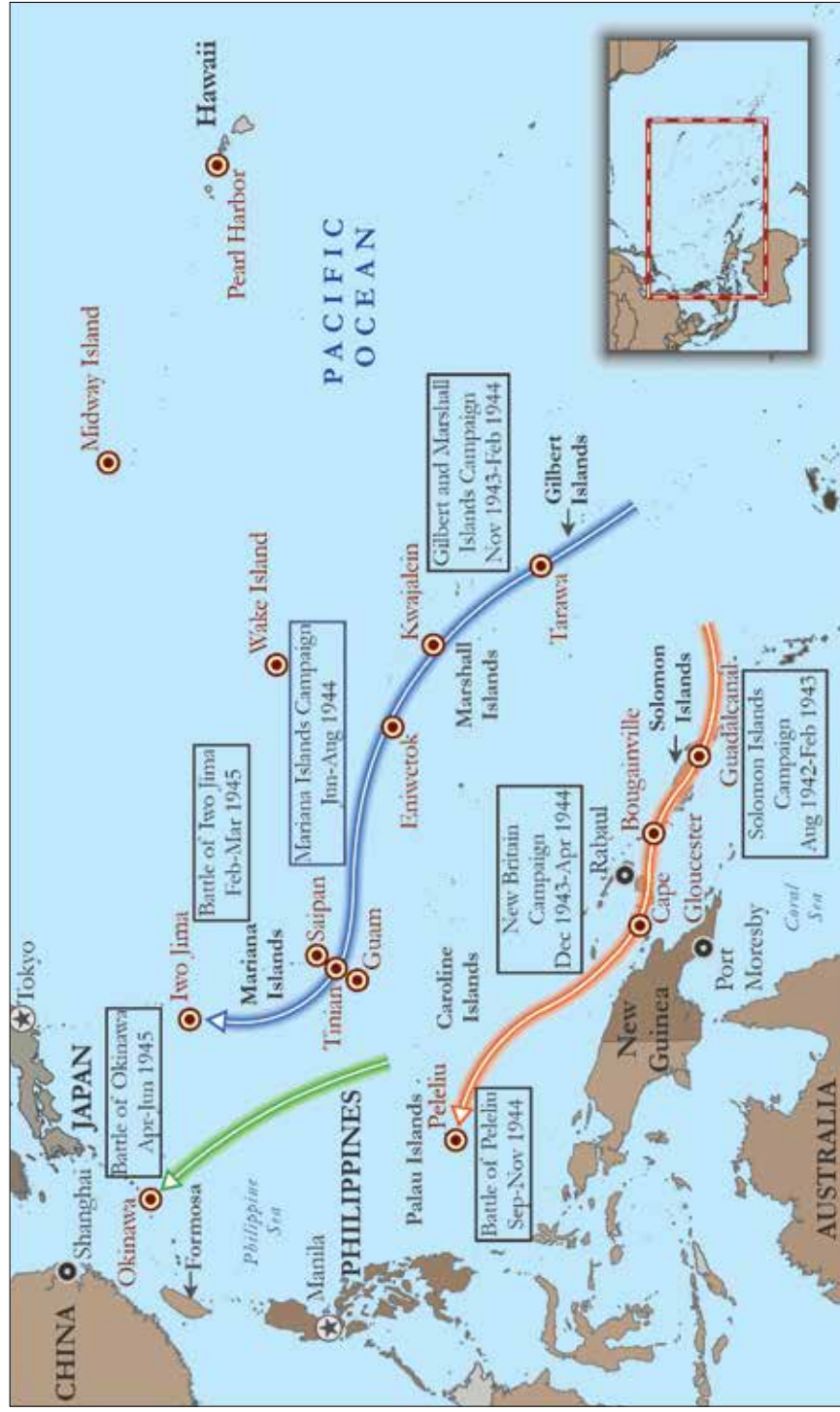
---

Marine Fighting Squadron 214, became the highest-scoring Marine ace of the war just moments before he was forced to bail out of his Vought F4U-1A Corsair. Believed dead, he received the Medal of Honor posthumously. Boyington, however, survived and would spend the rest of the war as a prisoner.

By March 1944, Allied forces had succeeded in isolating Rabaul. With the once formidable naval base neutralized, Allied forces bypassed the garrison, marooning 100,000 enemy troops for the remaining 17 months of the war. With Operation Cartwheel ending, the 1st Marine Division left New Britain and went back to the Guadalcanal area. On the small island of Pavuvu, the division rested and refitted. By January 1944, the Japanese had lost more than 10,000 to defend the Northern Solomons. U.S. losses were less than 1,000 killed and 2,800 wounded. Once Allied supremacy had been achieved in the Southwest Pacific, the focus of offensive operations shifted to the Central Pacific.

### *The Two-Pronged Strategy and Tarawa*

Within weeks of the start of fighting on Bougainville, Marines from the 2d Marine Division were set to launch a new campaign 2,000 kilometers to the northeast in the Gilbert Islands. At the beginning of 1943, senior American and British civilian and military leaders had agreed to grind down the Axis Powers with constant military and economic pressure, thereby maintaining the initiative and setting the conditions for unconditional surrender. In the Pacific, the strategic objectives were to stop the Japanese from consolidating their gains by launching large-scale, coordinated land, air, and sea combat operations. Allied planners designed a two-pronged attack in the Southern and Central Pacific to spread Japanese forces thin and maximize Allied military power against a determined enemy. Doing so would force the enemy to react to multiple dilemmas and prevent them from launching their own offensives. Both campaigns would use an



---

“island-hopping” concept. The Allies would attack and seize vital locations for follow-on operations while bypassing and starving out less strategically important places, as they had at Rabaul.

Toward the end of 1943, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assigned General MacArthur the Southwestern Pacific campaign focusing on operations in the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and the Philippines. Concurrently, the Joint Chiefs tasked Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and Commander in Chief of the Pacific Ocean Areas, to lead an island-hopping campaign in the Central Pacific, targeting the Gilbert, Marshall, and Mariana Island chains as steppingstones toward the eventual invasion of Japan.

The two offensives had the common approach to seize locations that could be used as springboards for further combat operations, but the two advances had some differences. In the Southwest Pacific, there were large land masses that gave General MacArthur’s forces more opportunities to bypass. The Central Pacific had fewer and smaller islands and much more sea space in between. As a result, Admiral Nimitz’s forces had few options to avoid costly amphibious assaults in their island-hopping campaign to secure necessary bases and eliminate the Japanese threat.

The launch of the Gilbert Islands campaign in the Central Pacific (code-named Operation Galvanic) on 20 November, while Operation Cartwheel remained ongoing, initiated this two-prong strategy. The Gilbert Islands, composed of 16 atolls and islands that formed the southeast corner of the Japanese defensive perimeter, had to be taken as a first step toward the Mariana Islands, which were the ultimate objective in a drive across the Central Pacific. Planners envisioned basing aircraft in the Mariana Islands to attack the Philippines and Japan. To achieve that objective, the Allies had to engage in an island-hopping campaign that would cover nearly 3,500 kilometers.



The aftermath of the initial assault on Tarawa vividly illustrates how fierce the fighting was. Despite significant losses, Tarawa proved that the Marine Corps' amphibious doctrine could overcome the strongest enemy defenses. Seizing and defending advanced bases was now a reality.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

The key objective of the Gilbert Islands campaign was Tarawa Atoll, particularly the heavily fortified island of Betio. While only a little more than one square kilometer in size, Betio housed a Japanese garrison and air base that threatened Allied lines of communication to Hawaii. The Japanese defended Betio with nearly 5,000 naval troops and Korean laborers, fortifying it with gun emplacements and defensive positions armed with weapons ranging from 7.7mm machine guns to 8-inch coastal defense guns. Rear Admiral Keiji Shibazaki, the garrison commander, boasted that it would take a million Americans 100 years to conquer Betio. The allies sought to neutralize the threat posed by Tarawa and then use the airfield on Betio to support operations against the Marshall Islands. The mission to take Betio fell to

---

the 2d Marine Division, under the command of Major General Julian C. Smith, part of Major General Holland M. Smith's V Amphibious Corps. As the Marines attacked Betio, a reinforced regiment from the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Division would seize Makin, the northernmost atoll in the Gilberts.

Betio was surrounded by a significant coral reef located a few hundred meters offshore. Under normal conditions, the high tide would allow landing craft, vehicle, personnel (LCVPs, or commonly known as Higgins Boats) to pass over the reef. The amphibious task force faced a "neap tide," however, which lowered the water level to a point that prevented LCVPs from passing over the coral. To address the neap tide problem, the Marines turned to their landing vehicle, tracked (LVTs), which had been used primarily for logistics in previous campaigns. As a tracked vehicle, LVTs had the ability to crawl over the reef and continue to shore. The Marines added armor to their existing LVTs and requested a new variant, the LVT-2, be sent from the United States. Even with the influx of LVT-2s, one-half of which went to the Army regiment attacking Makin, there were not enough of the tracked vehicles to fully support the operation. To mitigate this shortage, the landing plan called for the LVTs to ferry Marines to the shore, return to the reef, and pick up additional troops from the LCVPs.

Early in the morning of 20 November 1943, the invasion force arrived off Tarawa. Shortly after 0500, Japanese shore batteries on Betio opened fire on the task force. The American warships responded with a bombardment, while aircraft strafed the beaches. Despite the heavy shelling, many Japanese fortifications remained intact. When the first three waves of Marines began landing at approximately 0900, the Japanese suddenly emerged from their underground positions and delivered intense and accurate fire against the assaulting forces. Defending the beach was out of character for the Japanese, who up to that point in

---

the war had fought by allowing the Americans to land and then using the terrain and environment against them. Despite the barrage, only a few LVTs failed to reach the shore. Casualties in the first wave were relatively light but increased significantly in subsequent waves due to tidal conditions and attrition among the LVTs. Many Marines were forced to disembark from LCVPs at the reef and wade hundreds of meters to shore under heavy enemy fire, resulting in significant casualties.

Around 1100, 2d Marines commander Colonel David M. Shoup waded ashore after his LVT was disabled, taking shrapnel wounds to the leg and a grazing bullet wound to the neck on his way. He nonetheless rallied the Marines on the beach, organized them by late afternoon, and began to push inland. Additional Marines landed the following day, and Colonel Shoup urged them forward against strong enemy resistance. By the afternoon of the second day, Marines had gained the upper hand. Colonel Shoup radioed Major General Julian Smith, who was aboard the battleship USS *Maryland* (BB 46), and reported: "Casualties: many. Percentage dead: unknown. Combat efficiency: we are winning." Finally, at 1330 on November 23, the Marines secured the island, although mop-up operations continued into the next day. Following the battle on Betio, Marines quickly secured the remaining islands in the Tarawa Atoll.

In only 76 hours of fighting, the Marine Corps suffered more than 1,100 killed and nearly 2,300 wounded, equal to the number of Marine casualties in 6 months at Guadalcanal. The Japanese lost approximately 4,500 men, with many choosing to fight to the death or commit suicide rather than surrender. Three Marines were awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for their actions during the battle: First Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman Jr., Staff Sergeant William J. Bordelon, and First Lieutenant William D. Hawkins. Colonel Shoup also received the Medal of Honor and later became the 22d Commandant of the



---

Marine Corps. The 2d Marines' relentless advance in the face of heavy resistance inspired the regiment's motto: "Keep Moving."

The Battle of Tarawa was historically significant, as it marked the first time a seaborne assault had been launched against a well-prepared enemy defending a heavily fortified island. The operation validated the soundness of the Marine Corps' amphibious doctrine but also provided important lessons about landing craft design, naval gunfire support, command and control, and supplying troops ashore. Operationally, it secured lines of communication with Hawaii and, according to Admiral Nimitz, "knocked down the front door to the Japanese defense in the Central Pacific."

### *The Marshall Islands*

After the Gilbert Islands campaign, Major General Smith's V Amphibious Corps shifted its focus to the Marshall Islands, identified by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the next island group necessary to sustain the Central Pacific offensive. Using intelligence gained from aerial reconnaissance made possible by airfields in the now-captured Gilbert Islands, the Joint Chiefs identified a number of islands and atolls. Seizing these would eliminate Japanese airbases that could threaten Allied lines of supply and communication, provide new airbases to extend Allied air power into the Pacific, and perhaps most importantly, offer use of the atolls to support substantial advanced naval bases. With the Central Pacific offensive requiring Allied naval forces to conduct sustained operations thousands of kilometers from established bases such as Pearl Harbor, these bases in the Marshall Islands were vital to sustain the drive toward Japan. The key objectives were Majuro Island, followed by Roi, Namur, and Kwajalein Islands. Once those were secured, V Amphibious Corps would take key islands in the Eniwetok Atoll. On 30 January, a Marine reconnaissance company, along with the U.S. Army's 2d Battal-

---

ion, 106th Infantry, quickly captured Majuro. The next day, 31 January, the 4th Marine Division launched attacks on Roi and Namur, while the U.S. Army's 7th Infantry Division targeted Kwajalein Island. The 23d and 24th Marines secured Roi and Namur in three days, while the 7th Infantry Division captured Kwajalein Island in four days. At Roi and Namur, Marine casualties totaled more than 300 killed and 500 wounded, while the Japanese lost more than 3,500 troops. Although the Japanese inflicted hundreds of casualties on the Marines and soldiers during the Kwajalein Atoll operation, the casualty figures were low compared to those from Tarawa.

Following Kwajalein, the Marines turned their attention to Eniwetok Atoll, with the primary objectives being the islands of Engebi and Eniwetok. The V Amphibious Corps assigned the 22d Marines to neutralize a Japanese airstrip on Engebi and the U.S. Army's 106th Infantry to seize Eniwetok. On 17 February 1944, the 22d Marines attacked Engebi, capturing the island after a single day of fighting. The following day, 18 February, the 106th Infantry assaulted Eniwetok Island. Japanese resistance initially stalled the attack, prompting the command to reinforce the 106th Infantry with a Marine battalion. The combined forces assaulted and overran the heavily defended sector, securing the island within two days. Subsequently, the 22d Marines landed on Parry Island, the final objective of the Marshall Islands campaign, and secured it in two days, completing the capture of Eniwetok Atoll. With the Marshall Islands in American hands, Allied forces began planning for the invasion of the Marianas, the islands that would enable the Allies to strike the Japanese mainland.

### *The Mariana Islands*

After the capture of Eniwetok Atoll, American forces had seized a 25-kilometer-wide lagoon that offered Admiral Nimitz a nat-

---

ural harbor and forward base for ships to support the continued Central Pacific drive. The Marshalls campaign was so successful that Allied forces were able to modify their strategic plan. They decided to bypass Truk Atoll, the Imperial Japanese Navy's major naval base in the Central Pacific, and advance the timetable of Operation Forager, the capture of the Marianas Islands, by nearly five months. U.S. forces would take the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam to check the Japanese in the region and provide air bases for Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bombers to strike Japan's home islands. The V Amphibious Corps, still under the command of the newly promoted Lieutenant General Holland Smith, was selected to capture Saipan and Tinian. The III Amphibious Corps, under the command of Major General Roy S. Geiger, was selected to capture Guam.

Saipan was subjected to intensive air and naval bombardment beginning on 11 June 1944. This preparation, however, failed to neutralize the enemy in the landing areas. Shortly after 0800 on 15 June, the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions, commanded by Major General Thomas E. Watson and Major General Harry Schmidt, embarked on landing craft and started for the southwest coast of the island. As the LVTs neared the beaches, the enemy began firing a heavy fusillade from automatic and anti-boat weapons, mixed with devastating shelling from artillery and mortars. Many of the LVTs were either sunk or disabled, but approximately 8,000 men were ashore within 20 minutes. After three days of fierce fighting, the beachhead was secured, and U.S. forces began moving inland. The battle raged until 9 July, climaxing with Marines annihilating the remaining 4,300 Japanese defenders who mounted 15 hours of suicidal banzai charges.

Saipan, a strategically important island in the Marianas, served as the home of Japan's Central Pacific Fleet, the same force that attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. It was



The Pacific offensives involved hard fighting as Marines dug the Japanese out of fortified positions on islands across the Pacific. Here, Marines attack Japanese positions with hand grenades on Saipan.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

the base of communications between Tokyo and forces in the south and west. Perhaps most critically, it was an integral part of the perimeter that the Japanese called the Absolute National Defensive Sphere, which, as the name suggests, was the line that the empire would defend at all costs. Everything in front of that line the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy were only to give

---

up stubbornly, providing time to build defenses behind it. The Americans attacked the defensive line, however, and created a desperate situation for the Imperial General Staff.

On 19 June, Task Force 58, a Navy carrier group, met a powerful Japanese flotilla, including a large armada of aircraft carriers, which had been dispatched to the Marianas to destroy the attacking force at Saipan. During the engagement, known as the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the Japanese lost three aircraft carriers. American pilots shot down nearly 600 enemy aircraft, leading to the nickname “The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.” This victory guaranteed the United States uncontested control of the seas adjacent to Saipan while frustrating any enemy counterlandings.

The cost of the campaign was great for both the Americans and Japanese. American casualties were more than 16,500, which included almost 3,500 dead. Marine units alone suffered nearly 13,000 casualties. Measured against this toll, however, was an enemy loss of 24,000 confirmed dead and 1,810 prisoners. Although the price for victory was high, the seizure of Saipan and the resulting establishment of the first B-29 bomber base in the Pacific was a significant step.

Lieutenant General Smith later considered the American victory at Saipan “the decisive battle of the Pacific offensive.” The enemy agreed. After learning that Saipan had fallen, the most senior officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy, Fleet Admiral Osami Nagano, remarked, “Hell is on us.” The commander of Japan’s submarine forces, Vice Admiral Shigeyoshi Miwa, told his American captors, “Our war was lost with the loss of Saipan. I feel it was a decisive battle.” Japanese shipping was cut off, their submarines could no longer operate, and B-29s could now pummel Japanese cities. The defeat was such a catastrophe that Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo resigned.

Next on the Mariana Islands schedule was the strategically



World War II marked a significant advancement in Marine artillery, which sank enemy naval vessels, employed counterbattery fire, knocked out enemy armor, conducted preparatory bombardments, and cleared fortified positions. Here, the crew of a M1 75mm pack howitzer lashed to a cliff top fires at Japanese holdouts in a cave bunker on Tinian.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

important island of Guam. The island was 550 square kilometers of rough volcanic terrain fringed with coral. Plans were made, and the landing date was set for 21 July. Naval Task Force 53, commanded by Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly, was given the mission of landing and protecting the troops. The 3d Marine Division, commanded by Major General Allen H. Turnage, would land to the north of Apra Harbor, and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, commanded by future Commandant Brigadier General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr., would simultaneously land several kilometers to the south, below Orote Peninsula. The Army's 77th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Andrew

---

D. Bruce, was to be the floating reserve, and Marine Brigadier General Pedro A. del Valle was to command the artillery of the III Amphibious Corps.

The severe casualties taken on Saipan led the Navy to subject Guam to the heaviest preparatory bombardment yet delivered in the Pacific. In June, the frequency of aerial bombardment of the island was stepped up, and Admiral Conolly's ships moved in to attack Japanese positions in July. Carrier-based aircraft and battleships, cruisers, and destroyers pounded Guam for 13 days, weakening defenses and the enemy's ability to resist the amphibious assault that began on 21 July.

Although the Japanese had been injured, they were so well entrenched that it took five days of bitter fighting before the 3d Marine Division was able to gain control of the high ground overlooking the beaches. In the south, after bloody fighting on the first day, General Shepherd's brigade won its foothold, and the Army division followed it ashore to take over the final beachhead line on 25 July. The Japanese counterattacked both elements of III Amphibious Corps on 26 July, but the Marines held and counted more than 3,500 enemy dead in their sector after bitter fighting. Hundreds more lay dead in front of the brigade positions on Orote. The Japanese defensive capability on Guam had been smashed beyond repair, yet much bitter fighting still followed in cleaning up isolated pockets of resistance.

Meanwhile, the Tinian campaign—which has since been referred to as a model shore-to-shore operation—had begun. The landing on 24 July was preceded by a feint toward the beaches at Tinian Town, all heavily mined and defended. While all available defenders were awaiting the Americans at Tinian Town, the 4th Marine Division landed against comparatively light resistance at two small northern beaches. The 2d Marine Division followed and joined the battle. Allied forces took Tinian in nine days. Not

---

only was the operation completed within minimum time and with relatively moderate Marine casualties, but the entire battle plan was conducted with outstanding efficiency. The artillery, naval gunfire, and aircraft units worked in harmony with the assault troops, demonstrating the refinement of support techniques that had begun at Tarawa.

Soon after Tinian fell, the III Amphibious Corps on Guam captured its military objectives. With the Marine and the Army divisions in the assault and the Marine brigade mopping up the rear areas, the combined forces drove to the northern tip of the island. In the third week of the operation, the last Japanese units were driven over the northern cliffs. For the Marines, it was gratifying to recapture former American territory, but even more important, the securing of Guam completed the conquest of the Mariana Islands. The cost of the Guam operation was less than planners' preinvasion estimates but still approximately 1,350 Americans killed and 6,450 wounded—a total of 7,800, of which 6,964 were Marines. The rapid seizure of Guam has been attributed to several factors, among them the Navy's unprecedented effectiveness of preinvasion bombardment, the inability of the Japanese to affect a systematized plan of opposition, and the high degree of inter-Service cooperation that all participants demonstrated.

The experience gained and the techniques perfected signified increased amphibious capabilities. During the Battle of Guam, for example, a system was developed that allowed naval gunfire and air support to be delivered against the same target areas at one time. This was accomplished by limiting the minimum pullout levels of supporting aircraft. The result was a devastating combination of flat trajectory and plunging fires. In addition, aircraft carriers were assigned specifically for troop support. Later, these carriers were to embark Marine aircraft squadrons for use in support of Marine divisions when the situation permitted.





Marines move through the shattered landscape of Peleliu during the two-month battle for that island. Enemy troops on Peleliu suffered three days of naval gunfire bombardment and air strikes prior to the invasion, yet the fortified Japanese defenders put up a stubborn defense.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

This marked another major step toward the full development of the Marine air-ground team.

### *Palau Island and the Battle for Peleliu*

In early 1944, with V Amphibious Corps driving across the Pacific and the Japanese successfully neutralized in the Solomons and New Guinea, General MacArthur looked toward liberating the Philippines. He argued that the Palau Islands were a vital part of Japan's inner defensive line and posed a significant threat to his campaign to retake the Philippines, which lay about 800



Vought F4U Corsairs of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing conduct close-air support strikes on Peleliu in 1944. The airfield was only 1,500 meters from this target, as Marines often flew from expeditionary airfields directly behind the lines in the Pacific.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

kilometers to the west of the Palaus. In March 1944, Allied planners began preparing for an attack on the islands, setting the operation for September. To carry out the attack, planners selected the 1st Marine Division to take Peleliu, and the U.S. Army's 81st Infantry Division to take Angaur Island, southwest of Peleliu.

Roughly 18 square kilometers of dense vegetation and coral limestone, Peleliu was home to a Japanese airfield. The terrain was dominated by a long ridge called the Umurbrogol but Marines nicknamed "Bloody Nose Ridge." The Marines faced a well-entrenched and determined Japanese force of more than

---

10,900 troops. The Japanese fortified Peleliu's craggy terrain with a network of tunnels and defensive positions, turning the island into a fortress.

On the morning of 15 September 1944, the 1st Marine Division landed under intense Japanese fire. After five days of fierce fighting, the Marines secured southern Peleliu. Colonel Chesty Puller's 1st Marines bashed against the strongest part of the enemy lines, making little progress in their assault on the heavily defended Bloody Nose Ridge. By the fifth day, the 1st Marines were exhausted and had suffered 1,749 casualties. On 20 September, Major General Rupertus changed plans and sent the 5th Marines to capture the northern tip of Peleliu and its adjoining island, Ngesebus, thereby encircling the remaining Japanese defenders in the Umurbrogol pocket. This tactic cut off the main enemy force from external support and reinforcements. The 81st Infantry Division also relieved the battered 1st Marines, and Marine and Army forces together gradually overwhelmed the Japanese holdouts in the pocket.

On 16 October, one month after the initial landing, the 81st Infantry Division, which had already secured the smaller island of Angaur, took over the Peleliu mission from the 1st Marine Division. Additionally, Marine Aviation units began using Peleliu's airfield to provide consistent air support to forces still engaged in combat and to protect the newly established naval base at nearby Ulithi. Finally, on 25 November, the soldiers eliminated the last Japanese resistance, securing Peleliu. Casualties for the 1st Marine Division during the campaign were approximately 1,250 killed and 5,270 wounded. Eight Marines were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions. Allied forces killed nearly the entire Japanese garrison of 10,900 troops, with only 202 prisoners taken, most of them Korean laborers.

---

## ***Iwo Jima Flag Raising***

On the morning of 23 February 1945, as elements of the 28th Marines finally crested the summit of Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima after savage fighting, a group of Marines located a length of iron pipe and raised a small American flag from USS *Missoula* (APA 211). To ensure that Marines across the island could see the colors, a larger flag was sourced from *LST-779*, which Private First Class Ira H. Hayes, Private First Class Harold H. Schultz, Private First Class Franklin R. Sousley, Corporal Harlon H. Block, Corporal Harold P. Keller, and Sergeant Michael Strank raised. During the second flag raising, Joe Rosenthal, an Associated Press photographer, captured the iconic image while a Marine motion picture cameraman, Sergeant William H. Genaust, filmed the moment. Seeing the U.S. flag raised on the highest point of Iwo Jima, where it was visible across the whole island, inspired the Marines there to continue the savage fight, and both the photograph and film that immortalized the event have become defining images of Marines' heroism during World War II and all wars.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

## *Iwo Jima*

With the Palaus in Allied hands, MacArthur's long-heralded return to the Philippines began in mid-October 1944. The U.S. Army landed at Leyte and began the campaign to retake the islands. With the Philippines campaign underway, the Allies continued their advance to the Japanese homeland. Two strategically important islands, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, stood between Allied territory and Japan. Okinawa was identified as an important staging ground for an eventual invasion of mainland Japan, but both islands were needed to support U.S. strategic bombing. Their capture would move American air bases to within 1,000 kilometers of Japan, allowing fighters to escort bombers to Japanese targets. Capturing Iwo Jima and destroying its radar site could deny the Japanese the ability to warn of incoming bomber raids. Seizing the airfield would neutralize the Japanese fighters that intercepted B-29s and occasionally attacked airfields in the Marianas, provide an emergency strip for damaged bombers, and defend the Allied flanks in the invasion of Okinawa.

For the operation, Major General Harry Schmidt, commanding general, V Amphibious Corps, was placed in command of the landing force, Task Group 56.1. The landing force consisted of the 3d, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions and numerous supporting units. Lieutenant General Holland Smith, now the commanding general, Expeditionary Troops, and the commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Pacific, had overall responsibility for the conduct of the fighting ashore. On 19 February 1945, the Marines landed on the southeastern beaches with the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions in the attack and the 3d Marine Division in floating reserve. The 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division, were ordered to take the dominating terrain of Mount Suribachi to the south, while the rest of the two divisions were to fight across the island and turned to advance north. The Japanese had steadily reinforced the island over the previous months, and the



Marines on Iwo Jima clear out a Japanese bunker with a flamethrower. The Battle for Iwo Jima involved methodically fighting the enemy across an island honeycombed with caves and defensive fortifications, March 1945.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Marines expected the battle to be one of the toughest yet fought in the Pacific.

When the first Marines hit the beach, they encountered only light resistance at first. As the lead elements moved in and follow-on landings were made, Japanese artillery, machine gun, and rocket fire slammed into the now-crowded beach, inflicting severe casualties. Guadalcanal Medal of Honor recipient, Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, now a machine gun section leader, was part of the initial assault. With his Marines were pinned down, Basilone used grenades and demolitions to single-handedly neutralize a Japanese blockhouse and its garrison.

---

At the front of the assault throughout the day, he consistently exposed himself to enemy fire, even guiding a tank through a minefield at one point. While moving along the edge of the airfield, Basilone was killed by enemy small-arms fire. For his actions on Iwo Jima, he was posthumously awarded a Navy Cross.

The intense Japanese resistance prevented the Marines from achieving their first-day objectives. About 30,000 Marines were on the island by the end of the day, and the 28th Marines had isolated the enemy positions on Mount Suribachi. On 23 February, Marines reached the summit of the volcanic peak and raised the American flag over Suribachi, where it flew as a sign to the entire island of the determination of the Marines. When a photograph image of a second flag-raising, to replace the first one, reached the United States, it became a symbol of great national significance and has remained so to this day.

Despite the flag-raising, the fight for Iwo Jima was far from over. By 24 February, most of the 3d Marine Division had moved into the line with the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions as the Marines pushed to the island's north and northeast. The Japanese defenders' extensive network of tunnels, pillboxes, and bunkers all dug into the island forced the Marines to secure Iwo Jima by slowly and deliberately clearing the enemy's intricate web of defenses, leading to heavy casualties. As had become common in the Pacific, the Japanese had little hope of driving the Americans off Iwo Jima. Their objective was instead to inflict as many casualties as possible. Marines were forced to advance slowly, often only able to locate enemy positions once the Japanese opened fire. Two days prior to the flag-raising, Private First Class Jacklyn H. Lucas and three other Marines were advancing through a ravine near Motoyama Airfield No. 1 when they were ambushed. Although Lucas believed the Japanese were within one meter of the Marines, they could not locate the enemy's position until two stood up. At that moment, Lucas's weapon jammed, and



A Vought F4U Corsair of Marine Aircraft Group 33 fires rockets in close-air support of Marines attacking on Okinawa, ca. May/June 1945.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*



On Okinawa, an automatic rifleman and a machine gunner provide a base of fire against Japanese positions as Marines advance. Though Okinawa saw the use of advanced ordinance like the rockets fired by Corsairs, the operation required the fundamentals of infantry combat to break enemy defensive positions.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*



---

he saw two Japanese grenades roll to Private First Class Allan C. Crowson's feet. Lucas then knocked Crowson out of the way, plunged one of the grenades into the soft dirt with his rifle, and then placed the second grenade under his own body to shield the other Marines from the blast. As a result, Lucas saved the lives of three Marines. Lucas survived and was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions. At 17 years old, he is the youngest Marine to receive the award.

By 16 March, the last pockets of organized resistance were bottled up in far northern sector of the island, and Iwo Jima was officially declared secured. Marines, and later soldiers, continued to clear Japanese defenders, many of whom were hidden in underground tunnel network, some until the war's end. Between 200 and 300 Japanese troops launched a suicidal attack during the early morning of 26 March. The Japanese managed to skirt around from the north along the island's western beaches and launch a three-pronged attack against the Marine, Army, and Navy rear-echelon camps to the west. Marines from the all-Black 8th Ammunition Company and 36th Marine Depot Company were among those who organized a hasty defense to stop the attackers. Private James M. Whitlock, of the 36th Marine Depot Company, had been in a working party when the attack began. He charged and killed three Japanese soldiers who had been firing from a foxhole. While still under enemy fire, he returned to his unit to obtain ammunition and ran back to the fighting. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his actions. The attack left around 100 Americans dead and about 200 wounded, exemplifying the challenges in securing the island. The intense struggle at Iwo Jima nonetheless demonstrated to the Japanese that the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps' amphibious forces, given control of the surrounding skies and seas, could seize any objective regardless of the power or stubborn resistance of the defenders. With the island taken, Marine losses were approximately 17,000 wound-

---

ed and nearly 6,000 killed. Honoring the Marines, soldiers, and sailors who fought in the battle, Admiral Nimitz commented, "Among the Americans who served on Iwo Island, uncommon valor was a common virtue."

### *Okinawa*

The island-hopping campaign finally placed U.S. forces within striking distance of the Japanese home islands by late March 1945. Okinawa was the last island to seize before launching the anticipated climatic battle to end the war, nearly 500 kilometers from mainland Japan. Operation Iceberg, the seizure of Okinawa, was the largest amphibious assault during the war in the Pacific theater of operations. In contrast with many of the other Central Pacific operations, which had been the responsibility of Marines, the mission of seizing Okinawa was assigned to the Tenth United States Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner Jr. The assault forces were composed of the Army's XXIV Corps (7th, 27th, 77th, and 96th Infantry Divisions) and the III Amphibious Corps (1st and 6th Marine Divisions). The 2d Marine Division was kept afloat as the Tenth Army reserve. Buckner also envisioned the 2d Marine Division as a diversionary force to make a landing feint on the opposite side of the island from where the main landings would take place.

On Easter Sunday morning, 1 April 1945, the leading waves of assault troops debarked from landing craft and went ashore on the western side of Okinawa as the northern wing of the impressive invasion force. Within the first hour of the initial assault, 16,000 troops had landed on Okinawa. Unlike the hostile receptions on other beaches in the Pacific, there was no curtain of deadly fire. Without even a delayed Japanese response, as had been the case on Iwo Jima, the Marines turned north immediately, while three of the four Army divisions cut the narrow waist of the island and then headed south. As the Marines con-

---

tinued the advance inland, they met minimal resistance. At the end of the first day, they had established a beachhead more than six kilometers wide and three kilometers deep. By 3 April, they had traversed the island in their sector and reached the opposite coast. Enemy resistance increased as the 6th Marine Division moved into the northern portion of the island, and there were several savage firefights while the Marines enveloped the Japanese defenders on the Motobu Peninsula. Within three weeks, after facing some of the fiercest fighting early in the operation, the Marines secured the northern two-thirds of Okinawa.

At the end of the first week, soldiers of the XXIV Corps ran into the enemy's main defensive position in the south, and the Japanese plan became clear. The Japanese had concentrated most of their forces in the south, where they had carefully constructed a defense in depth—multiple belts across the waist of the island anchored on what was called the Shuri Line. Okinawa's interior was full of ridges and escarpments that offered natural defensive positions. The Japanese had spent considerable effort excavating and building heavily fortified installations with concentric rings of fire in a series of strongpoints along the Shuri Line. For the Americans to secure Okinawa, they would have to dislodge Japanese soldiers who understood that they were the last obstacle preventing U.S. forces from landing on the home islands.

XXIV Corps' divisions attempted to punch through the line throughout April and were steadily worn down in the brutal fighting. Offshore, kamikaze air attacks inflicted considerable damage to the U.S. Navy Fleet that resolutely remained at anchor and on patrol during the onslaught to support the forces ashore. As the fight continued, the campaign enabled a reunion of Marine air and ground forces that had been separated for much of the Central Pacific advance. While the Marine aircraft groups had been close partners to the Marine divisions in the Solomon Islands and on Peleliu, the great distances involved in

---

the Central Pacific left Marine assault forces more dependent on Navy carrier squadrons. Marine squadrons were often moved in after an island was seized and provided rear area security as the advance continued. On Okinawa, however, Marine squadrons were established ashore early in the fight and played a vital role not only in supporting the attacks on the ground but also keeping the kamikaze attacks at bay, even while beating off Japanese infiltrating attacks on their own bases.

By the end of April, the 27th Infantry Division had endured losses to such an extent that it was rendered combat ineffective. Tenth Army sent the division north to clean up any enemy hold-outs. By 8 May, the III Amphibious Corps was ordered south to fight alongside the XXIV Corps as the right flank of the main effort driving southward into the teeth of the Japanese defenses.

Rather than continue piecemeal attacks, the Marines and soldiers launched a large-scale general offensive across the entire Shuri Line on 11 May. The attack quickly became uncoordinated, and units engaged in desperate fights for the next 10 days. Marines suffered significant casualties in their efforts to take a series of hills on the western approaches to Shuri Castle that American troops referred to as the Crescent, Sugar Loaf, Half Moon, and the Horseshoe. Torrential rain in mid-May further slowed the advance, turning the ground into a morass that limited attacks and resupply and made life unbearable for the Marines. Naval gunfire continued to provide support, however, and the battleship USS *Mississippi* (BB 41) shelled Shuri Castle for three days, leading the Japanese to withdraw to the south. By early June, U.S. forces had pushed the defenders to the southern tip of Okinawa, the Kiyau Peninsula, where the climactic final battle took place. On June 18, as General Buckner was observing Marines assaulting an objective from Ibaru Ridge, he was killed by enemy artillery fire. The next senior troop commander, Marine Major General Roy S. Geiger, who was a naval aviator, as-

---

sumed command of the Tenth Army, becoming the only Marine officer ever to have commanded a field army. Three days later, on 21 June, the last pockets of Japanese resistance were eliminated, and General Geiger announced the end of organized resistance. Mopping-up operations began, and Okinawa was secure by the end of June.

After 82 days of the most brutal fighting seen in the Pacific, Okinawa had cost the Marine Corps, including ships' detachments and aviation, 3,430 killed and 15,723 wounded. An additional 560 Navy doctors and hospital corpsmen accompanying the Marines were killed or wounded. Overall American losses in the land battle amounted to 7,374 killed, 31,807 wounded, and 239 missing in action. At sea and in the air, the Navy reported 36 U.S. ships sunk, 68 damaged, 763 aircraft lost from all causes, and 4,907 seamen killed or missing in action and 4,824 wounded.

The Japanese took more casualties at Okinawa than they had during any previous Pacific battle. They lost 7,830 aircraft and 16 warships. Japanese soldiers and seamen on the island fought to the last man, including the northern and southern commanders, Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima and Rear Admiral Minoru Ōta, who committed suicide in caves along with their staffs. The enemy paid the grim price of 107,539 counted dead, 21,764 sealed off in caves, and 10,755 taken prisoner. Many of the dead were civilians, innocent victims of the bitter fighting.

### *The Atomic Bomb and Surrender*

While the Allies rapidly developed the Mariana Islands and Okinawa into staging bases from which to attack the enemy's homeland, Japan refused an American demand for unconditional surrender. Then, on 6 August over the city of Hiroshima, the U.S. Army Air Forces dropped the first atomic weapon used in warfare. Three days later, another B-29 dropped a second bomb,

---

destroying the industrial areas of Nagasaki. After days of intense debate within the war council, the Japanese Emperor surrendered his country unconditionally to the Allies on 14 August 1945. The formal surrender occurred in a ceremony aboard USS *Missouri* (BB 63), anchored in Tokyo Bay, on 2 September 1945, and concluded with a flyover of more than 800 U.S. military aircraft.

By the end of the war, the Marine Corps had grown to six divisions, five aircraft wings, and supporting troops. Its all-time strength peaked in World War II at 485,113. (The Service's end strength has fluctuated since but has held steady at between 170,000 and 200,000 the last 50 years.) The war cost 19,733 Marines killed in action and 68,207 wounded in action. There was no shortage of heroism, as personified by the 82 Marines who earned the Medal of Honor. The Service made great doctrinal leaps and solidified the amphibious warfare role that it still plays in the national defense establishment today. Marine Aviation also matured tactically and organizationally, with 120 Marine pilots becoming aces, 5 of whom shot down 20 or more enemy aircraft. Not insignificantly, the war played a considerable role in Marine Corps culture. A tour of many units' command decks today reveals how the mottos, insignia, and nicknames of numerous Marine units hearken back to their experience in World War II. The imagery of the war has had a profound cultural impact on the Marine Corps as well. The photograph of the flag raising on Iwo Jima flag is more than a historical record. It is a powerful symbol of the values and traditions of the Service and serves as a connection between all Marines past, present, and future. Indeed, on 23 February 1945, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal understood the symbolic importance of the flag rising for both the American people and the Marine Corps, declaring, "The raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years."

---

## CHAPTER 7

# The Origins of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, 1945–1960

With the surrender of Japan, the Marine Corps transitioned into an occupation force. When deciding which regiment would have the honor of being the first American combat unit to step foot onto the Japanese home islands, General Lemuel C. Shepherd selected the 4th Marines. The choice was symbolic, as the regiment had participated in the Philippine campaign in 1942 and had been captured at Corregidor before being reactivated in 1944. The 2d and 5th Marine Divisions followed the 4th Marines to Japan to assume occupation duty, while the Marine Corps sent the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing to China. The Marines in China were tasked with repatriating Japanese soldiers and protecting American property and lives during a civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists and Mao Zedong's Communists. Meanwhile, the 3d Marine Division occupied various Pacific islands, such as Truk and Chichi Jima, and the 4th Marine Division returned to the United States for demobilization.

All branches of the armed forces began to draw down during fall 1945. The public was anxious to return to peacetime pursuits

---

and pressured national leaders to return the bulk of the 12 million Americans in uniform to civilian life. The 4th Marine Division cased its colors in November 1945. The 3d Marine Division followed suit the following month, and the 5th Marine Division disbanded in January 1946. By the end of 1946, all Marine occupation forces redeployed from Japan. Similarly, Marines in China began to return home. The Marine Corps' end strength quickly plummeted. The postwar drawdown first slashed the size of the Marine Corps to about 156,000 officers and enlisted men. Within another year, the Service contracted to approximately 90,000 Marines. In the United States, a peacetime routine set in. Once again, the Marine Corps returned to volunteer recruiting for personnel, which had been temporarily abandoned during the war due to the Selective Service Law. Traditional ceremonies and customs put aside during the turmoil of war were revived. Dress blues and swords appeared again, and veterans of World War II told new recruits how tough it was "in the old Corps."

Ultimately in the post-World War II era, the Marine Corps would adjust its force structure to make it lighter and more mobile to respond to crises around the globe. As the nation's rapid response force or force-in-readiness, the nation would increasingly call on the Marine Corps to be forward deployed and ready on a moment's notice to engage the enemy and to act as a deterrent force to the growing threat of Communism in the new Cold War era.

### *The Cold War's Impact on the Marine Corps*

Despite the postwar drawdown, the Marine Corps did not revert to its prewar stature, owing to its hard-earned role as an amphibious force and to a new global balance of power. The United States entered World War II as an isolationist power but found itself the leader of the Free World at the close of the war. Japan and Germany lay crushed and occupied. Of the Allies, only the



---

United States and Soviet Union were in any shape to project power and influence. Americans had fought the war to check the advance of fascism. After the war, the United States helped construct a new global order based on Western democratic values and free trade. In principle, U.S. leaders believed that nations tied together by mutually beneficial trade were less likely to wage war against each other. Moreover, rather than let Germany and Japan face retribution for World War II, the United States and its Western allies rebuilt Germany and Japan through the Marshall Plan. Doing so bolstered American markets, allowed for U.S. forces to return home, and helped prevent the encroachment of Soviet Communism in Western Europe. U.S. postwar objectives were incompatible with the Soviet Union's own security interests, which were informed by the Communist worldview and Russia's historical experience of three devastating invasions from the west in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By 1947, the United States and its allies stared at the Soviet Union warily across a divided Europe as a cold war descended around the globe.

The dawn of the nuclear age only increased these tensions. For the Marine Corps, atomic weapons forced it to reevaluate amphibious concepts and procedures that had proved so successful in the Pacific campaigns, such as the practice of concentrating ships and landing craft to mass large expeditionary forces ashore. In September 1946, General Alexander A. Vandegrift, now Commandant, appointed Major General Lemuel Shepherd as chair of a special board to study amphibious warfare in the nuclear age. In attempting to answer how an amphibious force could maintain dispersion while still striking quickly and with overwhelming force, the Shepherd Board recommended the Marine Corps study the use of rotary-wing aircraft.

These efforts occurred at the Landing Force Development Center at Quantico, Virginia, where tactics, techniques, and

---

equipment came under careful study. The Development Center explored every aspect of nuclear warfare to effect new organizational structures, develop new equipment, and refine doctrine in preparation for future contingencies. The Marine Corps had acquired its first helicopters in World War II. The bulk of them were used for pilot training, but a few American-built helicopters participated in Allied special operations in Burma and the Pacific. These early machines conducted air-sea rescue, medical evacuation, and humanitarian missions. Since that time, further advances in helicopter design and a need to develop new tactics and techniques opened opportunities for helicopters to fill a larger role in the Marine Corps. In December 1947, the Marine Corps organized a special squadron, Marine Helicopter Experimental Squadron One (HMX-1), to theorize and test vertical assault concepts.

While technological advances forced the Marine Corps to reevaluate its amphibious doctrine, the Service also found itself in a fight to retain its World War II capabilities and missions. Rising tensions in the Cold War and the nuclear age had led national leaders to discuss a postwar military reorganization that would account for the lessons of World War II and the country's new global preeminence, igniting a debate that would stretch more than seven years. While there were proposals from nearly every echelon of civilian and military leadership, the battle lines over structure, roles, mission, and budget were drawn early on between the Army and Army Air Forces on one side and the Navy and Marine Corps on the other. The primary discussion point was how to centralize national military command and resources under a unified defense establishment. The Marine Corps argued for the preservation of the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) as an air-ground amphibious element during naval campaigns. Suggestions from outside the Service ranged from stripping the Marine Corps of its aviation, returning it to its

---

nineteenth-century roles and mission, or dismembering it altogether.

After much lobbying, Marines received the legislative protection they desired in the National Security Act of 1947. The act formed the broad structure and mechanisms by which the president coordinates and controls national security and the national military establishment. It created what would become the Department of Defense under a single secretary of defense with general authority and control over the Department of the Navy, the Department of the Army, and the new Department of the Air Force. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, composed of the Service heads, became a permanent military planning body. Not only did the act establish an independent Air Force, it also formed the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council, an advisory body designed to assist the president in forming military and foreign policy. For the Marine Corps' part, the act secured a formal role as the nation's amphibious specialists and a force-in-readiness. It also retained its traditional duties and received affirmation that it was a separate Service within the Department of the Navy.

On 1 January 1948, General Clifton B. Cates became the 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Cates' commandancy, which lasted until 31 December 1951, was destined to be eventful. He took office while the Marine Corps was still in the process of postwar readjustment. The U.S. military was scaling to peacetime levels and building up the Reserve force. General Cates spent many hours giving forthright testimony before the House Armed Services Committee. His testimony contributed to subsequent amendments to the National Security Act of 1947 that enabled the Marine Corps to become the nation's force-in-readiness.

Despite securing the legislative protection that it so desired, the Marine Corps spent the next four years fighting a series of

---

inter-Service battles to ensure the survival of the Fleet Marine Force. It spent 1948 and 1949 making its case from the sidelines, including to Congress when the House Armed Services Committee held hearings on defense unification. A reduced defense budget for fiscal year 1950 sent the Joint Chiefs looking for places to cut, which had the follow-on effect of that body reviewing roles and missions. As the Commandant was not a statutory member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Marine Corps lacked adequate representation to influence conversations about the size and therefore the future of the Marine Corps and the FME.

While Marine Corps leadership advocated for the Service in Washington, there were ample opportunities beginning in the late 1940s for the Marine Corps to prove its value as a force-in-readiness to deter the spread of Communism. In the Mediterranean, the Soviet Union attempted to influence the Greek Civil War and pressure Turkey into joint military control of the Turkish Straits. Beginning in 1948, a battalion landing team was assigned to the United States Sixth Fleet operating in the Mediterranean. Nearly every five months, a new reinforced infantry battalion rotated through the fleet. The Marines' FMF duties included vigorous amphibious training. Many practice landings were made on the beaches of friendly Mediterranean countries, while Marine Aviation concurrently augmented the Sixth Fleet's own aviation capabilities. The Marines serving with the Sixth Fleet also responded to nearby emergencies. After the United States consul general in Jerusalem was killed by an assassin in May 1948, 20 Marines from the Sixth Fleet were sent to protect American diplomats.

Given the global nature of the struggle against Communism and the nation's global role, the Marine Corps recognized that it might have to fight in every environment, not just Pacific islands as in World War II. The 1st Marine Division began regular cold weather training in 1949, initially in Alaska. In 1951, the

---

Marine Corps established the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in the Sierra Nevada mountains near Bridgeport, California, approximately 320 kilometers east of San Francisco.

Due to the continued cuts in appropriations, the Marine Corps was little more than a skeleton of its former World War II power at the beginning of 1950. By June, its end strength was slightly less than 75,000. Of this number, approximately 28,000 were serving in the FMF. Other Marines served at posts and stations, naval bases, aboard ships, supply and administrative billets, and various special assignments. With combat units of the regular Marine Corps considerably under strength, it was necessary to depend on the Marine Corps Reserve to fill in the gaps in the event of war. Fortunately, there were 90,000 reservists available, most of whom were experienced combat veterans of World War II. Although the Marine Corps possessed one well-trained division and one aircraft wing on each coast, all units were significantly undermanned. Most regiments were hardly more than under-strength battalions. Service and support units were also reduced or eliminated.

Among those who had been part of the downsizing were women Marines. At the end of World War II, the Marine Corps issued mandatory discharges and resignations for women Marines by 1 September 1946. Despite the discharges and resignations, the Marine Corps decided to retain some women Marines on active duty on a case-by-case basis to facilitate postwar administrative work. The U.S. government, however, had not passed legislation allowing postwar active-duty service for women or a permanent women's reserve. The Marine Corps therefore temporarily extended some active-duty women's contracts beyond the discharge date. The Service also established reserve Voluntary Training Units as a temporary stopgap until the federal government enacted legislation.

---

President Harry S. Truman signed Public Law 625 on 12 June 1948, authorizing women to serve on active duty and establishing the postwar Marine Corps Women's Reserve. The law called for an active-duty Women Marine force of 100 officers, 10 warrant officers, and 1,000 enlisted by June 1950. The Marine Corps also created the director of Women Marines, a colonel's billet posted in the Office of the Commandant. Despite the law opening active-duty service to women, the Marine Corps did establish certain restrictions on women Marines. It set the highest permanent rank for women at lieutenant colonel. (The director of Women Marines was authorized to wear the colonel's rank only while serving in that billet.) The Service established a mandatory retirement policy for women and prohibited women from combat, combat aviation, or sea duty other than transport vessels or hospital ships. Women received the same pay and benefits as men, but neither their husbands nor their children were eligible for dependent benefits.

African Americans, many of whom hoped the gains made during the war would lead to further opportunities, were also part of the rapid demobilization at the end of the war. In early 1946, the Service suspended recruitment of African Americans until it had a clearer idea of postwar troop requirements and how many veterans would choose active duty. Recruitment resumed later in the year, but the overall requirement for Black personnel in the Marine Corps had been reduced to 1,500 in January 1947 out of the Service's total strength of 93,000. The overriding issue was finding units in which African American Marines could serve. With postwar demobilization, there were fewer billets in which Black Marines could serve in a segregated military.

In the meantime, the Civil Rights movement gained momentum as groups continued the fight to end discrimination and segregation. The Marine Corps viewed such debates as national issues and preferred to steer clear of discussions about in-

---

tegration. On 26 July 1948, President Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which ended segregation in the Armed Services in theory. In practice, however, integrating the military would take years of struggle. The Air Force and the Navy had been more open to integrating after World War II, rationalizing that it was wasteful and inefficient to separate a Service by color. The Army and Marine Corps did not initially accept the efficiency rationale. Both Services instead argued that integrating would provoke conflict and undermine the military's ability to fight and win wars. It would be the urgent need for troops generated by the coming war that finally eroded the practice of segregation in the Army and Marine Corps.

### *War in Korea*

Cold War tensions had flared in Europe over the occupation of Berlin in 1948, but the first outbreak of hostilities in the Cold War era occurred in Asia. Its origins lay in the aftermath of World War II, when the Soviet Union and United States sent troops to occupy Korea and repatriate Japanese soldiers. The Soviet Union entered Korea from Manchuria, occupying the northern reaches of the peninsula. The United States feared that Korea could potentially become a Communist state and sent U.S. troops to occupy the southern sector. To prevent conflict between the two rival nations, Soviet and American leaders agreed to divide Korea at the 38th parallel, an east-west line across the peninsula. In the north, the Soviet Union oversaw the establishment of a Communist government led by Kim Il-Sung. In the south, the United States fostered a capitalist regime headed by Syngman Rhee. Korea remained occupied until the Soviet Union and the United States withdrew their troops from the peninsula in the late 1940s. After the withdrawal, Korea became a ward of the United Nations (UN).

Throughout the late 1940s, North and South Korea engaged

---

in persistent skirmishes along their shared border. By June 1950, Kim Il-Sung had developed a sizeable military force equipped with Soviet weapons, and he was determined to unite the country by force. On 25 June 1950, the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) streamed across the 38th parallel. The invasion caught South Korea and the United States by surprise. The larger and better-equipped NKPA forces quickly seized the South Korean capital of Seoul and were poised to continue their drive South. For the United States and the non-Communist world, the global situation in late June 1950 looked bleak. The invasion appeared against the stark backdrop of two significant events the previous year. In August 1949, the Soviets ended the American monopoly on atomic weapons by successfully detonating a nuclear fission device. Two months later, Mao Zedong's followers finally defeated Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists, turning China into a Communist state. (The last of the Marines had withdrawn in spring 1949 when the situation deteriorated, ending a century of Marine Corps involvement in China.) For American policymakers who saw Communism as monolithic and controlled from Moscow, the prospect of losing Korea seemed to increase the likelihood that all of Asia would fall to the Communists.

Within two days of the invasion, the UN Security Council passed a series of resolutions authorizing material support and the use of troops. General Douglas MacArthur, then the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan, led the UN intervention as commander in chief, United Nations Command. President Truman ordered the Eighth United States Army, commanded by General Walton H. Walker, to South Korea from Japan. Walker's Eighth Army was comprised of four understrength, under-equipped, and undertrained divisions that had been on occupation duty in Japan since the end of World War II. The U.S. military's general lack of preparedness proved catastrophic in the first months of the conflict. North Korean forces





Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP

---

continually outflanked and pushed back UN and Republic of Korea (ROK) troops. By 1 August, it looked as if the NKPA might defeat the Eighth Army, which was by then clinging to a small patch of territory in the southeast corner of the country known as the Pusan Perimeter. By consolidating and establishing a main line of resistance at the Naktong River, the Eighth Army hoped to hold out long enough for the UN to build up forces and launch a counteroffensive that would save not only the army but South Korea.

### *The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and the Pusan Perimeter*

Before the desperate situation at Pusan, Commandant Clifton B. Cates began preparing the Marine Corps for deployment. He visited Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Forrest P. Sherman to offer a brigade consisting of a regimental combat team and an aircraft group. Admiral Sherman was dubious, asking Cates how soon a brigade could be ready. "As quickly as the Navy gets the ships," Cates shot back. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the deployment on 3 July, but Cates had not waited for word. He had ordered the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, California, which was only at half-strength due to postwar reductions, to form the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Edward A. Craig. The brigade was composed of the 5th Marines, Marine Aircraft Group 33, and the 1st Tank Battalion. Cates called for volunteers around the Marine Corps. The strength of the brigade increased quickly, as Marines from more than 105 locations traveled to Camp Pendleton. Due to the Marine Corps' postwar table of organization, battalions had only two rifle companies rather than three. Moreover, Marine units had to fall in on World War II equipment stored at Barstow, California.

Despite these limitations, the 1st Provisional Marine Bri-

---

gade began embarking at San Diego within four days of receiving the Joint Chiefs approval and arrived in the Port of Pusan on 2 August. Before the arrival of the main body, Brigadier Generals Craig and Thomas J. Cushman, assistant wing commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, flew to Japan and South Korea to coordinate and conduct a leader's reconnaissance of the area of operation with UN and Eighth Army leaders. Craig met his Marines at the port and briefed his staff and battalion commanders. By 3 August, the brigade was ready to move. Navy carriers had two fighter-bomber squadrons prepared to fly close air support missions. The Marine Corps also positioned Marine Night Fighter Squadron 513 in Japan. Marine Observation Squadron 6, with its helicopters and light aircraft, joined the ground element to facilitate reconnaissance and fire direction. Ultimately, the ability of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade to deploy rapidly despite its manpower and equipment limitations was remarkable. The Marine Corps' quick response to the Korean crisis illustrated the professionalism and dedication of all Marines and further reinforced to the American public that the Marine Corps was the nation's rapid response force.

While reinforcements streamed into Port of Pusan, the enemy resupplied units in preparation to attack along four axes against the defensive line. By the end of the first week of August, enough UN forces had arrived that the Eighth Army prepared a counteroffensive to spoil the NKPA's impending attacks. The counteroffensive would begin with an attack from Task Force Kean, composed of the Army's 25th Infantry Division, the 5th Regimental Combat Team, and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. Their role was to draw enemy forces south, away from the main effort that was to follow mid-month. The Marines' first combat action against the NKPA came at Chindong-ni, 80 kilometers outside of Pusan, on 7 August—eight years to the day that Marines had opened the first American ground offensive

---

of World War II at Guadalcanal. The Americans initiated the attack, beginning a chaotic week-long baptism by fire for the Marines in sweltering heat and over rugged terrain.

One of many significant actions in the Chindong-ni offensive came at Hill 342, where the NKPA *6th Division* attacked a company from the Army's 2d Battalion, 5th Regimental Combat Team. General Craig ordered a Marine platoon to reinforce the besieged company. As night fell, the platoon, led by Second Lieutenant John H. Cahill, began their climb. By dawn, scorching heat and water discipline quickly became an issue. As Marines continued to ascend the hill, many collapsed from heat exhaustion. Second Lieutenant Cahill urged his Marines forward. Nearing the summit, Cahill halted the platoon while he moved to link up with the soldiers. After Cahill made contact, the rest of his platoon pushed to the top under heavy fire. Only 37 of 52 Marines of the platoon reached the summit. During the climb, three Marines were killed in action and eight were wounded, while other Marines succumbed to the heat. Ultimately, Cahill's platoon was able to join the beleaguered company, and both units worked in tandem to hold the hill. The fight for Hill 342 was a harbinger of the battles to come, and it highlighted the value of decisive leadership at the lowest level as well as the importance of physical fitness and good water discipline.

After Hill 342, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade maintained the offensive. Driving through the North Korean *6th Division* and *83d Motorcycle Regiment*, the aggressive Marines advanced toward Chinju, where NKPA headquarters for the southwestern sector was located. By nightfall on day three, the Marines were at Changchun, 40 kilometers inside enemy territory. As the Marines were closing in on Chinji, General Walker ordered them to move north to Miryang, near the Naktong Bulge. On 6 August, an NKPA division crossed the river and created a salient in the Pusan Perimeter. For 10 days, U.S.

---

Army soldiers and NKPA troops were locked in a bloody battle of attrition, with neither side gaining the upper hand. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and an Army task force launched a coordinated attack to dislodge the enemy. Within the task force was the Army's 9th Infantry, which had served alongside Marines at Tientsin during the Boxer Rebellion and then again as part of the 2d Infantry Division during World War I. The Marines were responsible for taking a piece of terrain outside Miryang they called "No Name Ridge," where the NKPA *4th Division* had dug in. The stakes were high, as it became clear that failure to take No Name Ridge would put the entire Pusan Perimeter at risk. The commander of the 5th Marines impressed this on his 1st Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel George R. Newton, before stepping off. "Understood! Understood!," Newton responded. "This battalion goes only one way—straight ahead!"

The brigade attacked up No Name Ridge on 17 August into a wall of enemy fire. Marine aircraft, employing tactics developed in World War II, provided accurate and timely close air support in coordination with artillery. By nightfall, the Marines captured the northern end of the ridge after fierce fighting and considerable casualties. The battle continued throughout the night with enemy counterattacks. The following day, Marines renewed their attack and drove the NKPA off the ridge and back across the Naktong River. Marine air and artillery routed the fleeing enemy troops, destroying the NKPA *4th Division* in the process.

The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade proved itself as the Eighth Army's "fire brigade" at the First Battle of Naktong Bulge by successfully mobilizing on short notice to stop a NKPA division from penetrating the perimeter. The battle was a significant turning point in the war, as it stopped the enemy from exploiting its salient. The Marines returned to the same area two



Marines of the 1st Provisional Brigade move past a knocked-out North Korean tank in the Second Battle of the Naktong, 4 September 1950. The brigade was a crucial reinforcement to allied forces in the Pusan Perimeter at the height of the North Korean invasion.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

weeks later, when NKPA forces made a desperate frontal assault to overwhelm defenses before more UN reinforcements arrived. In the Second Battle of Naktong Bulge, the brigade destroyed the *9th Division* and remnants of the NKPA *4th Division*.

Once again, coordination between the air-ground team proved decisive and a source of envy for the Army commanders who witnessed it. On average, it took only seven minutes from a strike request before Marine Vought F4U Corsairs engulfed a NKPA position in napalm. Air-ground coordination in South Korea was a product of lessons Marines had learned in World War II. Between the two wars, the Marine Corps educated its air and ground officers together and trained in deployments where

---

air-ground teams were united under a single command. Those efforts paid off immediately at the Pusan Perimeter, where the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing's Corsairs proved decisive and filled the infantry units with confidence as much as pride.

By late August, the enemy, though deep inside South Korea, was suffering from overextended lines of communication and reduced strength and effectiveness. The Eighth Army's strategy of mounting a defense at the Naktong River and waiting for reinforcements had proven successful. The outlook appeared bleak only one month before, but UN forces had flowed in enough troops and equipment by early September that the numerical advantage swung in their favor. Soon, they would employ their air and naval supremacy in a daring operation to seize the strategic initiative.

### *Inchon*

After the Second Battle of Naktong Bulge, the Eighth Army pulled the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade from the line. By 12 September, the 1st Marine Division, which had recently arrived in South Korea, absorbed the brigade. The deployment of the division had been in the works for two months and was the product of lobbying from Lieutenant General Lemuel Shepherd, now commanding general, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. Lieutenant General Shepherd already had been successful arguing in joint discussions for employing Marine Corps units intact, as it was through his efforts that the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade was authorized to operate as an integrated air-ground team. On 10 July, General Oliver P. Smith met with General MacArthur about amphibious operations. Prior to the meeting, the Marines had established training teams to prepare the U.S. Army for amphibious operations. Additionally, MacArthur assumed that a Marine brigade would be the only force from the Corps that he would receive. Smith on the other hand, told MacArthur that he

---

could get the 1st Marine Division to strength and deployed to Korea in time for an amphibious operation somewhere on the west coast of Korea. After getting Shepherd's assurance, MacArthur submitted a formal request to the Joint Chiefs for the 1st Marine Division on 10 July, a division MacArthur had high praise for after commanding them in World War II. Although Shepard guaranteed the arrival of the 1st Marine Division, he and the division commander, Major General Oliver Smith, had reservations about MacArthur's choice of Inchon. MacArthur rationalized that most of the enemy was in the south near Pusan and that an amphibious force would face limited resistance at Inchon despite the numerous hazards such as poor tidal conditions, a sea wall, and a sizable island guarding pathways to the landing beaches. Marine leaders argued the landing should take place in the Posung-Myon region 50 kilometers south of Inchon, and the Navy argued for landing even farther south at Kunsan. MacArthur nonetheless was firmly set on Inchon. When providing his commander's guidance, he told his staff, "*We shall land at Inchon, and I shall crush them.*" Once he gave the order, discussion of alternate landing sites ended, and the 1st Marine Division began its preparation for an Inchon landing on 15 September 1950.

MacArthur tasked General Edward M. Almond's X Corps, composed of the 1st Marine Division and the Army's 7th Infantry Division, to conduct the invasion. Almond designated the Marines as the main effort. The landing force was composed of the 1st Marines, once again under the command of Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, and 5th Marines, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray. When the 1st Marines regimental staff briefed the battalions on the operational plan, Colonel Puller was blunt. "You people are lucky," he growled. "We used to have to wait every 10 or 15 years for a war. You get one every five years. You people have been living by



---

## ***Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller***

Lewis Burwell “Chesty” Puller was born in Tidewater, Virginia, in 1898. After graduating high school in 1917, Puller entered the Virginia Military Institute, attending only one year before leaving to enlist in the Marine Corps in August 1918. Although Marines were fighting in Europe, Puller was sent to Haiti, where he took a commission in the *Gendarmerie d’Haiti*, and excelled as a combat leader against *cacos* rebels.

In 1924, Puller earned a regular commission in the Marine Corps and served at several duty stations in the United States. In 1928, he was stationed in Nicaragua, where he led soldiers of the *Guardia Nacional* and

received two Navy Crosses for his stellar combat leadership. Throughout the remainder of the decade, Puller commanded the “Horse Marines” in China, instructed new officers at the Basic School in Philadelphia, and completed a second tour in China. In September 1941, just three months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he took command of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines.

Puller’s leadership and exploits in World War II are legendary. For his actions at Guadalcanal, he received his third Navy Cross, leading 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, in a fierce defense of Henderson Field in October 1942. As executive officer of the 7th Marines at Cape Gloucester in January 1944, Puller took over the command of two battalions that each lost their commander in battle, earning him a fourth Navy Cross. The next month, he took command of the 1st Marines, which he led on Peleliu before returning to the United States in November 1944.

During the Korean War, Puller once again commanded the 1st Marines at Inchon and the Chosin Reservoir. He received a fifth Navy Cross for his indomitable leadership during Chosin, saying in his trademark understatement, “We’ve been looking for the enemy for several days now. We’ve finally found them. We’re surrounded. That simplifies our problem of finding these people and killing them.”

He was promoted to brigadier general in 1951, major general two years later, and lieutenant general after his retirement in 1955. Lieutenant General Puller passed away in 1971 at the age of 73. His legend lives on throughout the Corps today.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

the sword. By God, you better be prepared to die by the sword.”

For five days, carrier-based aircraft and warships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet bombed and strafed Inchon Harbor and the waterfront. Marine Fighting Squadrons 214 and 323 flew from the decks of the light carriers USS *Sicily* (CVE 118) and USS *Badoeng Strait* (CVE 116). At first light on 15 September, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, went ashore on the island of Wolmi-Do, a critical land mass in Inchon's inner harbor that threatened the Marines' flank. Resistance was light. At 0655, Sergeant Alvin E. Smith of Company G, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, secured an American flag to the trunk of a shattered tree after securing Objective 1-A at the crest of a prominent terrain feature on Wolmi-do known as Radio Hill. After learning that the battalion had taken the island around noon, MacArthur penned a message to the joint task force commander, saying, “The Navy and Marines have never shone more brightly than this morning.”

The rest of the division had to wait for the evening tide to flow in before landing, and they would have only two hours to secure their objectives before the tide ebbed and the sun set. In the interim, naval gunfire and air strikes continued hitting Red and Blue Beaches and any target within a 40-kilometer radius of Inchon. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 5th Marines, with the recently formed 1st ROK Marine Regiment in trace, had to land against a seawall on Red Beach. Marines used ladders to debark from each landing craft, vehicle, personnel (LCVP). First Lieutenant Baldomero López, a platoon commander in the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, was captured in an iconic photograph scrambling up a ladder onto Red Beach. Moments later, he charged toward a bunker pinning down his men. As he lifted his arm to throw a grenade, enemy fire hit him in the right shoulder and chest. Falling backward, he dropped the grenade. Realizing his men were in danger, he swept the grenade under



On 15 November 1950, the 1st Marine Division landed at Inchon in an amphibious envelopment of North Korean forces on the peninsula. A seawall blocked access from the sea, forcing Marines to use scaling ladders to exit their landing craft before storming the beaches.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

his body, thereby smothering the explosion. For his selfless sacrifice, First Lieutenant López was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

Meanwhile, the 1st Marines landed on Blue Beach, five kilometers to the south of Red Beach, with the objective of cutting off Inchon from Seoul. Despite landing vehicles, tracked (LVTs) having difficulty getting ashore, the regiment met light resistance. After the successful amphibious assault, the 1st and 5th Marines moved abreast of each other the next day to advance to Seoul, while a ROK Marine regiment remained in Inchon to clear any resistance. Ahead of them, F4U Corsairs from Marine

---

Fighting Squadron 214 cleared the road of enemy T-34 medium tanks with rockets and napalm. On 18 September, the U.S. Marines seized Kimpo Airfield, considered the best air facility in South Korea. In short order, Marine Aircraft Group 33 became operational at Kimpo, providing Marine Aviation a base of operations to support the attack on Seoul and disrupt enemy lines of communication.

The 1st Marine Division fought its way to the outskirts of Seoul, augmented with the recently landed 7th Marines. MacArthur moved forward to visit the Marines on 21 September, and he concluded afterward that “there is not a finer fighting organization in the world.” The battle for the capital remained desperate. The enemy constructed barricades at every major intersection. Marines coordinated air strikes with mortar, artillery, and tank fire to dislodge the NKPA soldiers. All the while, snipers fired down on Marines who were forced to clear streets house by house. By 28 September, the Marines had neutralized the NKPA units and liberated Seoul. Prior to Inchon, many postwar military leaders and theoreticians argued that amphibious operations were no longer feasible in the nuclear age. The Inchon-Seoul campaign proved that amphibious operations were still viable. The strategic triumph at Inchon, the subsequent breakout of the Eighth Army from the Pusan Perimeter, and the recapture of Seoul had changed the direction of the war. MacArthur now sought to pursue the fleeing NKPA across the 38th parallel, and President Harry Truman concurred. In the western sector of Korea, MacArthur tasked the Eighth Army with attacking Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, which it took on 19 October. In the east, he ordered X Corps to embark on amphibious ships and swing around to the other side of the Korean peninsula to conduct a landing on the east coast at Wonsan before attacking north to the Yalu River, the border between North Korea

---

and China. The sprint was now on to destroy the NKPA and reunite Korea.

### *The Chosin Reservoir Campaign*

For the advance to the Yalu, which formed the border of North Korea and China, X Corps commander Major General Almond assigned the ROK I Corps to the right flank, the Army's 7th Infantry Division to the center, the 1st Marine Division to the left flank, and the 3d Infantry Division in reserve. The 1st Marine Division landed at Wonsan, south of Chosin Reservoir, on 26 October and began the process of securing the area and preparing to march north to Chosin. Colonel Puller's 1st Marines, organized as Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1), secured the Kojo area and engaged in significant combat with North Korean forces. While the 1st Marines were in Kojo, the 5th and 7th Marines, organized as Regimental Combat Teams 5 and 7 (RCT-5 and RCT-7) moved north from Hamhung on 1 November. The prospect of fighting Chinese forces concerned the RCT-7 commander, Colonel Homer L. Litzenberg, who told his staff, "We can expect to meet Chinese communist troops, and it is important that we win the first battle." Shortly thereafter, RCT-7 confronted Chinese troops. After four days of fierce fighting, the Chinese units withdrew north and the 1st Marine Division gave chase, unknowingly being drawn into a trap at the Chosin Reservoir.

After receiving orders from X Corps in late November, Major General Smith positioned RCT-5 and RCT-7 on the west side of the Chosin Reservoir at Yudam-ni. During the march to Yudam-ni, RCT-7 placed Fox Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, commanded by World War II veteran Captain William E. Barber, at the Toktong Pass, roughly midway between Yudam-ni and the 1st Marine Division headquarters at Hagaru-ri. The position was vital, as it defended the main supply route. Farther



Trudging slowly through the snow and bitter cold, Marines of the 1st Marine Division march south from Koto-ri during the fighting withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir in December 1950. MajGen Oliver P. Smith, the division's commanding general, declared, "I'm going to fight my way out, I'm going to take all my equipment and all my wounded and as many dead as I can. If we can't get out this way, this Division will never fight as a unit again." During the withdrawal, the 1st Marine Division rendered 10 Chinese divisions combat ineffective.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

south, two battalions of the 1st Marines dug in on the icy slopes of Koto-ri, while Task Force Faith, composed of elements from the Army's 7th Infantry Division, took up a position on the east side of the reservoir, covering the Marines' right flank.

On 2 November, a reconnaissance patrol captured a Chinese prisoner who confirmed the rumors that a significant number of his countrymen were moving into North Korea from Man-

---

churia. The prisoner indicated that three divisions were already operating within the Chosin Reservoir area. Unbeknownst to the Marines, the Eighth Army's capture of Pyongyang two weeks before had prompted the Chinese to enter the war out of concern that UN troops might go beyond the Yalu River and attack into China.

The Chinese *Ninth Army Group*, a 10-division force sent to Korea to annihilate the 1st Marine Division, initiated their attack on the evening of 27 November. The enemy's main effort was against RCT-5 and RCT-7 at Yudam-ni. Chinese units mercilessly attacked both the isolated Fox Company at Toktong Pass and Task Force Faith on the eastern side of the reservoir. Chinese forces then pushed south to cut the 1st Marine Division main supply route and assault Hagaru-ri.

The Communist offensive completely encircled Major General Smith's Marines, leading many experts to conclude that the division would be lost. After receiving orders from higher headquarters to withdraw, Smith ordered RCT-5 and RCT-7 to fight back to Hagaru-ri, 22 kilometers south of Yudam-ni. Smith understood that Hagaru-ri had to hold while RCT-5 and RCT-7 attacked south from Yudam-ni, as it was the only route out of the area. At Koto-ri, Colonel Puller formed approximately 900 U.S. Marines, British Royal Marines, and U.S. Army soldiers into a task force under the commander of the 41 Independent Royal Marine Commando, Lieutenant Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale. Drysdale's orders were to fight his way to Hagaru-ri and reinforce the lines. The task force left Koto-ri the next morning under constant enemy fire. Only one-half of Drysdale's force made it to Hagaru-ri after relentless Chinese attacks split the column in several places. The other half either returned to Koto-ri or were wounded, killed, or captured.

In the desperate defense of the position at Hagaru-ri, the executive officer of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, Major Regi-

---

nald R. Myers, organized a provisional company of 250 Marines and soldiers. Major Myers led a counterattack in the dark on 29 November against an enemy force of 4,000. He spurred his men to press the attack, constantly exposing himself to enemy fire. During 14 hours of fighting, his company suffered 170 casualties but killed an estimated 600 enemy soldiers and wounded 500 more.

By 1 December, Captain Barber and Fox Company were still holding open the Toktong Pass after four days and five nights of relentless Chinese attacks. Of the 240 Marines in the company, 26 had been killed, 3 were missing, and 89 were wounded, including Barber. Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis and his 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, fought their way to Fox Company overnight. Together, these Marines fought to keep open the main supply route. On 3 December, Lieutenant Colonel Davis led a converging attack against Chinese soldiers blocking the way to Hagaru-ri. His men pushed the enemy into the guns of Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett's 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, destroying a Chinese battalion in the process. After linking up, the Marine force prepared to march south. Critically wounded Marines were loaded onto already overburdened vehicles. Everyone else, including all other wounded who could still get on their feet, had to walk. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 5th Marines, passed through, and the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, became the rear guard. "That was the time when there was no outfit," Sergeant Robert B. Gault later recalled. "There was no more 5th or 7th; you were just one outfit, just fighting to get the hell out of there, if you could."

On the afternoon of 4 December, 79 hours after RCT-5 and RCT-7 commenced their attack south, the last elements reached Hagaru-ri, thereby rejoining the rest of the division. Along the way, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing pilots remained overhead, flying 145 sorties to protect the Marines as they marched south.



---

Battered but with their pride intact, Lieutenant Colonel Davis's battalion entered the perimeter of Hagaru-ri in route column singing the "Marines' Hymn." For his leadership during the withdrawal, Davis was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Throughout this operation, it was impossible to escape the cold. At night, temperatures sometimes dropped to 25 degrees below zero. The ground froze, forcing Marines to chip away fox-holes rather than dig them, a process that usually required six to eight hours. Their efforts were rewarded with their sweat freezing their skivvy shirts and socks to their bodies. Water in five-gallon "Jerry" cans and individual canteens turned into blocks of ice. Blood froze in wounds almost instantly. Cumbersome gloves or mittens made the most basic tasks difficult but were crucial to keep hands from going completely numb. Marines, displaying their generosity when suffering together, often gave their gloves, sleeping bags, and protective clothing to wounded buddies. Despite the conditions, they endured the frozen hell of Chosin remarkably well, finding new and inventive ways to survive and fight in the cold. The Marine Corps took the experience seriously enough to institute cold-weather training in the High Sierras of California within six months.

During the initial phases of the battle, Marines at Hagaru-ri had to defend against persistent Chinese attacks. Given the shortage of infantry there, the adage "every Marine a rifleman" and "every Marine lieutenant a provisional platoon commander" rang true. At Hagaru-ri, all Marine military occupational specialties defended the icy slopes of the perimeter day and night from the Chinese onslaught, keeping Hagaru-ri alive long enough to allow the Marine units moving south from Yudam-ni to arrive. Moreover, the expedient airfield at Hagaru-ri facilitated resupply and allowed many of the wounded to be flown to safety.

Once RCT-5 and RCT-7 consolidated inside Hagaru-ri, Major General Smith ordered the division to attack south to-

---

ward the port of Hamhung, 90 kilometers away. Elements of eight Chinese divisions still surrounded the Marines. War correspondents asked the commanding general if he intended to retreat. "Retreat, hell!" Smith replied. "We're just attacking in another direction."

With Marine close air support, the 1st Marine Division and the remnants of Task Force Faith fought through the encircling enemy over icy ridges and along deep winding valleys that lead back to Hamhung. Within two days, the units at Hagaru-ri had reached Koto-ri. As the Marines continued their movement south, Chinese forces destroyed the bridge at Funchilin Pass, halting the column. In a joint effort, the Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force airdropped, built, and laid an expedient Treadway bridge to reopen the Hamhung Road. It took the column another 13 days of fighting to reach Hamhung. The Marines then moved to Hungnam and embarked on transport ships back to Pusan. At the close of the Chosin campaign, *Time* magazine reported that the battle was "unparalleled in U.S. military history." From the military point of view, the primary tactical result of the retrograde movement was that the division had "come through with all operable equipment, with wounded properly evacuated, and with tactical integrity."

Not only had the Chinese failed to destroy the 1st Marine Division, but the Marines dealt a devastating blow to the enemy in return. Prisoner of war debriefings later revealed that UN forces had rendered units of the Chinese *Ninth Army Group* militarily ineffective. In all, 14 Marines received Medals of Honor for their actions during the Chosin campaign, 3 of them members of Barber's Fox Company. During the three months of operations between landing at Inchon and Chosin, the 1st Marine Division suffered 969 Marines killed, 5,517 wounded, and 199 missing. By the first of the year, the division was ready to return to combat. There were new battles to be fought—and won.

---

### *Sustained Operations Ashore*

During the two-and-a-half years that followed the Chosin Reservoir campaign, the Marines spent the war as a conventional land force within the Eighth Army. Moreover, the 1st Marine Division lost direct control over its aviation, as the UN command placed Marine aircraft under Air Force control. After returning from Chosin, the 1st Marine Division camped at Masan in a place Marines called the “bean patch” to rest and reequip. In January 1951, the Eighth Army ordered the division to Pohang in southeast Korea to fight against NKPA guerrillas made up of remnants of the *10th Division*. Forming “Rice Paddy Patrols,” the Marines began tracking down the enemy. By early February, Marines had eliminated approximately 60 percent of the guerrilla force, causing the remaining units to pull out of the area. At Pohang, General Smith led a masterful counter guerrilla campaign that highlighted the flexibility and resourcefulness of the Marine Corps to meet any mission.

In late February 1951, the Eighth Army moved the 1st Marine Division to central Korea and placed them under the control of IX Corps. Spearheading Operation Killer and Operation Ripper, the Marines led the UN advance on the east central front. By 4 April, they were among the first UN forces to cross back over the 38th parallel. Two weeks later, Chinese forces initiated a spring offensive that pushed the lines south again. After heavy fighting and many casualties, the enemy reached its culmination point. UN forces counterattacked and once again pushed the Chinese and North Korean troops above the 38th parallel.

### *Armistice*

By late spring 1951, with the battle lines stabilized around the 38th parallel, it became clear to both sides that a decisive military victory was unlikely. Negotiations toward an armistice began on 10 July and proceeded haltingly for months. The winter



Marine artillery was critical for fending off the massed attacks of Chinese infantry. In this photograph, a gun crew from the 11th Marines fires its 105mm howitzer in support of a 1st Marine Division attack in June 1951.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

of 1951–52 saw combat confined mainly to patrols, raids, and skirmishes. In March 1952, after seven months in the “Punch-bowl” area near the center of the front, so named because of the topography, the Eighth Army moved the 1st Marine Division near Seoul. There, they built extensive trench systems with log and earthen bunkers. Both sides clashed while peace talks continued at Panmunjom. Throughout spring 1953, bitter fighting occurred at places such as Outposts Reno, Vegas, and Carson, as well as Bunker Hill, Dagmar, Outpost Berlin, and the Hook. Finally, after two years of frustrating and often fruitless talks, the UN, North Korea, and China signed an armistice agreement on 27 July 1953. In the aftermath of the armistice, the Marines

---

were relieved of combat duties, though much of the division remained in Korea until April 1955. Eventually, ground elements returned to Camp Pendleton. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing remained in the Far East, however, and other Marines stayed in South Korea as military advisors.

Many Americans are unaware of the human cost of the Korean War and the sacrifices made by those who fought it, which has led to the conflict's nickname, the "forgotten war." Total U.S. casualties numbered approximately 136,000 killed, missing, or wounded. Of this number, Marine casualties were 30,544, with 4,262 Marines killed in action, 244 nonbattle deaths, and 26,038 wounded. The number of enemy losses was considerably higher. No definitive count exists but estimates range widely from 114,000 to 400,000. Researchers estimate that 2–3 million Korean civilians died during the war. By war's end, 42 Marines had earned the Medal of Honor for heroic actions in combat. Of these, 26 were posthumous. Ultimately, the Marine Corps, in conjunction with the Army, Navy, Air Force, and UN forces, were able to preserve South Korea's independence and sovereignty. Today, the country is a thriving democracy and a vital ally of the United States in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, the Marine Corps solidified itself as America's combat-ready rapid response force, with Marines playing a decisive role throughout the conflict. Although they eventually lost their organic aviation to Air Force control, the Marines in Korea showed the value of dedicated air support in the form of what would become the Marine air-ground task force.

### *Marine Corps Aviation in Korea*

The character of the Korean War—conventional operations over rugged terrain and in a country with poorly developed infrastructure—provided opportunities for the Marine Corps to utilize new technologies and innovate tactics and doctrines. The Service



During the Korean War, the Marine Corps pioneered the use of helicopters for multiple missions. Here, Marines conduct an aerial casualty evacuation in a Sikorsky HRS-1 transport helicopter.

*Courtesy of the National Archives, photo no. 127-GR-208-A131996*

tested what HMX-1 had learned about helicopters at Quantico before the war. Marines had used helicopters for liaison work as early as the operations around Pusan, allowing 1st Provisional Marine Brigade's Brigadier General Craig to move around the battlefield and confer with commanders. In September 1951, Marines made tactical history in east central Korea by testing the vertical assault doctrine. In an isolated area of the Punchbowl, Marine helicopters landed 224 fully equipped combat troops and 17,772 pounds of cargo within 4 hours. In addition, one of the helicopters laid 13 kilometers of telephone wire to the regimental command post in 14 minutes. Similar operations soon followed. The vertical-assault operation showed that even amid a

---

brutal war, Marine leaders continued to innovate, which would serve the Service well later in the Vietnam War.

Although Marine Corps Schools had developed the concept of vertical assault for operations in Korea, the Service later expanded this tactic for amphibious operations. This concept required Navy transportation, which led to the development of the Navy's landing platform helicopter (LPH) carrier—a combat vessel capable of carrying an integrated team of air and ground Marines. The first LPHs were converted Navy aircraft carriers and included USS *Boxer* (LPH 4), USS *Princeton* (LPH 5), USS *Valley Forge* (LPH 8), and USS *Thetis Bay* (LPH 6). The first purpose-built LPH was the later *Iwo Jima*-class USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH 2), commissioned in 1961.

Marine Corps fixed-wing aviation also played a crucial role in supporting ground forces. Elements of Marine Aircraft Group 33 (MAG-33), commanded by Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman, supported the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the defense of the Pusan Perimeter. MAG-33 comprised the “Death Rattlers” of Marine Fighter Squadron 323 and the “Black Sheep” of Marine Fighter Squadron 214. These fighter units were equipped with the F4U Corsair and flew missions from carriers based offshore. Additionally, MAG-33 had Marine Night Fighter Squadron VMF(N)-513 the “Flying Nightmares,” equipped with Vought F4U-5N Corsairs night fighters and Grumman F7F Tigercats heavy fighters flying from bases in Japan. The observation squadron, Marine Observation Squadron 6, played an important role in providing aerial reconnaissance and fire direction. After the invasion of Inchon, Marine Aircraft Group 12 arrived in Korea and began conducting operations with MAG-33, facilitating the Marine Corps' transition from sea-based to land-based air operations.

Marine Aviation changed significantly throughout the war as it transitioned from piston-engine aircraft to jet-powered air-

---

craft. Marine Fighter Squadron 311 brought the new Grumman F9F Panther jet fighter to Korea. By mid-1952, all squadrons of MAG-33 had transitioned to jet aircraft. Besides the Panther, the Marine Corps in Korea used the Douglas F3D Skyknight fighters for night operations, and Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron 1 used the McDonnell F2H Banshee for photoreconnaissance missions. The Marine Corps' entrance into the jet age in the early 1950s paved the way for an evolution of Marine jet aircraft, such as the Douglas F4D Skyray, the McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II, the McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet, the Grumman EA-6B Prowler, the McDonnell Douglas AV-8B Harrier II, and today's Lockheed Martin F-35B Lightning II.

### *Marine Corps Innovations*

On 1 January 1952, Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. became the 20th Commandant of the Marine Corps, succeeding General Cates, who remained on active duty and moved to Quantico as Commandant of Marine Corps Schools. During General Shepherd's tenure (January 1952–December 1955), the Marine Corps made several advancements to enhance the overall efficiency of the Service. One of the first changes was the reorganization of Headquarters Marine Corps along general staff lines, which clarified responsibilities, streamlined administrative procedures, and reduced wasted personnel efforts. Additionally, Shepherd separated fiscal functions from the Supply Department and established an autonomous Fiscal Division.

With the passage of Public Law 416 on 28 June 1952, the Commandant became a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, though only when matters concerning the Marine Corps were under consideration. Managing this new responsibility became a focus for Shepherd. His diplomatic handling of the transition firmly established the Marine Corps within the Department of Defense, both administratively and within command relationships.



---

In January 1956, General Randolph M. Pate succeeded Shepherd as Commandant. A few months later, on the night of 8 April 1956, six recruits drowned during an unauthorized night march into Ribbon Creek at Parris Island, South Carolina. Known as the “Ribbon Creek Incident,” the event touched off a national scandal. Following a thorough investigation, Pate appeared before the House Armed Services Committee, presented the facts, and promised appropriate corrective actions. Although the negative publicity did not immediately subside, Pate implemented immediate changes to the recruit training program, restoring the public’s confidence and ensuring the Corps continued to produce capable and effective Marines. While Pate reassured Americans of the Marine Corps’ commitment to professionalism, the Service continued working to meet the country’s national defense needs.

The most significant structural and doctrinal changes during this period derived from the 1956 Hogaboom Board, chaired by Major General Robert B. Hogaboom. The board’s objective was to evaluate the structure of the post-Korean War Marine Corps. Its members had to consider several factors, such as what role Marines would play in a potential nuclear war, how the Service could incorporate helicopters and vertical envelopment concepts into its amphibious doctrine, and how best to structure the force to serve as the nation’s force-in-readiness. The board built on the *Concept of Future Amphibious Operations*, Landing Bulletin 17, which formalized the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF). After convening for six months, the members submitted their recommendations on 7 January 1957. The result was a series of reorganizations on the scale of the changes made early in World War II.

The Hogaboom Board recognized the potential for nuclear war existed. It predicted, however, that the nation would most likely call on the Marine Corps to intervene in conventional mil-

---

itary operations around the world. Either way, a fundamental criterion for the board was mobility. The force had to be lighter, and it had to be transportable by ship, fixed-wing transport, and helicopters. The report recommended that the Marine Corps divest much of its division-level heavy weapons and supply and maintenance functions. Each infantry battalion gained a fourth rifle company and divested its weapons company. Mortars and any retained heavy weapons such as recoilless rifles fell under the headquarters and service company. Each infantry regiment in the division divested its heavy weapons and much of its organic supply and service capability. The report called for artillery to function more as independent batteries and recommended one artillery battalion keep towed 105mm howitzers while the other three battalions convert to the lighter and more air-transportable 4.2-inch mortars. The report also moved heavy artillery and tank battalions to a force troops group, designed to be a follow-on force during protracted operations. Another recommendation was to increase the division's reconnaissance company to a battalion. The division's service unit would be downgraded from a regiment to a battalion, with the excess division service assets placed under the force service regiment to be mobilized for protracted engagements.

General Pate approved the findings. The subsequent changes created a lighter, more mobile force, though at the risk of decreased firepower. The Hogaboom Board demonstrated the Marine Corps' flexibility and willingness to adapt the force to the current threat environment. Moreover, today's Marine air-ground task force subdivisions of the Marine expeditionary unit (MEU), the Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB), and the Marine expeditionary force (MEF) rest on the foundations of the board's recommendations.

---

### *Lebanon and Other Marine Corps Activities*

The structural changes implemented by efforts such as the Hoo-gaboom Board cemented the Marine Corps as the United States' foremost crisis response force, frequently deploying to global trouble spots throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. The United States sent Marines to East and Southeast Asia, the Mediterranean, South America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East to provide humanitarian assistance, military ground support, and, if necessary, to act as a deterrent force.

In August 1953, following a severe earthquake in the Ionian Isles of Greece, the United States dispatched a Marine battalion to assist with relief efforts. Similarly, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing supported French forces fighting in Indochina in April 1954, foreshadowing future regional conflicts. Marine Aircraft Group 12 ferried fighter aircraft from the carrier USS *Saipan* (CVL 48), while maintenance crews remained ashore to train French personnel in aircraft repair procedures. In July 1954, Marines were positioned off the coast of Guatemala when anti-Communist rebels seized control of the Guatemalan government, endangering U.S. nationals and American property. The Marines were prepared to land security forces if the situation escalated. In October of the same year, after extreme weather caused severe flooding in Tampico, Mexico, Marine Aviation units played a crucial role in rescuing Mexican citizens trapped by the floodwaters. These units also flew in emergency supplies, water purification equipment, cooks, and engineers to support those affected.

In January 1955, Marines were called on to assist the Chinese Nationalists when Communist forces compelled Nationalist troops and civilians to evacuate the Tachen Islands off mainland China. A shore party battalion of the 3d Marine Division, based in Japan, worked with U.S. Navy crews to evacuate 26,000 Chinese nationals to Formosa. Later, in 1958, at the request of the

---

Chinese Nationalist government, the United States sent Marine Aircraft Group 11 to Taiwan. Meanwhile, Marine battalion landing teams were afloat in the region, ready to respond to the escalating tensions between China and Taiwan.

In October 1956, when fighting between French and Moroccan forces at Port Lyautey, Morocco, threatened the security of a U.S. naval base, the United States sent Marines to the region. In the same month, Marines were involved in the evacuation of a United Nations negotiation team during the outbreak of war between Israel and Egypt. Marines from the Sixth Fleet also assisted in evacuating more than 1,500 people during the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt during the Suez Crisis. The Marine Corps placed other battalions on alert for possible deployment during the crisis, but when tensions eased, the alerted Marines traveled to the Far East for a goodwill tour.

The post-Korean War pattern of Marine deployments persisted throughout the decade, as the Marine Corps responded to crises as the nation's force-in-readiness. In December 1957, USS *Princeton* (CVS 37), stationed near the Philippines, rushed to Ceylon to support rescue operations following a devastating flood. Twenty Marine helicopters assisted flood victims, earning widespread gratitude. In January 1958, the Venezuelan people overthrew dictator Marcos Evangelista Pérez Jiménez. During the revolt, the mob endangered American citizens. A provisional company of Marines boarded USS *Des Moines* (CA 134) and cruised to the coast of Venezuela. The crisis subsided before intervention was needed, however.

In July 1958, Marines landed near Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, in response to a request from Lebanese president Camille Chamoun, whose government was grappling with a civil war. The United States, fearful that a destabilized Lebanon opened the door to Soviet influence in the region, decided to intervene. Three Marine battalion landing teams, commanded

---

by Brigadier General Sidney S. Wade, went ashore to deter the collapse of Lebanon's government by rebels or spillover from turmoil in neighboring countries. President Dwight D. Eisenhower stipulated that American intervention was for stabilization, not to preserve Chamoun's presidency. The Marines secured vital infrastructure, such as Beirut's airport and certain government buildings. During this volatile situation, where a single careless act could have sparked a broader conflict, the discipline of the Marines was exemplary.

The United States flew in an additional infantry battalion and Army airborne troops to reinforce the Marines. Navy and Air Force units also participated. Operational command was entrusted to Army Major General Paul D. Adams, who assumed overall leadership on 26 July, while Major General Wade was named commander, U.S. Marine Corps troops assigned to Lebanon. During the next two months, the U.S. forces' presence helped stabilize the situation. By 4 October, all Marines had withdrawn from Lebanon without suffering any casualties. Army and Air Force units followed shortly after. The Marines' quick landing and intervention in the Mediterranean amid a rapidly changing geopolitical crisis demonstrated the Corps' value and ability as an expeditionary force-in-readiness. Meanwhile, the nation had been gradually buttressing another ally to stop the spread of Communism, this one in Southeast Asia.

---

## CHAPTER 8

# U.S. Marines in Southeast Asia, 1954–1975

Throughout the 1950s, the United States became increasingly involved in attempting to contain Communism. Its greatest test would come in Southeast Asia. Following World War II, France attempted to reassert its colonial empire on the Indochinese peninsula. From December 1946 to August 1954, the French failed to defeat a Communist group called the Viet Minh in the First Indochina War. The Viet Minh, under the political leadership of Ho Chi Minh, declared independence in September 1945 and sought to unify all Vietnamese people under the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, a government that it formed. When the war ended with the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1954, Ho Chi Minh's objective appeared within grasp, as the independent states of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia formed out of France's colonial holdings in Southeast Asia.

The accords also partitioned Vietnam at the 17th parallel until a scheduled election to reunify the country could be held in 1956. Two Vietnamese states existed in the meantime. Communists in Hanoi administered the north with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and aimed to "liberate" the rest

---

of the country. The Republic of Vietnam governed the south from Saigon and sought to remain an independent, non-Communist nation. Given Hanoi and Saigon's incompatible long-term objectives, war broke out between the two states. In 1955, a Communist insurgency formed in the south to overthrow the government. It grew into the Viet Cong, a guerrilla organization and the military arm of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the Hanoi-aligned Communist revolutionary organization in the south. Within short order, the Viet Cong and the Viet Minh's successor, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), threatened the government in Saigon.

The United States became involved in the war in South Vietnam to contain Communism, whose political and economic tenets challenged the post-World War II rules-based order that U.S. policymakers believed would guarantee security and peace. Since American leaders feared unchecked Communism would lead to countries falling like dominos, they aimed to ensure political stability wherever non-Communist governments were under threat. The military played a profound role in that objective, assisting nations with aid, weapons, advisors, and, if warranted, combat forces. Due to circumstances and policy, then, American leaders viewed the struggle between Hanoi and Saigon as part of its own global competition with the Soviet Union and directed the entire array of U.S. assistance toward Southeast Asia by the beginning of the 1960s.

### *The First Marines in Southeast Asia, 1954–1964*

As the nation's force-in-readiness, the Marine Corps was present at every stage of the United States' incremental involvement in Southeast Asia. The first Marine advisor in Vietnam was Lieutenant Colonel Victor J. Croizat, a veteran of Guadalcanal, Kwajalein, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima during World War II. Lieutenant Colonel Croizat arrived on 2 August 1954 and was

---

assigned to the United States Military Assistance and Advisory Group, the body that trained, equipped, and advised the Vietnamese National Army. He became the first senior U.S. advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps after it formed in October 1954.

U.S. Marine involvement in Southeast Asia remained at an advisory level until July 1959, when North Vietnamese troops crossed the border to support Laotian Communist revolutionaries called the Pathet Lao. In August 1960, officers in the Laotian national army launched a bloodless coup against the government before aligning with the Pathet Lao. The spiraling civil war led to deepening U.S. and Soviet commitments in advisors and aid to their respective sides. With prospects of victory increasing for the Communists, newly elected President John F. Kennedy and his administration assessed that current policies were not working and that Laos joining North Vietnam and China as a Communist country risked neighboring South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. To reverse the deteriorating situation, President Kennedy backed Laos's anti-Communist government and authorized a military assistance program that included committing U.S. expeditionary forces to conducting a covert war.

In March 1961, Marines deployed in support of Operation Millpond, a secret rotary- and fixed-wing effort from the Central Intelligence Agency to interdict Communist forces and supply government troops in Laos. Marine Air Base Squadron 16 deployed from Okinawa to Udorn, Thailand, on 22 March. For six months, its Marines maintained a reinforced squadron of unmarked Sikorsky HUS-1 Seahorse utility helicopters that joined a squadron of Martin B-26 Marauder medium bombers and a handful of cargo aircraft, all of which Central Intelligence Agency pilots and crew flew.

The United States deepened its commitment to South Viet-



---

nam in February 1962, when the Commander in Chief, Pacific, established the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV). A joint command in Saigon, USMACV's mission was to support South Vietnam's regulars and militia, called the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), in defeating the insurgency that had expanded to 20,000 Viet Cong by early 1962. The Marine Corps' role expanded as a result, and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 362 (HMM-362) arrived in South Vietnam in April 1962 to transport RVNAF troops and supplies on the battlefield. With the arrival of the squadron for this mission, code-named Operation Shufly, the Marines' roles in South Vietnam encompassed advisory, staff, and combat service support functions.

By the end of 1963, U.S. policy toward Vietnam was at a crossroads. South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated in a coup on 2 November 1963 following unrest due to the unpopularity of his government and its policies. Three weeks later, Kennedy was also assassinated. Kennedy's successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, was unenthusiastic about the war but feared a retreat would diminish American standing in the world. He committed to a policy of gradualism in South Vietnam, or "going up old Ho Chi Minh's leg an inch at a time," as he put it. At the end of the year, the United States increased its presence in South Vietnam to 23,000 advisors.

### *Landing and Developing a Marine Strategy, 1965*

The pivotal event that led to the deployment of American ground troops to Southeast Asia occurred on 2 August 1964, when North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the destroyer USS *Maddox* (DD 731) in the Gulf of Tonkin. The incident, and a reported second attack two nights later against USS *Turner Joy* (DD 951), prompted Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on 10 August, granting President Johnson "all nec-



The first combat Marines in South Vietnam, from Battalion Landing Team 3/9, come ashore near Da Nang, 8 March 1965.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

essary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” The Johnson administration moved cautiously toward expanding the U.S. military’s role in South Vietnam. A series of Communist attacks against American facilities and advisors occurred during the New Year and spurred the president to authorize reprisal bombing strikes against PAVN bases and lines of communication inside North Vietnam. On 2 March, Johnson expanded the bombing into a sustained campaign called Operation Rolling Thunder in the hopes of convincing Hanoi to end its support of the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam.

The Marine Corps was an integral component of the Americanization of the war. Following Viet Cong attacks on the Da Nang Air Base at the end of February 1965, USMACV request-

---

ed two battalions of Marines to defend the facility and thereby free up Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) troops to conduct more aggressive operations. In response, Johnson authorized the deployment of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (9th MEB), which went ashore at Da Nang on 8 March to become the first U.S. ground combat troops in South Vietnam. With the landing, the number of Marines in South Vietnam jumped from 200 to more than 5,000.

The United States recognized that the RVNAF was struggling to push out Viet Cong political influence in the populated areas and spread security and civic programs, a process known as pacification. By the end of March, the Republic of Vietnam had lost control of the countryside except for the areas around provincial capitals. To prevent a Communist takeover of South Vietnam, President Johnson authorized a buildup of combat power. Among the reinforcements were a U.S. Army brigade and Australian, New Zealand, and South Korean forces. The commanding general of the 3d Marine Division, Major General William R. Collins, arrived at Da Nang with a small advance party on 3 May 1965. Three days later, the 9th MEB was deactivated and III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) was established along with the 3d Marine Division (Forward), both of which were under the command of Major General Lewis W. Walt. Marine Aircraft Group 16 commanded aviation elements until the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing arrived. The additional Marines allowed III MAF to establish combat outposts in the coastal areas of Phu Bai, Chu Lai, and Qui Nhon to protect air and logistics bases.

During the coming months, American troops dispersed across four corps tactical zones in South Vietnam that were both military zones and political regions. Each had an American lieutenant general commanding troops via a regional force headquarters and a parallel Army of the Republic of Vietnam corps

---

headquarters with its own troops under command of a South Vietnamese lieutenant general. U.S. Army units operated in three of the four zones while III MAF, as both the regional force command and the Marine component command, was responsible for the I Corps Tactical Zone, made up of South Vietnam's five northernmost provinces: Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai. Though the Marine area of operations was not the largest corps tactical zone in the country, it shared borders with North Vietnam and Laos, had 2.6 million people, and was larger in area than Connecticut at 16,000 square kilometers, leading one commander to report that he had "too much real estate" and not enough troops.

Operational command of all air and ground forces in South Vietnam belonged to U.S. Army General William C. Westmoreland. As commander of USMACV, General Westmoreland set the strategy to achieve the American objective of defending a stable and independent non-Communist government in Saigon. In late spring 1965, he faced an enemy who employed multiple capabilities. The Viet Cong was composed of three echelons of fighters. Guerrilla units operated at the hamlet level and protected a Communist political cadre that acted as a shadow government through taxation, administration, and conscription. Local-force units were organized at the district and regional levels, had some training, and fought more conventionally than the guerrillas. Main-force units—Westmoreland's primary concern—were organized in battalions and regiments and filled with uniformed, professional soldiers who received supplies and training in conventional warfare from the North Vietnamese.

These capabilities gave the Viet Cong remarkable flexibility. By June 1965, the main-force units were destroying the equivalent of one South Vietnamese infantry battalion every week. Meanwhile, guerrillas pressed into populated areas. On 1 July,



Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP

---

they launched their first attack against the Da Nang Air Base. One airman was killed, and three Marines were wounded in the attack. The enemy had made their approach through the heavily populated area south and east of the field, where ARVN soldiers maintained security. As a result of the attack, the Marines' area of responsibility expanded outward.

The Viet Cong attempted to wage a conventional war against the South Vietnamese military to achieve a quick and decisive victory before the Americans could prevent the fall of the Saigon government. By summer 1965, it appeared to be working. South Vietnamese forces crumbled under the pressure of the Communist threat, leading U.S. leaders to conclude that the Saigon government and RVNAF were not up to the task. The dire situation convinced Westmoreland, defense leadership, and President Johnson to increase the American commitment to 200,000 troops and release units from their static defense missions. The focus became achieving a military victory through a "big-unit war," or large-scale conventional combat operations that found, fixed, and destroyed enemy forces.

The Marines were not averse to USMACV's efforts to use overwhelming American firepower, but they believed that the center of gravity in the I Corps Tactical Zone was the South Vietnamese people. If the American objective was to stabilize the country and defend it against the expansion of Communism, Marines such as the commanding general of Fleet Marine Force Pacific, Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, who was the Marine Corps' leading expert on counterinsurgency, argued that it was necessary to separate the Viet Cong from the population. To accomplish this, III MAF designed a balanced approach of pacification operations inside the hamlets and villages, counter-guerrilla operations around the enclaves, and search and destroy operations away from the population. The idea was to push the Viet Cong away from the villages and spread security out like



Drawing on its history of counterinsurgency warfare, the Marine Corps instituted the Combined Action Program (CAP) in the I Corps sector of Vietnam. In this photograph, village chief Le Kim Bat goes over a patrol route with Cpl John J. Shylo. The CAP program emphasized the initiative and judgment of junior Marine leaders working directly with Vietnamese locals, similar to previous programs in Nicaragua and Haiti.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

an ink blot until the pacified areas emanating from the enclaves were connected.

Central to this ink-blot strategy was the Marine Corps' unique approach to pacification. Security assurances came from the Combined Action Program (CAP), which used platoon-size formations composed of a reinforced squad of Marines and militiamen from the South Vietnamese Popular Forces. Marines based the concept on the Marine Corps' experience during the small wars of the early twentieth century, with the platoon living in hamlets and villages to ensure security and

---

train the militiamen to defend their community. Meanwhile, combat units provided civic action programs that delivered medical assistance and undertook community development projects such as digging wells, building schools, and distributing food. Together, the different elements of the Marines' balanced strategy aimed to dismantle the Communist infrastructure, foster economic development, strengthen local democracy, and prepare the conditions for long-term South Vietnamese self-sufficiency.

### *First to Fight: Operation Starlite*

Despite III MAF's strategy of focusing on the village level first, USMACV instructed the Marines to range out from their base areas and conduct search and destroy operations against main-force Viet Cong. As a result, Marines initiated the first major U.S. ground offensive of the war on 18 August 1965 with Operation Starlite. A reinforced regiment built around the 7th Marines attacked the *1st Viet Cong Regiment* in a remote coastal base area before the enemy could attack the installations and units at Chu Lai. With air, artillery, and naval fire support, the Marine battalions conducted a river crossing, a helicopter-borne assault, and an amphibious landing to trap the Viet Cong on the Van Tuong Peninsula. Operation Starlite ended on 24 August and resulted in more than 600 enemy killed at the cost of 45 Marines dead and 203 wounded.

During the fighting, Corporal Robert E. O'Malley, a squad leader with Company I, 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, charged across an open rice paddy to an enemy position, where he single-handedly cleared a trench line of Viet Cong. Corporal O'Malley then led his squad in attacking a second emplacement that was inflicting heavy casualties on another Marine unit. After assisting in the evacuation of his wounded, he gathered the remnants of his squad and returned to the fight before being ordered to



---

evacuate. Though wounded three times, he provided suppressive fire and waited until all members of his squad were safely aboard a helicopter before he left the battlefield. For his actions, Sergeant O'Malley became the first Marine to receive the Medal of Honor in the Vietnam War.

There were similar examples of bravery and valor the same day. Among the Marines killed were Lance Corporal Joe C. Paul, a fire team leader with Company H, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines. On the first day of the operation, well-entrenched Viet Cong pinned down Lance Corporal Paul's platoon with mortar, recoilless rifle, automatic weapon, and rifle fire. Seeing five wounded Marines in an exposed position, Paul sprinted across an open rice paddy, placed himself between the enemy and the wounded, and provided suppressive fire long enough for the platoon to evacuate the casualties. Paul continued firing until mortally wounded. Lance Corporal Paul was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

### *Fighting Conventionally, 1965–1966*

Operation Starlite demonstrated the superiority of U.S. conventional forces compared to the Viet Cong by rendering an enemy regiment combat ineffective and pushing main-force units away from the coastline. The Marines nonetheless remained focused on their balanced strategy and continued to place incoming infantry battalions around the enclaves. The enemy, too, stubbornly pursued their own strategy. In North Vietnam, a robust debate raged between hardliners who sought a quick victory in the south and the “North-firsters” who wanted economic and political stability in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam before toppling the Saigon government. By summer 1965, hardliners had the upper hand. They were convinced that the American pursuit of a limited war to defend South Vietnam meant a decisive military victory was achievable through conventional op-

---

erations, regardless of the stream of U.S. troops and material flowing into South Vietnam. As such, both Communist and American leaders had set a course for escalation in the closing months of 1965.

The first major clash between U.S. and North Vietnamese forces occurred in the II Corps Tactical Zone in mid-November 1965. In the Ia Drang Valley, brigades from the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) fought two PAVN regiments to a draw. The Battle of Ia Drang was significant because it signaled a shift in the character of the war. Not only would North Vietnam support the Viet Cong with equipment and training, but its troops would also infiltrate South Vietnam and engage U.S. forces conventionally. Moreover, the battle indicated the enemy was developing tactics to nullify or exploit American tendencies. Among them was closing with units quickly, which not only neutralized the U.S. military's overwhelming advantage in fire support but also took advantage of its aversion to casualties. The Communists' more aggressive approach—or "grabbing the enemy's belt to fight him," as they put it—signaled a confidence that they could hold their own on the battlefield against U.S. troops and a belief that their resilience meant they could routinely pay a higher cost but still win the war.

This became clear to Marines when the *1st Viet Cong Regiment* reappeared the same week as the Battle of Ia Drang to attack RVNAF positions in the Que Son Mountains south of Da Nang. The regiment was now part of the recently formed *2d Infantry Division*, composed of both Viet Cong and PAVN units, and was fighting to gain control of a valley that served as the gateway to Da Nang. To neutralize the enemy forces, III MAF built a multibattalion task force composed of Marine and ARVN units for a joint operation from 8 to 20 December called Operation Harvest Moon. The Marines and ARVN soldiers failed to trap the Viet Cong in the planned set-piece offensive

---

battle and instead found themselves on the defense. The enemy mauled the ARVN battalions in the Que Son Valley, and the Marines struggled to rescue their allies. Despite III MAF's attempt to land a decisive blow against the Viet Cong's main-force units with Harvest Moon, the enemy remained elusive and militarily effective.

### *Expanding the War, 1966–1967*

Within six months of landing at Da Nang, the number of Marines in South Vietnam had grown from around 5,000 to 38,000. Their area of responsibility equally expanded, from 20 to 1,500 square kilometers. The Communist political infrastructure nevertheless remained intact, and the Johnson administration resolved to double the number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam in 1966. This led to the arrival of the 1st Marine Division headquarters, which took control of the 500-square-kilometer Chu Lai tactical area in late March before receiving reinforcements during the coming months. By June, there were 270,000 U.S. service personnel in the country, 54,000 of whom were Marines. Floating off the coast was the Seventh Fleet's amphibious ready group and special landing force, which served as Pacific Command's strategic reserve and gave USMACV a battalion landing team (BLT) and a helicopter squadron. More than 260,000 PAVN and Viet Cong troops confronted the expanded U.S. force.

In summer 1966, III MAF opened a new front in the I Corps Tactical Zone. Intelligence from Marine reconnaissance units indicated that a PAVN division had infiltrated South Vietnam through the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Enemy units crossing the DMZ broke with North Vietnam's usual practice of funneling troops and supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a network of footpaths and small roads in Cambodia and Laos that fed the Communist war effort in South Vietnam. This new

---

PAVN threat meant that the enemy was pressuring the Marines from two sides, forcing III MAF to protect both the western and northern approaches to the coastal population centers.

In response, the 3d Marine Division sent five infantry battalions and an artillery battalion to search the remote, rugged, and sparsely populated hills of Quang Tri Province from 15 July to 3 August in Operation Hastings. The Marines engaged five battalions of PAVN near a dominating terrain feature called the Rockpile that sat astride several infiltration routes and the operationally important Route 9, the only east-west road that connected the northwestern corner of South Vietnam with the coastline. Unlike the Viet Cong main-force troops who preferred to sidestep Marines and concentrate on the RVNAF, the well-equipped, highly motivated PAVN stood and fought with good coordination of small-arms, machine-gun, and mortar fire.

One of the operation's desperate fights occurred on the first day, when PAVN troops cut off and surrounded Company K, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines. For three successive nights, the Marines of Company K repulsed the enemy's attempts to overrun them first with a company, then a battalion, and finally a regimental attack. The commander, Captain Robert J. Modrzejewski, rallied his Marines during each human-wave assault and directed air and artillery support on top of his company's position. When two squads from 1st Platoon became separated from their fellow Marines, the platoon commander, Second Lieutenant John J. McGinty III, ran through intense automatic-weapons and mortar fire to locate his troops, 20 of whom were wounded. Second Lieutenant McGinty shouted encouragement and directed fire while the enemy swarmed the Marines, and he killed five PAVN soldiers at point-blank range with his pistol. He finally stopped the enemy attack by calling in air and artillery strikes within 45 meters of the position. Both Captain Modrzejewski and Second Lieutenant McGinty were awarded Medals of Honor for their

---

leadership and actions. When the operation ended, the enemy broke contact and left more than 700 of its dead on the battlefield.

Operation Hastings and its immediate follow-up, Operation Prairie, confirmed the presence of determined PAVN divisions at the DMZ and set the conditions for how Marines would fight the war for the next five years. In early October, III MAF reshuffled its two divisions to wage a conventional campaign along the DMZ and a pacification campaign in the coastal lowlands. The 3d Marine Division displaced from Da Nang to Phu Bai to command the war in the two northern provinces and serve as a blocking force against the PAVN. It also opened a forward headquarters at Dong Ha, the city that lay astride the crossroads of Route 9 and Route 1, the vital coastal road that ran the length of South Vietnam. The 1st Marine Division left a brigade-sized force at Chu Lai and displaced to Da Nang to command pacification operations in the three central and southern provinces. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also authorized a second amphibious ready group and special landing force and committed both (designated Alpha and Bravo) to extended operations ashore. Units of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing remained at five principal fields: fixed-wing aircraft at Da Nang and Chu Lai, helicopters at Phu Bai, Marble Mountain near Da Nang, and Ky Ha at Chu Lai. The realignment supported the Marine concept of creating breathing space for pacification to take hold in the populated areas by starving the Viet Cong of the men and supplies they needed from the North Vietnamese. If the 3d Marine Division could block the PAVN from reaching the coastal lowlands, then the 1st Marine Division, with its organic elements, CAP Marines, and support from the special landing forces, could isolate and destroy the Communist infrastructure in the coastal lowlands.

During the first half of 1967, 3d Marine Division elements hurriedly constructed a strongpoint defense of mutually sup-

---

porting combat bases and firebases in the thick jungles along Route 9 to serve as a barrier line against PAVN infiltration. In April, the enemy struck at the most remote position first, a former U.S. Army Special Forces camp near the Laos border at Khe Sanh. Two Marine battalions drove off a PAVN division in hill fights around Khe Sanh. The fighting was only a prelude to a summer full of PAVN attempts to cut the line of communication along Route 9. To the northeast, on the DMZ, Marines repelled significant PAVN attacks in a 150-square-kilometer box that Marines dubbed "Leatherneck Square." The northwest corner of the square, an exposed position on a plateau at Con Thien, was particularly frustrating for Marines who sat at the outpost and endured endless enemy mortar, artillery, and rocket attacks coming from inside North Vietnam. To reduce the pressure on Con Thien, the Marines conducted battalion-sized operations inside Leatherneck Square in June and July 1967, among them Operations Cimarron and Buffalo.

While the 3d Marine Division fought intense conventional battles against enemy units of similar size and capabilities near the DMZ, the Marines in the 1st Marine Division operating in the coastal lowlands experienced a different type of war by summer 1967. Pacification relied on squad, platoon, and company-sized patrols in and near populated areas. With 800 people per square kilometer in Quang Nam, the population density in that province was greater than any American state. As a result, the 1st Marine Division did not enjoy the loose rules of engagement of their fellow Marines to the north, who operated in unpopulated areas where, according to the future 27th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert H. Barrow, "anything that moved you could shoot at." The character of the war led the Marine Corps to deploy snipers as well as reconnaissance battalions and force reconnaissance companies. The leading Marine sniper in the war, Staff Sergeant Carlos N. Hathcock Jr.,



Marines from the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, search for North Vietnamese troops in 1967. For Marines who operated in the coastal lowlands, the wet and muddy rice paddies made patrolling difficult.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

deployed to South Vietnam twice and had 93 confirmed kills. Terrain also influenced the war in the central and southern provinces. Streams and rice paddies cut up the rich alluvial plain of the coastline, which meant Marines were not only often damp

---

or soaked but funneled into predictable routes on narrow village trails and dikes. Antipersonnel mines, booby traps, and ambushes were an ever-present threat during patrols. The Viet Cong understood the American rules of engagement and used them to their advantage, often hitting units near hamlets, where they knew Marines could not use their overwhelming firepower for fear of civilian casualties.

The inability to engage guerrillas who rarely appeared exasperated Marines, and they became suspicious of the same villagers they were trying to protect. What many could not see was what the CAP Marines knew—villages were political battlegrounds between the government and Communist cadre. The violent struggle over loyalty and obedience instilled fear and a desire for self-preservation among the South Vietnamese. To the Marines, the villagers' standoffishness appeared, at best, ungrateful and, at worst, suspicious. Either way, their frustration grew, and they struggled to understand a complicated war that made it difficult to distinguish between friend and foe and discern whether they were winning. What they were certain of was that the combination of the type of enemy, the terrain, and the character of the war in the coastal areas made the experience of fighting in the 1st Marine Division area of operations as psychologically taxing as it was physically draining.

Regardless of whether Marines were in the 1st or 3d Marine Divisions' area of operations, South Vietnam's terrain and sparse infrastructure necessitated a reliance on helicopters. The Marine Corps' early development of vertical assault during and after the Korean War prepared it well for when observation and medium- and heavy-lift helicopter squadrons began deploying to Southeast Asia. Tactics changed with experience and technology, but Marine rotary-wing aviation's role in the air-ground team remained constant, with helicopters placing infantry on the ground at key points to offset the enemy's swift mobility,



---

evacuating casualties, and supplying troops in the field. Another constant was the bravery of its crews, illustrated by Major Stephen W. Pless and his Bell UH-1E (Huey) gunship crew's actions on 19 August 1967. While on an escort mission, the Marines responded to an emergency call regarding four American soldiers stranded on the beach south of Chu Lai with 30 to 50 Viet Cong fighters closing in. Major Pless made several low-level gun and rocket runs that drove the enemy into a tree line. He then maneuvered his UH-1E to retrieve the wounded soldiers. During the rescue, enemy fighters rushed to within meters of the helicopter before the gunship crew beat them back. With the wounded aboard, Pless showed extraordinary airmanship by getting his grossly overloaded helicopter out to sea, skimming the water four times before finally becoming safely airborne. Pless's actions saved the four soldiers' lives and earned him the Medal of Honor.

### *The Tet Offensive, 1968*

Throughout the rest of 1967, the 3d Marine Division continued their attempts to block PAVN infiltration, the 1st Marine Division focused on destroying Viet Cong units and dismantling Communist infrastructure, and Special Landing Forces Alpha and Bravo executed 40 amphibious landings in support of the divisions. General Westmoreland planned to maintain this strategy into 1968, which he hoped would be "the year of decision" by killing more enemy troops than the Viet Cong and PAVN could replace and consolidating gains in pacification. The Communists, however, vowed to continue the war despite its growing cost. Fearful that Saigon was becoming more self-sufficient, Hanoi prepared a military offensive that they hoped would inspire the South Vietnamese to mount a popular uprising against the government. USMACV collected intelligence in December 1967 of massive enemy troop movements. Westmoreland an-

---

anticipated this might be the climactic battle of the war, and he sent his operational reserve to III MAF, which included the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and a brigade from the 101st Airborne Division. In mid-January, it was clear the enemy divisions were moving toward the major cities and provincial capitals across the country. In the I Corps Tactical Zone, though, the enemy targeted the 3d Marine Division's isolated outposts.

PAVN troops first struck the combat base at Khe Sanh on 20 January, where the 26th Marines were positioned. III MAF had argued earlier that the combat base's exposed position near the Laos border held no significant value, but Westmoreland contended that it blocked the North Vietnamese from a clear route to outflank the 3d Marine Division, which would lay open the two northern provinces. The PAVN troops cut off Khe Sanh by severing Route 9 and laid siege to the Marines positioned at the combat base and in the surrounding outposts for 77 days. At one of the hilltop positions, Sergeant Mykle E. Stahl, a platoon sergeant with the 4.2 Mortar Platoon attached to Company K, 3d Battalion, 26th Marines, led eight Marines in an attempt to dislodge PAVN troops who had overrun the defenses. While the other Marines laid down a base of fire, Sergeant Stahl, already wounded from shrapnel, assaulted enemy troops in bunkers. He received bayonet wounds when three soldiers attempted to capture him. Despite being wounded and his rifle malfunctioning in the struggle, Stahl killed two of the enemy before the Marines killed the third. He then assaulted another bunker and cleared it of PAVN. He finally employed a .50-caliber machine gun against attacking enemy forces, when he was wounded a third time before the enemy withdrew. For his actions, Stahl was awarded the Navy Cross.

The siege of Khe Sanh opened the Tet Offensive. The dramatic nationwide offensive erupted on 29 January, when enemy forces attacked military and government installations in major



A view of the bunker defenses of the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, along the western perimeter of Khe Sanh. Some journalists criticized the Marines for not “digging in,” but this photograph illustrates how fortified the Khe Sanh perimeter was.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*



A Douglas A-4 Skyhawk drops two “snake-eye” bombs on a target close to the southern perimeter of Khe Sanh. Close-air support was critical to the Marine Corps’ success in the siege of Khe Sanh.

*Courtesy of Robert Donoghue*

---

population centers across South Vietnam. The size and ferocity of the attack was stunning. Although quickly repulsed from Quang Tri City, Da Nang, Hoi An, Tam Ky, and Quang Ngai City, the enemy was able to hold out in Hue, the old imperial capital and the third largest city in the Republic of South Vietnam. Unlike the Marines at Khe Sanh, battalions of the 1st and 5th Marines who fought in Hue had to consider the thousands of innocent civilians entangled in the heavy fighting. As a result, the Marines and other allied forces had to slug it out in house-to-house combat rather than rely on aerial bombs and artillery shells.

Gradually, the Marines pushed the Viet Cong and PAVN troops back toward the Citadel, the walled-in portion of Hue that protected the old Imperial City on the north bank of the Perfume River. Enemy casualties rose to more than 1,200 killed by the end of the first week. Despite the casualties, it became clear that the enemy was prepared to fight a last stand in the Citadel with, intelligence estimated, two battalions. Finally, on 22 February, Marines using tanks and M50 Ontos vehicles with six 106mm recoilless rifles, were able to fight their way to the southeast wall of the Citadel. On the next day, Marine, U.S. Army, and South Vietnamese forces launched coordinated attacks against the remaining enemy. At 0500 on 24 February, RVNAF troops ripped down the Viet Cong flag and raised the flag of the Republic of Vietnam. The last enemy resistance ended on the following day, and the Citadel was declared secure. Although U.S. and South Vietnamese forces took numerous casualties during the 26 days of fighting, enemy losses were much higher at 5,000 dead.

The Communist offensive was a tactical failure. Apart from the sharp fights at places like Khe Sanh and Hue, American and RVNAF units absorbed the assault and threw back the attackers within days. The scale of enemy casualties was such that the Viet



During the Tet Offensive, Communist forces launched attacks across South Vietnam and seized large parts of the Imperial City of Hue. During some of the fiercest urban fighting in Marine Corps history, Marines cleared the city of enemy forces. In this image, Marines of Company H, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, fight street to street in February 1968.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Cong struggled during the next two years to regain their pre-Tet capabilities. Despite the tactical failure, Tet was a political victory for the Communists. Any confidence that the South Vietnamese had in their government's ability to protect the country was eroded. In the United States, too, Americans were skeptical of the Johnson administration's assurances that the Communists were losing when they nightly watched scenes of fighting on their televisions, none more dramatic than Viet Cong guerrillas on the embassy grounds in Saigon.

The war nonetheless ground toward its climax in the middle of 1968. USMACV's strategy was manpower-intensive, leading to the largest American force of the war in August 1968 at 540,000 troops. The Marine Corps' involvement in the war

---

peaked in June at 87,000 Marines—49 percent of the entire Service. The same month, Army General Creighton W. Abrams succeeded General Westmoreland as commander of USMACV. General Abrams articulated what he called a one-war strategy, ostensibly replacing Westmoreland's attempts to search for and destroy the enemy with the decision to clear and hold the countryside. The one-war strategy did not greatly disrupt Marine operations, however, as units had already been taking a similar approach in the I Corps Tactical Zone.

### *Operation Dewey Canyon, 1969*

At the beginning of 1969, the 3d Marine Division began implementing new concepts that eschewed the strongpoint defense strategy. Not satisfied to “sit there and absorb the shot and shell” of the enemy, the 3d Marine Division's new commanding general, Major General Raymond G. Davis, vowed to take the fight to the PAVN. He devised what he called high mobility, an air assault concept that relied on helicopters to insert infantry-artillery teams into enemy-controlled areas. It emphasized projecting combat power via short-term, mountaintop fire support bases from which artillery supported infantry clearing operations. After nearly two years of fighting a defensive war along the DMZ, Major General Davis vowed that his Marines would fight the enemy “on our terms,” taking the fight to PAVN base areas in the remote northwest corner of South Vietnam.

The best example of the high mobility concept was Operation Dewey Canyon, a regimental attack in western Quang Tri Province that aimed to disrupt the enemy's attempt to repeat the Tet Offensive of the year before by attacking the PAVN logistics hubs. From 22 January to 18 March 1969, the 9th Marines under the command of Colonel Robert H. Barrow methodically advanced south into the Da Krong Valley on the border with Laos. Helicopters inserted infantry companies and engineers on



Helicopters were critical to Marine operations in Vietnam. In September 1968, Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters carry elements of the 4th Marines into battle near the demilitarized zone.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

the hilltops. The Marines then cleared vegetation and leveled the pinnacle to construct artillery positions. With the arrival of artillery batteries from the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines, the hilltops became mutually supporting fire support bases. The infantry companies patrolled down the mountains and hills, sweeping areas under the protective screen of the artillery. The Marines repeated the entire process once the infantry advanced beyond the range of the guns, leapfrogging their way down the Da Krong Valley to the Laos-South Vietnamese border and destroying tons of materials in enemy caches along the way. The operation was noteworthy for being one of the final large Marine offensives of

---

the war but also for its innovative aspects, from close coordination between the air-ground team to new concepts in logistical support. Although an imperfect metric, awards tend to depict a degree of danger, bravery, skill, and sacrifice. For actions during Operation Dewey Canyon, Marines and corpsmen were awarded 4 Medals of Honor, 6 Navy Crosses, and 55 Silver Stars. For its outstanding performance, the 9th Marines earned a Presidential Unit Citation.

### *Redeploying from South Vietnam, 1969–1971*

Only days before Operation Dewey Canyon began, Richard M. Nixon was sworn in as president in Washington, DC. The new commander in chief inherited his predecessor's limited options for success in South Vietnam. He understood that domestic politics and public opinion constrained his ability to pursue the war more aggressively. In the face of these challenges, Nixon and his advisors concluded that without more definable national war aims beyond defending a free and democratic South Vietnam, no strategy could strike a balance between continuing to shoulder the burden of the war while meeting broader U.S. objectives in the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union and China. They therefore determined that they had little choice but to pursue a peace settlement and withdraw some or all U.S. forces.

President Nixon's approach to withdrawing without giving the appearance of defeat was a policy known as "Vietnamization," a dual-track approach of negotiating with the Communists while turning over responsibility for fighting the war to a strengthened South Vietnamese military. The administration believed Vietnamization not only kept open the possibility of a negotiated settlement but also improved the RVNAF's ability to force the withdrawal of Communist troops from South Vietnam and demonstrated that the United States would honor its commitments. With a joint statement on 8 June, Nixon and his



---

### ***Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton***

In April 1942, months after the United States entered World War II, the federal government purchased approximately 121,000 acres of land near Oceanside, California, about 80 kilometers north of San Diego. The first Marines arrived that summer, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt formally designated the base Camp Pendleton on 25 September 1942, named after the late Major General Joseph H. Pendleton. With more than 30 kilometers of coastline connected to a substantial inland area of flat land and hills crossed with waterways, Camp Pendleton proved ideally suited to prepare units for combat in the Pacific. As tens of thousands of Marines passed through Pendleton during the war, the base became known as the “Gateway to the Pacific.”

After World War II ended in 1945, Camp Pendleton became the permanent center of West Coast Marine Corps activities and was a prime location for tactical experimentation and large-scale training. In 1947, the 1st Marine Division returned from the Pacific and was permanently based at Pendleton. During the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Pendleton continued preparing units for combat. In 1971, I Marine Amphibious Force relocated to Camp Pendleton from Okinawa and was redesignated as I Marine Expeditionary Force in 1988. Camp Pendleton’s Marines have deployed in support of operations in Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Camp Pendleton hosts portions of recruit training, including “the Crucible,” and the West Coast School of Infantry, among other formal schools. Camp Pendleton-based units that are part of I Marine Expeditionary Force support operations in the U.S. Central Command and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command areas of operation.

South Vietnamese counterpart, President Nguyen Van Thieu, announced the withdrawal of the 25,000 American troops from South Vietnam. The following month, Nixon revealed his new national security policy, later dubbed the “Nixon Doctrine,” which amounted to Vietnamization expanded for all of Asia. The United States, he pledged, would honor its treaty commitments and provide a shield against nuclear threats and aggression. It would, however, limit its support of an ally’s defense to military and economic assistance rather than troops.

---

The withdrawal from Southeast Asia came at a challenging time for the U.S. military. Years of combat operations had stressed the force as much as the social and cultural upheavals back in the United States. Racial tensions in the period particularly impacted unit cohesion and discipline. During the early Vietnam War era, the Army and the Marine Corps had maintained a “color blind” policy, with leaders insisting that all Marines were “green.” This mantra generally held true in combat, as Marines of all colors shared in the hardships of war bringing them closer together. When units left the field, however, racial conflict often flared, especially as the war dragged into the late 1960s and the racial turmoil in America increasingly found its way into the social fabric of the U.S. military. In 1969, a riot broke out at Camp Lejeune that led to the death of one Marine and placed the Corps in the national spotlight. Moreover, from January to July 1969, Camp Lejeune witnessed more than 160 racial assaults. Military leaders could no longer ignore the deteriorating racial climate when reports highlighted that racial issues, along with issues like drug use, were undermining the Service’s warfighting capabilities. The 24th Commandant, General Leonard F. Chapman Jr., addressed racial issues with an All Marines message (ALMAR) in September 1969 in what was the first step in a long process to reduce racial conflict in the Marine Corps.

The redeployment of American combat units was a long, incremental process that mirrored the U.S. military’s gradual buildup in South Vietnam. It consisted of 14 phases between July 1969 and November 1972 that lowered the number of personnel from 550,000 to 27,000. As part of the first phase, the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, embarked on USS *Paul Revere* (LPA 248) at Da Nang’s deepwater pier and sailed for Okinawa on 14 July 1969. Within a month, all of the 9th Marines redeployed. During the next six phases of the American withdrawal, the Ma-

---

rine Corps gradually left, going from 81,337 Marines on the eve of its first redeployment to just 542 after its last in July 1971. By then, 12,948 Marines had laid down their lives and 78,963 were wounded in the conflict.

As Vietnamization intended, the primary Marine Corps and Army efforts by mid-1971 were advisory. The 542 Marines who remained in South Vietnam were part of a transitional support force spread throughout the country performing liaison, advisory, staff, and guard functions. The largest contingent was 195 members of Sub Unit One, 1st Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO). Company F, Marine Security Guard Battalion, had 156 men at the U.S. embassy in Saigon and the consulate in Da Nang. The 68 officers and enlisted of the U.S. Marine Advisory Unit, Naval Advisory Group, assisted the Vietnamese Marine Corps with training, logistics, and staff functions. The remaining Marines in South Vietnam were in Da Nang or Saigon.

### *Easter Offensive, 1972*

Marines remained invaluable for the RVNAF when North Vietnam launched a general offensive against South Vietnam on 30 March 1972. Known as the Spring or Easter Offensive, the enemy attack began with PAVN artillery pummeling RVNAF units in the former Marine positions along the DMZ. Captain Ray L. Smith, recipient of two Silver Stars during a previous tour and a future major general, received the Navy Cross for coordinating air support against an enemy attack and then leading survivors to friendly lines. Major Walter E. Boomer, a future Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, led survivors from Fire Support Base Sarge through the jungle to the brigade headquarters at Mai Loc, where the remnants of the Vietnamese Marine Corps battalions consolidated. A five-man team from 1st ANGLICO was instrumental in directing naval gunfire at Gio Linh while

---

PAVN troops swarmed their position. Their spotting allowed ARVN troops to escape south when the base fell, but two team members, Lieutenant David C. Bruggeman and Corporal James F. Worth, died or went missing in the fighting.

The enemy's unrelenting pressure forced the RVNAF to concede much of Quang Tri Province and contract its defensive perimeter around Dong Ha. By the end of 2 April, PAVN units controlled every South Vietnamese position north and west of the city. The natural obstacle of the Cua Viet River became integral to the RVNAF defense of Dong Ha. At the river, a Vietnamese Marine Corps battalion defended a railroad trestle and a two-lane, 150-meter-long vehicle bridge with orders to defend the spans "at all costs."

PAVN heavy artillery hit the battalion with a firestorm of indirect fire. In response, the Marine advisor, Captain John W. Ripley, requested a naval gunfire mission from an ANGLICO team, which coordinated fire from a guided missile destroyer in the South China Sea. The destroyer's 5-inch guns halted enemy infantry attempting to cross the railroad bridge and then interdicted a PAVN regiment on the river's north bank. Heroics from Vietnamese Marines stalled an attack from two regiments of enemy armor. Ripley surmised that it was only a matter of time before the PAVN overwhelmed them.

Ripley, along with U.S. Army advisor Major James E. Smock, repositioned 500 pounds of TNT and plastic explosives that ARVN engineers had placed beneath the highway bridge. Ripley recalled from his time at U.S. Army Ranger School that it was necessary to torque the entire span to drop a bridge. He swung from the girders for two-and-a-half hours, placing the explosives on a diagonal line across the width of the bridge, often in plain view of the enemy on the north bank. Shortly after Smock positioned the final charges under the railroad trestle, Ripley detonated the explosives on both bridges, dropping the

---

two spans and denying the enemy a crossing point over the Cua Viet. For his actions, Ripley was awarded the Navy Cross.

The North Vietnamese wagered that their three-prong attack would overwhelm the RVNAF leadership and paralyze Saigon into indecision, but they had not anticipated the degree to which U.S. forces would support South Vietnam. President Nixon responded to the Easter Offensive by punishing the North Vietnamese with air and naval power. Japan-based Marine fighter and attack squadrons offered leaders a valuable source of aviation in the region. On 4 April, when advisors presented Nixon with the choice of sending either Air Force or Marine aircraft, Nixon told his advisors, "The Marines are better." He reasoned that "The Marines will do a better job. Let's do whatever does a better job."

Despite the aviation reinforcements, Dong Ha fell on 28 April after the PAVN renewed their offensive. South Vietnamese troops withdrew to Quang Tri City and then again to Hue, site of the brutal urban fighting four years before. RVNAF troops defended the city with air support from Marine Aircraft Group 15, whose constant attacks on the PAVN's line of communication led the enemy to name Route 13 the "Road of Death." To disrupt PAVN preparations for an attack against Hue, helicopters and amphibious tractors of the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade provided lift and fire support to the Vietnamese Marine Corps in separate successful amphibious flanking attacks against the enemy while ANGLICO spot teams controlled naval gunfire. The Communists failed to take the city and suffered more than 2,900 killed in May. From June forward, the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade continued to provide direct support to the Vietnamese Marine Division as it recaptured Quang Tri City from the PAVN in September.

The sum of these allied gains compelled North Vietnamese leadership at the beginning of June to accept that they had failed

---

to alter the military and political balance of power in their favor. Hanoi therefore abandoned hope of defeating the Saigon government with a decisive military victory in mid-June 1972 and decided instead to end the war against the Americans through secret negotiations in Paris. During the next six months, representatives from the United States and North Vietnam discussed terms and finally signed the Paris Peace Accords on 27 January 1973.

For U.S. forces, the agreement brought an end to combat and support operations. Officially, the Vietnam War was over. Only two days prior, Private First Class Mark J. Miller became the final Marine to be killed in action in South Vietnam when he died in a 122-mm rocket attack at Bien Hoa Air Base. Ironically, Private First Class Miller was a rifleman in Company I, 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, the first company of Marine combat troops to arrive in South Vietnam on 8 March 1965.

### *Collapse of the U.S. Presence in Southeast Asia, 1975*

The terms of the Paris Peace Accords stipulated a ceasefire in place and U.S. forces withdrawing from South Vietnam within 60 days. The United States would leave 200 personnel to protect the U.S. embassy and oversee aid transfer, returning to an arrangement that existed before the Americanization of the war 10 years before. While the 23,300 remaining American troops in South Vietnam (among them 1,200 Marines) prepared to leave, the United States, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam conducted a prisoner exchange. Of the 555 military personnel listed in the rolls that North Vietnamese and Viet Cong representatives provided to the American counterparts, 26 were Marines. Though 555 next of kin received the news that their loved one was still alive, more than 1,000 learned from the Department of Defense that their family member remained missing. On 14 February 1973, Lieutenant Colonel Harlan P. Chapman became

---

the first Marine to return to the United States in the prisoner exchange. Lieutenant Colonel Chapman had been in captivity since 5 November 1965, when he went down near Hanoi in his Vought F-8E Crusader. FMF Pacific commander, and future 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Louis H. Wilson Jr. welcomed Chapman back to the Marine Corps, to which the lieutenant colonel retorted, "Thank you, General, but I never left." For the American returnees, their repatriation culminated on 24 May 1973, when President and Mrs. Nixon hosted them at the White House.

The last American troops departed South Vietnam when the final known prisoners of war left Hanoi on 29 March. The responsibility of defending South Vietnam now fell entirely to the RVNAF, who skirmished with the PAVN and Viet Cong units that occupied parts of South Vietnam. North Vietnam had not abandoned its goal of complete victory over the Republic of Vietnam when it signed the peace accords. In December 1974, it was ready to deliver the fateful blow by obliterating the RVNAF and seizing all major cities, including Saigon. The North Vietnamese launched the first phase of their offensive in January 1975, when PAVN and Viet Cong troops overran a lightly defended province in the middle of the country, threatening Saigon.

Simultaneous to Hanoi's offensive, a Communist group in Cambodia called the Khmer Rouge resumed their efforts to defeat the government in that country. Rather than attacking the capital of Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge targeted the convoys of boats that delivered 80 percent of the capital's supplies via the Mekong River. The last convoy arrived on 27 January 1975 but ran into Khmer Rouge naval mines on its return trip, making the river impassable and isolating the regime. To avert disaster, the United States launched a limited airlift to supply the besieged capital with food, fuel, and ammunition.

By the time the Khmer Rouge encircled Phnom Penh, the

---

North Vietnamese opened the second and ultimately final phase of their offensive at the beginning of March. The Communists' main effort came in the Central Highlands, with supporting actions against Quang Tri City, Hue, and Da Nang. South Vietnamese movements to reinforce weak points created widespread panic, as civilians interpreted the sight of troops withdrawing as a signal that the government was abandoning them. The enemy advance in the Central Highlands was so swift that the Communists were able to overrun 6 provinces within 10 days and effectively cut South Vietnam in half. In the north, retreating columns of soldiers and civilians flooded into Da Nang. On 28 March, the airport closed, leaving the sea as the only means of escape. Off the coast, Military Sealift Command ships began to arrive. Small boats ferried refugees to the ships until 30 March, when PAVN units entered Da Nang without a fight. Within days, the Americans had ferried 70,000 South Vietnamese from Da Nang to the island of Phu Quoc in the Gulf of Thailand. North Vietnam next concentrated on the fatal blow, an attack on Saigon.

### *Operations Eagle Pull and Frequent Wind, April 1975*

U.S. officials watched the twin crises in Southeast Asia with the sober realization that there was little they could do. While it attempted to secure funding for military support from Congress, President Gerald R. Ford Jr.'s administration ordered the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade to sail to the South China Sea. On 1 April, the Khmer Rouge overran the last of the Cambodian government's strongholds on the Mekong, the government collapsed, and the prime minister fled the country. On 2 April, the U.S. ambassador to Cambodia requested evacuation. From 4 to 10 April, flights of Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft evacuated hundreds of Cambodians with ties to the U.S. government, leaving only 50 embassy employees and a manageable



---

number of evacuees for a helicopter option. That option became necessary by 10 April, as the Khmer Rouge closed to within artillery range of the capital's airfield, forcing the Americans to end fixed-wing evacuations.

The evacuation of Cambodia, called Operation Eagle Pull, began the morning of 12 April when Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallions from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 flew from USS *Okinawa* (LPH 3) to Phnom Penh. Marines from Battalion Landing Team 2/4 secured the landing zone shortly before 0900, and the embassy officially closed 45 minutes later. The last of the Marines lifted off at 1059 as enemy mortarmen zeroed in on the landing zone. During Operation Eagle Pull, Marines evacuated 287 people, 84 of whom were U.S. citizens, without taking any casualties.

In South Vietnam, PAVN forces had nearly surrounded Saigon by the end of April and began rocketing Tan Son Nhut airport, the location of the Defense Attaché Office (DAO), the U.S. military headquarters in South Vietnam. The deteriorating security situation prompted U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam Graham A. Martin to transfer a squad of embassy Marines to the DAO compound to help with processing refugees. The squad joined 3d Platoon, Company C, BLT 1/9, which had arrived on 25 April to serve as the security force and prepare for helicopter operations. On the morning of 29 April, PAVN troops launched a rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut that signaled the final push on Saigon. At 1051 on 29 April, the senior commander in South Vietnam issued the order to execute Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Saigon.

As with Operation Eagle Pull, Marines were assigned to evacuate U.S. citizens and select South Vietnamese from the DAO compound in a joint operation with the U.S. Air Force. Shortly after the first helicopters landed at the DAO compound, the ambassador's staff requested an evacuation of 2,000 peo-



Vietnamese refugees arrive on board USS *Duluth* (LPD 6) carried by Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 during Operation Frequent Wind, the 29–30 April 1975 evacuation of Saigon, South Vietnam.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

ple from the embassy. There had been no planned evacuation outside of the DAO compound, but the Marines adjusted by sending three platoons as a security force and dividing aircraft between the compound and the embassy. Marine and Air Force helicopters flew into the night on 29 April. All the while, the enemy fired small arms, rockets, and artillery at the air base. After midnight, the final Marines left but not before igniting thermite grenades placed throughout the compound. The explosions and fires collapsed walls and roofs, destroying the buildings from where senior commanders had managed the American war effort in South Vietnam since August 1967. The operation at the compound evacuated 395 Americans and 4,475 South Vietnamese and third-country nationals.

In the meantime, throngs of South Vietnamese crowded

---

outside the compound in a desperate effort to flee the oncoming Communist forces. The crowd grew in size and became increasingly aggressive, eventually resorting to climbing the embassy walls. The White House ordered Ambassador Martin to leave Saigon, which he did before sunrise on 30 April. Remaining in the compound were approximately 30 Marines and Seabees. When the crowd of approximately 10,000 people realized that they might be left behind, they attempted to force their way into the embassy buildings. The gates to the grounds gave way before the remainder of the American troops were inside the main building, requiring them to fight their way to safety. They barricaded the stairways and withdrew to the rooftop, where a Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight picked them up, becoming the last Marines to leave South Vietnam.

During the embassy evacuation, Marine aircrews transported 978 Americans and 1,120 South Vietnamese to ships offshore. Approximately 7,000 people evacuated via commercial, military, and sea lift during Operation Frequent Wind. For the Marine Corps, the success came at the cost of four Marines. Rocket fire at a checkpoint outside the Tan Son Nhut main gate killed Corporal Charles McMahon Jr. and Lance Corporal Darwin D. Judge, the last Marines to die on South Vietnamese soil. Captain William C. Nystul and First Lieutenant Michael J. Shea, pilot and copilot of a CH-46, were lost at sea when their helicopter crashed into the water on approach to land aboard ship. Two hours after the Marines left the embassy rooftop, South Vietnamese leadership surrendered the country unconditionally. After 20 years, the Republic of Vietnam ceased to exist.

U.S. military activity in Southeast Asia appeared over with the conclusion of Operation Frequent Wind. On 12 May 1975, however, Khmer Rouge forces seized SS *Mayaguez*, an American-flagged container ship that was steaming in international waters off the Cambodian coast. The Khmer Rouge took

---

*Mayaguez*'s captain and 39 crew members hostage. U.S. assets in the area tracked *Mayaguez* to Koh Tang, Cambodia's largest island, where it dropped anchor. Realizing the nation's reputation was at stake after the withdrawals, President Ford opted to use military force to rescue the crew, reassure regional allies, and deter enemies. The president ordered the military to prevent the Khmer Rouge from taking *Mayaguez* and its crew to the Cambodian mainland, 50 kilometers northeast of Koh Tang.

The United States organized a joint force from the same units that had participated in Frequent Wind. A company from the 4th Marines boarded *Mayaguez* on 15 May, finding it abandoned. Simultaneously, two companies from the 9th Marines landed on Koh Tang and encountered stiff Khmer Rouge resistance. The difficulties of conducting a joint operation with little to no planning complicated matters. By the time the Khmer Rouge released the *Mayaguez* crew and the Marines withdrew from the island, 11 Marines had been killed, 41 were wounded, and 3 were missing. Navy casualties were two corpsmen killed and two wounded, while the Air Force lost two airmen killed and six wounded. The names of those who died in the operation to rescue the *Mayaguez* crew are the last on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, as the U.S. government recognizes the action in which they died as the last battle of the conflict.

The Vietnam War cast a long shadow on the United States and the Marine Corps. During 20 years of military involvement in Southeast Asia, the country lost more than 58,000 Americans. Between 1965 and 1975, approximately 500,000 of the 730,000 men and women who served in the Marine Corps deployed to Southeast Asia. Of those deployed, 13,091 were killed in action and another 88,594 were wounded—nearly one-third of all American casualties and almost 14,000 more than the 87,940 Marines killed and wounded in World War II. The human toll

---

was more quantifiable than the wounds to the Marine Corps' élan and self-perception as the nation's elite fighting force. While Marines have much to be proud of with their conduct on the battlefields of Southeast Asia, the Service exited South Vietnam tired and facing serious questions about force readiness and training as well as existential questions over its mission, roles, and capabilities.

---

## CHAPTER 9

# Post-Vietnam Reforms and the Rise of the Joint Force, 1975–2001

The Vietnam War tested the resiliency and endurance of the Marine Corps. The length of the war stressed the Service's ability to balance its global mission with training, fielding, and sustaining a constant rotation of Marines in and out of South Vietnam. The character of the war, with its mixture of enemy, terrain, and conventional and irregular warfare, forced Marine units to innovate at almost every echelon. Perhaps most vexing was the way in which the social, cultural, and political tumult at home strained the connection between the Service and civil society. The unpopularity of the war and the erosion of discipline in the ranks began to diminish the public's positive relationship with the Marine Corps. To rectify these issues and return Marines to their global roles and mission, leaders first made a concerted effort to weed out drug abuse and disciplinary problems, to diminish racial conflict, and to build a dedicated and reliable recruiting force for a volunteer military. These personnel reforms preceded a decade of restructuring to address the possibility of

---

war with the Soviet Union in Europe, hone contingency response capabilities, and integrate into the new Joint Force. By the 1980s, the Corps was in a position to reformulate its war-fighting philosophy and doctrine, creating a culture that ensured Marines could respond to the significant changes that occurred after the Cold War. It was the sum of these changes during the post-Vietnam era that set the conditions for the Marine Corps' success in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

### *Reforming the Marine Corps*

By the early 1970s, with the war in Vietnam gradually ending, Marine Corps leaders began discussing a “rapid reset” of the Service to address personnel and operational requirements for the post-Vietnam era. A significant issue that plagued the entire U.S. military by the late 1960s and early 1970s was racial tensions within the branches. The Marine Corps was not immune to these issues. Indeed, a number of high-profile events within the naval Service grasped the attention of Marine Corps and Navy leaders as well as Congress. As mentioned in the previous chapter, racial conflicts between White and African American Marines increased in the late 1960s. On 20 July 1969, a riot at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, led to the death of a Marine and a subsequent congressional investigation. In the early 1970s, the U.S. Navy witnessed racial conflict and mutinous situations on USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) and USS *Constellation* (CV 64). Much of the racial animosity that emerged in the Services in the late 1960s stemmed from the social conflict generated from the antiwar and civil rights movements. Marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen were naturally not immune from holding the same wide range of views and opinions as society. Additionally, all Services experienced disciplinary issues with instances of refusal of orders, murders of unpopular leaders, and increased alcohol and

---

drug abuse. Military leaders and the U.S. Congress understood that continued conflict, substance abuse, and poor discipline undermined the fighting force.

By the late 1960s, conscription had become a significant point of contention and frustration with the U.S. population. Young men enrolled in colleges received deferrals, which skewed draft boards toward inducting working-class Americans who often did not possess the means to afford higher education. Additionally, many argued the draft allowed for inefficient troop turnover, as draftees generally served a period of two years and rotated in and out of units in South Vietnam, diminishing unit continuity. As the 1960s ended, President Richard M. Nixon had called for an end of the draft and the subsequent establishment of an all-volunteer force.

In 1973, the draft officially ended, and the all-volunteer era began. With the arrival of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the Marine Corps, along with the other Services, had to rely on recruiting their personnel. Unlike the draft era, the Marine Corps now faced competition for highly qualified recruits from the other Services and the private sector. As a result, the U.S. government now had to ensure pay and benefits were competitive with the public sector to compete for scarce human resources.

Despite the difficulties in recruiting, the Marine Corps viewed the AVF as a way to weed out underperformers, troublemakers, and substance abusers. Commandants General Louis H. Wilson (1975–79) and General Robert H. Barrow (1979–83) worked tirelessly to address the Marine Corps' post-Vietnam personnel issues and establish a recruiting system that prioritized quality over quantity. Initially when the AVF began, the Marine Corps used the Armed Forces Qualification Test to judge the potential and quality of recruits. Over time, recruiters began coaching recruits on how to obtain a qualifying score, which diminished the quality of young Americans attempting to be-





Three Marines operate data processing machines, an integral part of Marine administrative operations. By the mid-twentieth century, the use of sophisticated technology became increasingly prevalent throughout the U.S. military. *Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

come Marines. The Corps continued to find recruits who had disciplinary problems and who often went absent without leave or deserted. Generals Wilson and Barrow and the U.S. Congress

---

opted for high school diplomas as the criteria that best predicated recruit quality. In 1975, due to inflated Armed Forces Qualification Test exam scores, Congress mandated the Services ensure that at least 55 percent of recruits had high school diplomas. Prior to the end of his tenure as Commandant, Wilson set an even higher standard, requiring three-quarters of all Marine recruits to have high school diplomas.

Wilson and Barrow also made a number of reforms to the Marine Corps recruiting system. They mandated that only the highest qualified Marines received recruiting duty and established more officer oversight at recruiting stations and the recruit depots. To better compete with the workforce and other Services in the AVF era, the Marine Corps invested heavily in advertising and other forms of media. Although Wilson and Barrow had to commit more resources to attract recruits, the Marine Corps retained its elite persona and high standards in its recruiting advertisements. Army and Air Force advertisements showed soldiers and airmen with relaxed grooming standards or offered a sense of adventure. By contrast, the Corps focused on the Service's values and challenged recruits and officer candidates to earn the title of Marine. One of the most iconic recruit advertisements of the era shows a Marine drill instructor in the face of a recruit with a caption that reads, "We don't promise you a rose garden."

Recruit training was another issue that Wilson and Barrow addressed. Throughout the 1970s, the Marine Corps experienced a growing number of incidents of recruit abuse and increased scrutiny of the motivational platoon, where underperforming recruits received remedial training. Wilson and Barrow reformed the recruit training system by ensuring that only the highest caliber Marines were sent to drill instructor school. Potential drill instructors were evaluated on a number of performance items and received a psychiatric screening before being selected. The number of officers to manage basic training was

---

also increased, and at least two general officers were posted at each recruit depot. Finally, Wilson and Barrow placed Marine Corps recruiting under the control of the depots to facilitate management and oversight of the recruiting system.

Part of the reforms included efforts to broaden Marine Corps demographics. By 1973, the Marine Corps had nearly 30,000 African American enlisted men and around 340 enlisted women, representing 17 percent of the total force. The presence of African American Marine officers, however, remained low, despite a directive in 1970 to increase their numbers. Even after several Marine Corps initiatives, the number of African American officers increased only marginally. Moreover, most African American officers were concentrated at the company-grade level, with limited exposure in the field-grade ranks and no general officers. Finally, due to the racial turmoil associated with the end of the Vietnam War, the Department of Defense and Marine Corps developed cultural awareness programs, enlisted councils, and leadership training, all of which began the process of reducing racial conflict throughout the Services. Commandant Wilson approved assignment of women to all noncombat related occupational fields in 1975. By the mid-1980s, there were nearly 10,000 women on active duty in the Marine Corps, up from about 3,000 in 1975. Women were permitted to serve in aviation by the mid-1990s, and ground combat restrictions remained until 2016, when the Defense Department directed all the Services to open nearly all billets to women.

In addition to personnel issues, the Marine Corps focused much of its efforts in the 1970s on its mission. By the end of the Vietnam War, Commandant Cushman affirmed that Marines would not fight sustained operations ashore and were going out to sea, proclaiming that “we are pulling our heads out of the jungle and getting back into the amphibious business.” Senior leadership understood that the Marine Corps’ relevance coming

---

### ***Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.***

Born in Topeka, Kansas, on 2 March 1932, Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr. was a pathbreaker in the Marine Corps. Petersen broke down racial barriers when he became the first African American Marine aviator in October 1952 and then the first African American to command a Marine Corps tactical air squadron during the Vietnam War. In 1979, he broke down another barrier when he became the first African American general officer in the Marine Corps.

Petersen had a storied career as a Marine Corps aviator. He flew 64 combat missions in Korea with Marine Attack Squadron 212, where he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. In Vietnam, he flew 250 combat missions and commanded Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314, which won the Hanson Award for best Marine Corps squadron in 1968.

Following promotion to lieutenant general, Petersen commanded the Marine Corps Combat Development Command at Quantico, Virginia, before retiring in 1988. At the close of his career, Petersen earned the distinction of “Silver Hawk” and “Gray Eagle,” denoting him as the most senior naval aviator in both the Marine Corps and the Navy.

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr. passed away on 25 August 2015 at 83. His life, career, and legacy exemplify the Corps’ values of honor, courage, and commitment.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

out of the war depended on strategic usefulness. For this reason, the Service focused on rebuilding for two primary missions. The first was as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) strategic reserve in the event of war with the Soviet Union. Embarked amphibious forces in the North Sea region or the southern flank of the Mediterranean could fix enemy divisions, reinforce NATO's flanks in Norway, Germany, or Turkey, and be a visible American commitment to the alliance. Beginning in September 1978, the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade took part in NATO naval exercises that tested amphibious reinforcement.

The second mission was the Corps' return to its familiar role as an expeditionary force. The United States viewed the Iranian Revolution in February 1979 and a Soviet-backed coup in Afghanistan in December 1979 as threats to global security. Iran could endanger access to the Persian Gulf, and the Soviets could pursue their geopolitical goal of gaining a presence in the Indian Ocean. At the center of both threats was the potential for hostile countries to impact the flow of oil and gas out of the region and into the world economy. Since vital resources were intertwined with international economic and security interests, the regional events had global implications. President James E. "Jimmy" Carter responded with the Carter Doctrine, which announced that the United States would defend its national interests in the Persian Gulf with military force if necessary. This declaration provided the Marine Corps an opportunity to reassert its role as America's expeditionary force-in-readiness and test the personnel reforms that it had undertaken.

### *Operation Eagle Claw, 1980*

The Service did not have to wait long to deploy in support of the Carter Doctrine. The popular revolutionary movement in Iran in 1979 challenged decades of American strategy in the Middle East, which rested on the "Twin Pillars Policy" of U.S.

---

support to Saudi Arabia and Iran to prevent Soviet political incursions in the region. On 16 January 1979, the Shah of Iran was forced to abdicate political power to revolutionary Islamic forces. On 4 November, a mob of Iranian student revolutionaries overwhelmed the American embassy compound in Tehran. They took 66 American hostages, including the 13 Marines of the embassy security guard. A few weeks later, the hostage-takers released 13 of the hostages, including 4 Marines.

On 24–25 April 1980, the United States launched Operation Eagle Claw, a complex Joint special operation to rescue the remaining hostages. The Joint force was composed of members from all four Services, with other government agencies supporting. Six Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft flew troops and supplies to a rendezvous point in Iran, code-named Desert One, where they were to rendezvous with 8 Navy Sikorsky RH-53D Sea Stallion heavy-lift helicopters flown by 12 Marine, 3 Navy, and 1 Air Force pilots. The helicopters were to refuel and then carry the rescue force to a landing zone in the mountains above Tehran called Desert Two. There, troops would launch the rescue operation.

After a severe sandstorm and a series of equipment malfunctions, the number of working helicopters was reduced from eight to five, and the mission was aborted. During refueling operations at Desert One, a hovering RH-53D collided with a parked C-130 due to sand from the rotor blast obscuring the helicopter crew's vision. Both aircraft were destroyed, killing five airmen and three Marines. The remaining RH-53Ds were abandoned, and the rescue force and helicopter crews evacuated aboard the C-130s. Iran did not release the remaining hostages until 20 January 1981 after 444 days of captivity. The Marine embassy guards, along with the other servicemembers held, all received the Defense Meritorious Service Medal for their conduct during captivity.

---

A Joint Chiefs of Staff investigation into the failure of Operation Eagle Claw highlighted flaws in planning, command and control, and Joint interoperability. The operation ultimately prompted the establishment of the U.S. Special Operations Command several years later. In more general terms, Operation Eagle Claw clearly demonstrated that the United States struggled to operate effectively in the Persian Gulf region. The Carter administration had recognized this the month before the operation and established the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force in March 1980 with the intent to provide the president military options to meet global contingencies. The focus, however, was on the Persian Gulf. With the Army and Navy focused on Europe and the Pacific, the Marine Corps saw an opportunity to emphasize its utility. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert H. Barrow, argued that the Marine Corps was a natural fit for the mission. The Joint Chiefs of Staff decided that command of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force would rotate between officers drawn from the Marine Corps and the Army. The first commander was the future 28th Commandant, Lieutenant General Paul X. Kelley. The organization did not have permanently assigned forces; instead, it earmarked various commands to provide troops in the event of a major crisis in the Middle East, especially a Soviet invasion. It was obvious that all future operations would be Joint in nature and that the region needed a more robust organization. Lieutenant General Kelley recommended that the task force be replaced with a major Joint combatant command. The Department of Defense deactivated the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force on 31 December 1982 and stood up U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) on 1 January 1983.

CENTCOM was the first large, geographic unified command activated since the Korean War. It grew organically out of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. Its home was the same

---

headquarters building on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, and the same forces were allocated to the new command, though others were added later. It took years for the military establishment to fully accept and embrace CENTCOM. Eventually, however, the Department of Defense elevated the rank of the CENTCOM commander to four stars, the same as the commanders of Pacific Command, European Command, Atlantic Command, and Southern Command.

### *Beirut, Lebanon, 1983*

President Ronald W. Reagan, inaugurated on 20 January 1981, the same day that Iran released the remaining American hostages, continued the Carter administration's efforts to build Joint capabilities. President Reagan and his advisors viewed the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" bent on world domination, and they set out to contain Communism assertively with American strength, ending the previous three administrations' cooperative policy known as *détente*. As such, Reagan initiated a military buildup and endeavored to confront the Soviets wherever they attempted to exploit destabilized areas of the globe.

With Reagan's return to more active Cold War competition, the Middle East remained integral to the security of global markets. By 1982, Lebanon became a source of instability in the region. Since 1975, a civil war had raged between various sects of the Lebanese population. In August and September 1982, the president sent the 32d Marine Amphibious Unit (32d MAU) to Lebanon to maintain a show of force during the withdrawal of the Palestine Liberation Organization from Beirut. As the 32d MAU prepared to leave the area, the Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated, leading to increased factional conflict. Given the continuation of hostilities in the region, the Department of Defense ordered the 32d MAU, alongside 2,000





On 23 October 1983, a suicide truck bomber breached the perimeter of Beirut International Airport and destroyed the headquarters building of Battalion Landing Team 1/8. More than 200 sailors and Marines died in the terrorist attack targeting Marines for their peacekeeping mission in Lebanon.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

French and Italian troops, to land and begin peacekeeping operations.

Once ashore, the Marines secured Beirut International Airport. The rules of engagement required the Marines to use minimal force if attacked as they secured the airport. On 30 October, the 24th MAU relieved the 32d MAU and brought ashore artillery. As the Marines expanded their patrol zones, they experienced hostility from the predominantly Muslim Lebanese population, who increasingly saw the Marines as supporters of the Christian Lebanese government and Israel. Nonetheless, direct attacks on American peacekeeping forces did not occur un-

---

til 16 March, when a grenade thrown at a patrol wounded five Marines. A month later, a large car bomb exploded at the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 61 people, including 17 Americans, and injuring more than 100.

Hostilities increased throughout the rest of the year as Marines began conducting patrols with Lebanese Army troops. Restrictive rules of engagement were maintained to limit this escalation from blossoming into a major conflict. Positions were subjected to indirect fire that killed and wounded several Marines. In response to the attacks, units used counterbattery fire to neutralize the threat. In October, sniper and grenade attacks took a toll on Marines guarding the airport.

The increase in tension reached a crescendo on 23 October 1983, when a suicide bomber drove a truck loaded with the equivalent of nearly 5,500 kilograms of explosives through the security gates and into the headquarters building of the 24th MAU's Battalion Landing Team 1/8 at the Beirut International Airport. The explosion collapsed the building, killing 241 Marines and sailors and wounding another 70. At the same time, another suicide attack destroyed the building housing French paratroopers, killing 58. After rescue and recovery operations, the 22d MAU relieved the 24th MAU on 19 November. The tragedy highlighted the extreme danger Marines would face in coming decades as they confronted new threats, even when engaged in expeditionary operations that did not match traditional ideas about what war would look like. Hostile forces shelled the 22d MAU on 4 December 1983, killing eight Marines and wounding two. The same day, the United States initiated air strikes on artillery positions in Lebanon, and the battleship USS *New Jersey* (BB 62) fired a barrage of its 16-inch guns at suspected enemy artillery and antiaircraft positions in the mountains above Beirut.

In February 1984, the Lebanese National Army collapsed.

---

Faced with either maintaining an untenable position or deepening the American commitment in the war, President Reagan decided to withdraw all Americans from Lebanon. On 26 February 1984, the last of the 22d MAU's Marines departed Beirut for U.S. Sixth Fleet ships off the coast. The evacuation of Lebanon was complete and the mission was over, but the Marine guard at the U.S. embassy in Beirut remained.

The Marine Corps' efforts in Lebanon and the tragic bombing of the barracks at Beirut International Airport has left an indelible mark on the Corps, which is still memorialized, studied, and debated today. Questions of leadership, necessity of the operation, mission creep, and rules of engagement linger. Lebanon and the barracks bombing marked a harbinger of the future small wars' hybrid environments and enemy tactics. The nation and Marine Corps' experience there highlights the ramification of improper national strategic planning combined with the failure of leaders to understand the enemy both tactically and culturally, leading to a strategic failure and catastrophic event. Despite the missteps, however, the Marines in Lebanon, just as those who had come before them, continued to give their all for their nation and for their fellow Marines on the ground, constantly adapting to the fluid and chaotic environment that was Lebanon in the early 1980s.

### *Grenada*

Only days before the Beirut bombing, the Marine Corps deployed forces for Operation Urgent Fury, the liberation of Grenada. In March 1979, a Marxist-Leninist party took control of the small island nation and built relationships with the Soviet Union and Communist Cuba. In September 1983, radical factions within the government and military deposed and murdered the prime minister, Maurice Bishop. The Reagan administration was concerned about the political instability of Grenada



Marines patrol Grenada in October 1983 during Operation Urgent Fury, the successful U.S. military intervention on the island.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

and did not want Cuban or Soviet Union aircraft basing on the island. Journalists reported riots, looting, and threats to the several hundred American citizens on the island, including students at a medical school, which raised fears of another hostage situation like the one in Iran. These considerations and requests for intervention by other Caribbean nations prompted the United States to intervene.

The military quickly established a Joint task force for the Grenada invasion but had little time for deliberate planning. In October 1983, the Department of Defense diverted the 22d MAU and a Navy amphibious squadron from their planned Mediterranean deployment for the invasion of Grenada. Battalion Landing Team 2/8, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ray L. Smith (the same officer who received a Navy Cross

---

for his actions during the Easter Offensive during the Vietnam War), originally intended to conduct an amphibious landing north of the island but had to pivot toward a heliborne landing instead. On 25 October, Lieutenant Colonel Smith's Marines inserted and captured the Pearls Airport and the town of Grenville.

Meanwhile, elements of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 provided close air support to U.S. forces in the south, which included Army and Navy special operations troops. Enemy antiaircraft fire brought down a Marine Bell AH-1T SeaCobra attack helicopter supporting Army Rangers. The pilot in command, Captain Timothy B. Howard, and copilot/gunner, Captain Jeb F. Seagle, survived the crash, but Captain Howard was seriously wounded and trapped in the aircraft. Captain Seagle extricated his copilot, dragged him a safe distance from the burning SeaCobra, and administered aid while enemy troops closed on their location. When he realized the enemy was approaching, Seagle distracted them away from Howard, sacrificing his own life so that a CH-46 could land and evacuate his fellow Marine. For his extraordinary courage and selflessness, Seagle was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.

The Joint task force succeeded in destroying the enemy's forces and evacuating the students while incurring minimal casualties. Operation Urgent Fury achieved its objectives but not without issues. Haphazard coordination and improper communication between the varying components, particularly fire support, were identified as key weaknesses in conducting Joint operations. The failure of Operation Eagle Claw and the difficulties of interoperability between the Services during Operation Urgent Fury spurred Congress to reform the Department of Defense and its command relationships. On 4 October 1986, it passed the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act, the most far-reaching restructuring of the Department of Defense since its establishment by the National Security Act of

---

1947. Goldwater-Nichols, as the act is known, made sweeping changes, but the most wide-ranging included establishing the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the president's chief military advisor and the removal of the Service chiefs from the operational chain of command. Under the new law, the commanders of the various unified combatant commands now reported to the president through the secretary of defense. The goal of the act was to reduce Service parochialism and improve the planning and execution of complex Joint operations. Although, the concept was not perfect and issue of command responsibility and interoperability would linger, Goldwater-Nichols nevertheless worked to streamline and clarify the chain of command as well as command authority and responsibility, operational control, communication between the Services, planning, and the allocation of scarce resources to combatant commanders. Ultimately, the establishment of the Joint task force has worked to diminish the inauspicious incidents associated with pre-Goldwater Nichols operations such as the *Mayaguez* incident, Operation Eagle Claw, or Grenada.

### *Panama*

The changes made under Goldwater-Nichols were tested during Operation Just Cause, the American invasion of Panama on 20 December 1989. Throughout the 1980s, U.S. relations with Panama grew increasingly strained. Then in February 1988, the U.S. federal court system indicted General Manuel Antonio Noriega, the head of Panama's armed forces and de facto leader of its government, on charges related to the narcotics trade. For the next year, the United States sent troops to reinforce the canal zone. An attempt to oust Noriega by a faction of the Panamanian Army failed. On 16 December 1989, four American officers lost their way to Panama City and stopped at a Panama Defense Forces checkpoint. When Panamanian soldiers carrying AK-47



On 20 December 1989, Marines of the 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion and the 1st Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company conduct security operations in Arrijan, Panama, during Operation Just Cause.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

rifles shouted threats and attempted to drag the officers out of their car, the driver attempted to drive away. One of the Panamanians opened fire, killing Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz.

Determining that American servicemembers were at risk, President George H. W. Bush authorized Operation Just Cause to remove Noriega from power, secure the democratically elected government, and keep the canal secure. A Joint force of more than 27,000 Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force, and Coast Guard troops launched the operation on 20 December. Task Force Semper Fi, the Marine component, was responsible for securing the western approaches to Panama City and neutralizing Panamanian forces in the area. Elements of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines; the 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion; and the 1st

---

Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company conducted their missions successfully. Within days, the country was largely secured. Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces on 3 January 1990. Marine elements assisted with nation-building operations for several months after hostilities ended. Gradually, the Marine Corps withdrew from the country except for the Marine Security Force assigned to the canal zone.

For the U.S. military, Operation Just Cause was the largest and most complex operation since the Vietnam War. Ultimately, the changes that Goldwater-Nichols had instituted improved the Joint Force's ability to plan, deconflict, and execute operational objectives. The act enabled commanders of the unified and specified commands to broaden authority at the tactical level, providing task force commanders with independence and flexibility in executing their assigned missions. Still, Operation Just Cause revealed there were areas that Joint operations could be refined, especially in coordinating operations in an urban environment.

### *The Maneuver Warfare Movement and the Gray Renaissance*

The Marine Corps' role in U.S. military operations during the decade after the end of the Vietnam War had shown, in part, the success of the personnel reforms and force design changes that the Service had made. Less noticeable but no less important were the ways that Marines had begun to modify the way they thought about and approached warfare. Driving this cultural change was that many of the field-grade officers in the 1980s had spent their formative years as company-grade officers in the Vietnam War. Some, especially those who had led rifle platoons and rifle companies, had become disenchanted in South Vietnam by what they saw as an over-reliance on heavy firepower against an adversary who proved wily and willing to absorb enormous casualties. These combat veterans had been



---

further disappointed to return to the United States and see that the costly lessons of this war were not being applied to train the next generation of leaders. These experiences were relevant as the Marine Corps considered its role in a potential war in Europe, leading some Marines and defense analysts to argue that continued reliance on firepower would be a losing proposition against the more numerous forces of the Warsaw Pact.

An alternative approach that resonated with Marines was to emphasize mobility and rapid, decisive action to disrupt and destroy the adversary. Two leading advocates of this approach were not Marines at all but a congressional staffer named William S. Lind and retired Air Force fighter pilot Colonel John R. Boyd. Both were part of a larger group of reformers calling for broad and sweeping changes to the U.S. military establishment, from the weapons the Department of Defense was buying to the way the Services prepared for war. Lind advocated for a maneuver warfare model over what he saw as the traditional American firepower-attrition approach. The key difference between the two was that attrition warfare depended on mobility to apply firepower to destroy an enemy, while maneuver warfare used maneuver and firepower to disrupt an adversary and eliminate their ability to react as a coherent whole, forcing them to quit the fight or be the victim of piecemeal destruction. Boyd incorporated these ideas into a broader theory of conflict based on deep study of history and military theory and explained that adversaries go through a continual cyclical process of orientation, observation, decision, and action in warfare, later known as the OODA loop. Boyd explained that the combatant who can better understand and consistently reshape the environment quicker than their opponent can overwhelm the adversary's ability to understand events, leading to panic and breaking their will to resist.

These maneuver warfare advocates created an intellectual

---

framework, the basic tenets of which prioritized the psychological dimension of warfare over the material. They called for decentralizing command and mission orders, and they emphasized boldness, decisiveness, and leadership at all levels. Their concepts became an actionable approach to war once Marines engaged with their ideas in the early 1980s. One of the early adopters was Lieutenant Colonel Michael D. Wyly, a veteran of the war in South Vietnam who was the director of the tactics program at the Amphibious Warfare School at Quantico. Wyly worked with Lind and Boyd and developed a curriculum that offered ways Marines could practice maneuver warfare in their combat orders and tactics.

In short order, Amphibious Warfare School graduates took the concepts with them to the Fleet, where some units began to apply maneuver warfare in an organic, ad hoc manner. One of the early general officers who implemented the ideas was the 2d Marine Division's commander, Major General Alfred M. Gray Jr. The future 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps was exceptional among the senior officers in the Marine Corps at the time because of his emphasis on the study of military history and warfare as a professional obligation, which attracted him to the military reformers and their ideas on maneuver warfare. The 2d Marine Division adopted maneuver warfare under the leadership of Major General Gray. After several years of extensive testing in free-play exercises, his officers learned to apply what they had studied in school, taught these ideas to their Marines, and developed supporting maneuver warfare concepts in areas such as fires and logistics.

Marines did not universally embrace the new ideas, however. Some resisted maneuver warfare concepts out of a belief that they falsely promised bloodless victories, deemphasized aggressive frontal assaults, and would undermine discipline in the Corps by allowing young noncommissioned and junior officers

---

too much initiative. Others questioned the value of ideas that originated outside of the Marine Corps. Skeptics were won over but only after they saw the new ideas applied in field exercises or in combat operations in Grenada.

The leaders of the Corps remained deeply divided over the new ideas until General Gray became Commandant of the Marine Corps in July 1987. In addition to maneuver warfare, General Gray instituted an agenda for sweeping reforms. He wanted the Marine Corps to refocus on warfighting, regain its self-confidence, and react to a rapidly changing world to become, as the saying went at the time, “America’s 911 force.” Between 1989 and 1991, General Gray oversaw the creation of foundational documents that defined three core elements: every Marine would be a warrior, the Marine Corps would fight low-to-mid-intensity conflicts, and maneuver warfare would be the Service’s doctrine. He began by ensuring that all Marines understood that combat readiness was the bottom line by which they would be judged, with training focused on developing combat skills to the maximum extent possible.

The Gray renaissance was an evolutionary process that took years to manifest. Gray was an intellectual who believed in the power of knowledge and education and in the lifelong improvement of the individual. As such, he paired his doctrinal reform with changes to the Marine Corps training and education structure. On 10 November 1987, HQMC created the Marine Corps Combat Development Command to develop and disseminate operational concepts, plans, and doctrine. Gray also focused on creating a robust professional military education (PME) system. The idea was to continually educate leaders and challenge them to avoid intellectual stagnation. To that end, Gray established Marine Corps University (MCU) at Quantico on 1 August 1989 and the Marine Corps Research Center two years later. This unified the Amphibious Warfare School (later the Expeditionary

---

### ***General Alfred M. Gray Jr.***

General Alfred M. Gray Jr., 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps (1987–91), left an indelible mark on the Corps through his visionary leadership and transformative initiatives. Gray was a key leader in theorizing, testing, and codifying the maneuver warfare philosophy, culminating in the publication of *Warfighting*, FMFM-1 (today's MCDP-1) in 1989. Since then, maneuver warfare has been the cornerstone of the Marine Corps' warfighting doctrine.

Gray inculcated a "warrior ethos" throughout the Corps that promoted professionalism, intellectual rigor, and a deep commitment to initiative and mission success. Gray built his understanding of a warrior ethos from years of experience as a Marine Corps combat leader. In Korea, Gray served as an artillery officer and an infantry officer. In Vietnam, he served as a signals intelligence/electronic warfare officer and an artillery officer. In 1967, Gray commanded a composite artillery battalion at an isolated outpost called Gio Linh near the demilitarized zone, where he led by example on 14 May 1967 by risking his life to help rescue wounded Marines trapped in a minefield, an action for which he received the Silver Star.

As Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gray founded Marine Corps University out of a deep belief in the value of professional military education. Today, the university continues to educate and hone the minds and warfighting skills of the next generation of Marine Corps leaders through its many officer and enlisted programs designed to educate Marines to prevail in combat.

General Gray retired from the Marine Corps on 30 June 1991. His impact on the post-Vietnam transformation of the Corps cannot be overstated. Gray was an inspirational combat leader who always led by example. His vision of maneuver warfare, a warrior ethos, and a premier institution for professional military education continue to thrive and define the current Marine Corps. On 20 March 2024, General Alfred M. Gray Jr. passed away and was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.



*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

---

Warfare School), Command and Staff College, and eventually the School of Advanced Warfighting and Marine Corps War College into an institution for officer PME that would provide career-long education in a world-class institution. Having begun in the enlisted ranks, Gray ensured that MCU included an enlisted PME program and a robust distance learning program to meet the needs of Marines who were not afforded the opportunity to attend resident schools. Finally, Gray also published the first Commandant's Professional Reading List, establishing a professional responsibility of Marines of all ranks to always study and prepare for war—not just when they were in school.

Gray initiated the process to codify maneuver warfare and a warrior ethos in 1989 when he tasked Captain John F. Schmitt with writing a foundational publication, *Warfighting* (Fleet Marine Force Manual 1), later revised as Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1. The manual was unprecedented in that it defined a philosophical approach to unify Marines with a particular way of thinking about war, one conducive to the maneuver warfare approach rather than a prescriptive doctrine. As Gray declared in the preface, “I expect every officer to read and reread this book, understand it, and take its message to heart. The thoughts contained here represent not just guidance for actions in combat, but a way of thinking in general. This manual thus describes a philosophy for action which, in war and in peace, in the field and in the rear, dictates our approach to duty.”

### *Road to War in the Middle East, 1987–1990*

The Marine Corps remained active as the nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness even while the Service explored and debated maneuver warfare. One of the regional outcomes of the 1979 Iranian revolution was the Iran-Iraq War, a bloody conflict that began in September 1980 when Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces invaded neighboring Iran. By 1982, the fighting deteriorated

---

into a stalemate and a war of attrition. First Iraq and then Iran responded with attempts to degrade each other's ability to wage war by attacking oil tankers in the Persian Gulf, the world's most important oil transportation waterway. Both sides declared an "exclusion zone" and claimed safe passage for neutral ships, but attacks on noncombatant nations occurred.

The United States became involved in the Tanker War when Iran began attacking Kuwaiti merchant shipping. Kuwait, which was providing financial support and neutral ports to Iraq along with other Gulf states, requested the U.S. Navy escort their ships, which the Reagan administration agreed to in March 1987. Two months later, Iraq inadvertently hit USS *Stark* (FFG 31) with a pair of Exocet antiship missiles fired from a Dassault Mirage F1 fighter aircraft, killing 37 sailors. To avoid conflict with the United States, Iraq scaled back its operations in the Persian Gulf. Iran, however, did not, and its HY-2 Hai Ying "Silkworm" antiship missiles along the Strait of Hormuz increased the threat to neutral shipping in the Gulf.

The United States responded by flagging Kuwaiti oil tankers as American ships, since U.S. law prevented the Navy from escorting vessels under a foreign flag. CENTCOM, under the command of Marine General George B. Crist, launched Operation Earnest Will on 24 July 1987 with the initial escort mission. The operation was not only the first test of CENTCOM as a combatant command, it was also the first time a Marine commanded a military theater during combat operations and the first time a Marine commanded a naval campaign. In support of Earnest Will, the Marine Corps deployed Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (1-88, 2-88, and 3-88), comprised of a composite helicopter squadron and an infantry company with supporting attachments. Additionally, the Marine Corps used two barges (*Hercules* and *Wimbrown VII*) as semimobile bases from which special operations helicopters and patrol boats



Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP

---

could counter Iranian small craft. Operation Earnest Will continued into 1988 with U.S. Navy vessels escorting tanker convoys through the Persian Gulf.

After USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (FFG 58) struck a mine on 14 April 1988, wounding 10 sailors, the United States launched Operation Praying Mantis in retaliation against Iranian naval assets. Marines boarded, searched, and destroyed an Iranian oil platform that had been used as a base for strikes, and naval gunfire destroyed another platform. When the Islamic Republic of Iran's Navy attempted to interfere, U.S. Navy ships and aircraft sank or destroyed several Iranian speedboats, the Combattante II fast-attack ship *Joshan*, and the frigates *Sabalan* and *Sahand*. Unfortunately, a Bell AH-1T SeaCobra from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 167, flown by Captain Stephen C. Leslie and Captain Kenneth W. Hill, crashed while avoiding Iranian anti-aircraft defenses. Both pilots perished and were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Though Operations Earnest Will and Praying Mantis successfully kept open the Persian Gulf sea lanes, the operations unfortunately ended in tragedy. On 3 July 1988, the cruiser USS *Vincennes* (CG 49) mistook Iran Air Flight 655 for an Iranian fighter aircraft and shot down the airliner over the Strait of Hormuz, killing all 290 passengers and crew aboard. Shocked by the tragic loss, the Iranians accepted a United Nations ceasefire resolution that ended the Tanker War on 18 July 1988 and the Iran-Iraq War on 20 August 1988.

### *Gulf War, 1990–1991*

The lengthy Iran-Iraq War had led to the deaths of more than 500,000 people and left both nations exhausted. Iraq struggled under the weight of \$37 billion in debt to the Gulf oil states accumulated during nearly 8 years of war. Aiming to cancel the debt to Kuwait and control Kuwaiti oil reserves, Saddam Hus-



---

sein and his Baathist regime claimed that Kuwait historically belonged to Iraq. On 2 August 1990, around 100,000 Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait and overwhelmed the defenders in a matter of hours. President Bush immediately denounced Iraq's attack of a sovereign nation and assembled a global Coalition of concerned nations, first to defend Saudi Arabia against further Iraqi aggression and then to evict the Iraqi military from Kuwait.

Marines were involved in the crisis from the start. After conquering Kuwait, Iraq refused to allow American embassy staff in Kuwait City to depart for Saudi Arabia and instead took the Americans north to Baghdad, where they joined other international hostages. The embassy Marines guided the convoy, then stayed in Iraq with the remaining Americans until being permitted to depart in December 1990.

Meanwhile, Bush ordered the U.S. military to defend Saudi Arabia and deter Iraq from attacking neighboring countries in Operation Desert Shield. In August 1990, the Army began deploying the 82d Airborne Division, and the Air Force deployed the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing. These forces were quickly operational but incapable of serious, unsupported resistance to an Iraqi armored offensive. In the interim, the Navy deployed two carrier task forces to the region. The Marine Corps deployed the 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, which arrived in mid-August and fell in on equipment from Maritime Prepositioning Squadron Two. Like all Marine air-ground task forces, the brigade included armor, artillery, logistical support, and rotary- and fixed-wing air support.

More Marines arrived aboard Navy amphibious warships. The 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable [SOC]), already in the West Pacific, arrived in the Persian Gulf the first week of September, and the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade arrived from the East Coast of the United States soon thereafter. Following doctrine, both were commanded by



Iraqi soldiers surrender to the 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion of the 2d Marine Division in Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm in February 1991.  
*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

U.S. Naval Forces Central Command rather than Marine Corps Forces Central Command, which commanded the Marines in Saudi Arabia. Marine Corps Central Command forces, building onto the initial deployment of the 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, instead formed the theater strategic reserve and provided CENTCOM the option of an amphibious landing if needed. Throughout fall 1990, the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade conducted multiple amphibious landing exercises, demonstrating its capabilities to Iraqi forces. The Iraqis responded by heavily fortifying the coast and laying large minefields in the waters of the northern Gulf.

Additional Marine forces continued pouring into Saudi Arabia. I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), commanded by Lieutenant General Walter E. Boomer, became the primary command for Marines in Saudi Arabia on 3 September 1990.

---

The major subordinate elements of I MEF during Operation Desert Shield were the 1st Marine Division, the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, and the 1st Force Service Support Group. On 8 November 1990, Bush ordered an increase in forces in Saudi Arabia to provide the option of liberating Kuwait if Iraq refused to withdraw. The next month, the 2d Marine Division deployed to Saudi Arabia, while the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing was augmented to increase in size, and the 2d Force Service Support Group merged with the 1st Force Service Support Group already in Saudi Arabia.

During the early hours of 17 January 1991, aircraft from the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing and Coalition allies launched an air campaign against targets in Iraq and occupied Kuwait that signaled the beginning of Operation Desert Storm. Jamming and suppression actions by the escorts overwhelmed the Iraqi ground-based air defenses, blinding the Iraqis by destroying radar systems. The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing lost its first aircraft on the second day of the operation when an Iraqi infrared surface-to-air missile shot down a North American Rockwell OV-10 Bronco multimission aircraft crewed by Marine Observation Squadron 2's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Clifford M. Acree, and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Guy L. Hunter. Both Marines were presumed dead until they appeared on Iraqi television as prisoners of war. The same day the OV-10 was shot down, the Iraqis launched surface-to-surface missiles at Israel to provoke a military response in the hopes that the Arab states would leave the Coalition rather than fight alongside the Israelis.

After nearly two weeks of bombing and seeing no weakening in Coalition resolve, Iraqi forces launched the first major ground engagement of the war by attacking into Saudi Arabia on 29 January. The enemy focused on the Saudi border town of al-Khafji, which they intended to seize and then hold against an expected counterattack. In this way, they hoped to inflict enough

---

casualties on coalition forces to end the air strikes. The Iraqi *5th Mechanized Division* and *3d Armored Division* spearheaded the attack and managed to seize the long-evacuated town. An Iraqi brigade launched a diversionary attack against an observation post, OP-4, manned by a Marine light armored infantry company. The Marines repelled the attack, destroying several dozen enemy armored vehicles in the process. Unfortunately, 2 Marine light armored vehicles were destroyed in separate fratricide incidents that killed 11 Marines. Two days later, after lengthy artillery bombardment and air strikes, Saudi Arabian National Guard forces retook the border town of al-Khafji, ending the battle. Additionally, Marines used naval gunfire from the 16-inch guns of USS *Wisconsin* (BB 64) and USS *Missouri* (BB 63) from 3 to 9 February. Throughout its history, but especially in World War II, the Marine Corps used naval gunfire in support of ground operations. The Gulf War, however, marked the last use of naval gunfire (excluding missiles) in support of ground operations.

For the final push of Operation Desert Storm, CENTCOM gave I MEF the task of liberating Kuwait while the Army and other Coalition forces swept into southern Iraq to the west and encircled the Iraqi Army. The Iraqis had mined and fortified the border between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as well as the Kuwaiti coast. Lieutenant General Boomer ordered the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions to make two breaches and advance to Kuwait City. The Iraqis set fire to Kuwait's oilfields, filling the skies with noxious smoke that dramatically reduced visibility, even during the day. Marines launched the ground assault on 24 February 1991. Combat engineers initiated the assault by creating safe corridors for Marines to pass through. Units moved quickly through the Iraqi defenses under the smoke-filled skies, taking prisoners and securing all initial objectives.

The next day, 25 February, the Iraqis attempted a counterat-



A Marine M60A1 main battle tank of Task Force Papa Bear sits before a burning oil well during Operation Desert Storm. This photograph was taken in the afternoon, at approximately 1500. After the Iraqi Army lit the oil wells of Kuwait, smoke left the region shrouded in a black cloud even during the day. *Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

tack from the Burqan oilfields. The enemy managed to achieve some surprise by attacking through the smoke, but Marine tanks, light armored vehicles, and helicopter gunships destroyed the Iraqi armored assault. On 26 February, the 2d Marine Division reached its final objective, al-Jahrah, on the northern outskirts of Kuwait City, and the 1st Marine Division reached Kuwait International Airport. The Marines consolidated their positions in Kuwait on 27 February, and President Bush declared a ceasefire the following day.

During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, 383 American servicemembers lost their lives. Of those, 68 were Marines: 24 killed in action and 44 non-battle-related deaths. A further 92 Marines were wounded in action. The combined



After the disintegration of Somalia, Marines deployed to conduct a humanitarian mission. While they did confront hostile fire, they more often interacted with curious crowds, such as the one in this photograph, at a checkpoint in Mogadishu on New Year's Day, 1993.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

defense of Saudi Arabia and the liberation of Kuwait was one of the most successful Marine operations in the twentieth century, illustrating the advances the U.S. military had made in joint operations over the previous five years.

Turmoil in Iraq did not end with the war, however, as Iraqis challenged Saddam Hussein's control of the country. On 1 March, the day after the ceasefire, disaffected Iraqi troops and antiregime groups began an uprising in al-Basrah, sparking revolts in other southern cities. Less than a week later, a wave of uprisings broke out in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq. Within days, Kurdish Nationalists, Islamists, militiamen, and military deserters seized nearly every populated area in the north, including the large cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.

---

The Baathist regime's response to the uprisings was swift and bloody. Government forces crushed the northern and southern revolts. In the north, a humanitarian disaster emerged after several hundred thousand Kurds sought refuge from the cities and towns in the countryside. In April, U.S. European Command established a Joint, later combined, task force to undertake Operation Provide Comfort, a humanitarian mission to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq from further harm. The Marines' primary contribution came from 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), along with civil affairs Marines and teams from 2d Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company. On 13 April, Marines entered Iraq and joined British, French, Spanish, and Italian NATO units to distribute aid and establish a security zone in which Iraqi forces were forbidden. Marine Brigadier General Anthony C. Zinni served as the deputy commanding general and chief of staff of Combined Task Force Provide Comfort. The Marines remained until July, when Coalition forces established a "no-fly zone" for Iraqi aircraft over northern Iraq to protect the Kurdish population. A second no-fly zone was declared in August 1992 to patrol over the Shi'a areas of southern Iraq. Both operations continued for the next decade, with Marine aviation units routinely deploying with U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy units to enforce the no-fly zones.

### *Humanitarian Operations, 1991–1996*

Operation Provide Comfort was illustrative of the types of missions that the Marine Corps executed in the 1990s. As the Soviet Union collapsed and Cold War ended, superpower competition no longer framed U.S. national defense priorities. The nation instead faced a destabilized world, and the Marine Corps ensured that the Marine air-ground task force was ideally suited to respond to unexpected crises across the globe, ranging from humanitarian relief operations to large-scale conventional op-

---

erations. Forward-deployed Marine expeditionary units within the Navy's amphibious ready groups became the commonly used Marine unit, highlighting the Corps' ability to execute the full spectrum of operations in a Joint environment.

A series of humanitarian crises followed the end of the Gulf War, the first of which occurred in Somalia after a civil war erupted. In January 1991, the instability necessitated the evacuation of the U.S. embassy in the capital of Mogadishu, known as Operation Eastern Exit. Displaying the flexibility of the Marine air-ground task force, a 60-man evacuation team from the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, aboard USS *Guam* (LPH 9) and USS *Trenton* (LPD 14), were rerouted to Somalia from the Persian Gulf, where they were as part of the build-up of forces against Iraq. When the helicopters arrived on the morning of 5 January, between 100 and 150 Somalis with ladders were attempting to scale the embassy compound walls. Over several hours, the team secured the embassy while Marine helicopters evacuated all personnel from Mogadishu.

The civil war continued for nearly two more years, causing a massive humanitarian crisis. On 3 December 1992, the UN Security Council authorized the use of force to protect aid deliveries from armed factions. I MEF anchored a combined task force, called United Task Force Somalia, to carry out Operation Restore Hope. The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) was among the first forces in Somalia, securing the airport and the closed U.S. embassy in Mogadishu, which was repaired to serve as headquarters. Marines assisted the task force by establishing relief sectors from which aid could be distributed. The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) reembarked in January, and elements of the 7th and 9th Marines spent April helping enforce a fragile peace agreement among rebel leaders to freeze the movement of forces, surrender arms, and secure Mogadishu after instances of rioting. The U.S.-led United Task Force Soma-



---

lia turned over responsibilities to a UN force on 4 May, just days after the last Marines left Somalia. Two years later, conditions in Somalia had not improved, and about 1,800 Marines from the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) established a defensive perimeter for 3 days in March 1995 to protect the withdrawal of the last UN forces.

Marines also responded to natural disasters during this period. In April 1991, a cyclone devastated Bangladesh. The early death toll reached into the hundreds of thousands, while damage to infrastructure threatened millions more who were without food, clean water, and basic medical care. To stave off humanitarian disaster, President Bush authorized U.S. forces, under auspices of the State Department, to assist Bangladesh's government. Joint Task Force Productive Effort (later renamed Joint Task Force Sea Angel) was charged with carrying out the operation. Central Command released the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (minus the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit) and the Navy's Amphibious Group 3 from supporting Operation Desert Storm to attach to the Joint task force, where they served for two weeks before proceeding to home station. A task force called Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-91, composed of engineering, logistics, and civil affairs Marines, then took over responsibility for long-term distribution of aid until 14 June, when Operation Sea Angel formally ended. The Navy-Marine Corps team proved ideally suited to Operation Sea Angel. Due to Bangladesh's distance from established American bases, the ability to operate from the sea not only made the operation possible but also allowed Bangladesh's government to be the face of relief efforts, lending it key credibility while establishing democratic rule after ending years of military control.

Sea Angel was a relatively short-term mission compared to Marine humanitarian efforts in West Africa, particularly Liberia. In 1989, the country had fallen into civil war, necessitating a

---

noncombatant evacuation of Americans in June 1990. The 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) arrived off the Liberian coast (the offshore location became known as Mamba Station), where they remained on alert to evacuate the U.S. embassy and other U.S. government sites in the capital of Monrovia. In August, fighting reached Monrovia, and two companies from the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) landed to evacuate most Americans and secure the embassy, which had been reduced to minimal staffing levels. Through 26 August, Marines evacuated about 130 American citizens and more than 1,500 foreign nationals, including the staffs of several foreign embassies.

The 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) turned over responsibility to Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 3-90 on 21 August, which had been split off from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit owing to ongoing operations in the Middle East. Evacuations continued as fighting in and around Monrovia raged for months. On 9 January 1991, the task force departed Mamba Station, and the 5th Platoon, Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company, Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, Atlantic, assumed the embassy security mission until 15 February 1991, when a West African peacekeeping force restored order in Monrovia.

Marines returned to Liberia in 1996 after rebel leader Charles Taylor sent fighters into the capital to capture one of his rivals, resulting in widespread unrest. Marines from the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) were detached to support Joint Task Force Assured Response with the mission of protecting the U.S. embassy and evacuating Americans and other foreign nationals. While most fighters avoided engaging the Marines, there were occasional firefights. One group of fighters fired at an American position, wounding a Marine. In response, the Marines engaged from their positions, killing three and wounding several more. From June until August 1996, a Special Purpose

---

Marine Air-Ground Task Force, composed of personnel from the 8th Marines, took over responsibility for embassy security until African peacekeeping forces secured Monrovia after Taylor withdrew his forces from the city.

In Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, forward-deployed Marines were often selected to respond to humanitarian crises for which their expeditionary capabilities were well-suited. Crises closer to home drew Marines to familiar ground, however. In September 1991, the Haitian military ousted its democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who fled to the United States in exile. The coup triggered a refugee crisis, as Haitians attempted to flee to the United States by sea, usually in dangerous makeshift rafts. Previous agreements with Haiti permitted the direct return of Haitian refugees, but court challenges and policy changes by President Bush and his successor, President William J. "Bill" Clinton, complicated direct returns. Migrants picked up at sea were instead held while their status was evaluated.

From 1991 until 1993, the Marine Corps established Joint Task Force Guantanamo, built around Brigadier George H. Walls Jr.'s 2d Force Service Support Group. Brigadier General Walls's mission was to house Haitian refugees in camps at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. As the camps' populations swelled into the thousands, unrest grew, including attempted breakouts. At one point, II MEF's alert battalion, the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, was sent to reassert control in one of the camps. By July 1993, only a few hundred refugees remained, and they were permitted entry to the United States while their cases were resolved. That month, the Marine Corps deactivated the already reduced Joint task force, and the operation was terminated. Marines were called on again when the refugee screening policy changed, leading to the reopening of the camp between 1994 and 1996.

While Marines handled the refugee surge, the United States

---

prepared to deploy forces to Haiti to restore the government following a military coup. In advance, elements of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) conducted show-of-force operations in July 1994. Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean, composed of a battalion landing team formed from the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, as well as Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 264 and Combat Service Support Detachment 29, prepared for a landing. Just hours before the planned landings, the Haitian military government agreed to cede control. The Marines instead landed at Cap-Haïtien, a port city on Haiti's north coast, while the U.S. Army occupied Port-au-Prince to maintain order and ensure the handover occurred. Marines occasionally clashed with Haitian troops and police, resulting in several casualties amid a breakdown in command among the Haitian forces. On 25 September, the Marines turned over responsibilities in Cap-Haïtien to the Army's 2d Brigade, 10th Mountain Division.

Perhaps the most well-known humanitarian operation of the decade occurred in Bosnia. While Marines played a smaller role in this intervention than they had in the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean, the Marine Corps' expeditionary capabilities proved valuable. Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of several nations to declare independence from Yugoslavia after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. In April 1992, Bosnian Serbs, with support from Yugoslavia, surrounded the capital of Sarajevo and undertook a brutal ethnic cleansing campaign, expelling Bosnian Muslims and Croats from the territory they controlled and engaging in mass rapes and executions.

Marine McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet squadrons assigned to Navy aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean and F/A-18 and Grumman EA-6B Prowler squadrons deployed to Aviano Air Base, Italy, formed the bulk of the Marine Corps' contri-

---

bution to an air campaign against the Bosnian Serbs. The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC), however, played a key role in the rescue of Captain Scott F. O'Grady, a U.S. Air Force pilot whose General Dynamics F-16C Fighting Falcon fighter was shot down over Bosnia on 2 June 1995. While officials knew Captain O'Grady had ejected, it was unclear if he had survived until six days later, when he made radio contact while avoiding detection by hostile forces. At 0200 on 8 June, a 42-member Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel team, composed of Marines and a few sailors, lifted off from USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3) in two CH-53Es at about 0500, reaching O'Grady less than two hours later. As both helicopters flew back to *Kearsarge*, hostile forces fired at least three surface-to-air missiles, which all missed. Small arms fire did strike both aircraft but caused no casualties or significant damage.

### *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century Fight*

The end of the Cold War had prompted the United States to transition away from containing Communist expansion to focusing on regional challenges. For the naval Services, this meant shifting from global war on the open ocean to operations short of war in the littorals, particularly urbanized coastal areas. Since the Marine Corps estimated that 80 percent of developing nations' populations would reside in these coastal areas within the next 20 years, it prepared to meet what it termed "chaos in the littorals." Marines already had experience with the beginning stages of such chaos by the end of the 1990s after a decade of humanitarian crises. What they prepared for next, however, was the potential for that instability to spark regional wars.

On the first day of his commandancy on 1 July 1995, General Charles C. Krulak issued his planning guidance. Like General Gray, General Krulak attempted to impart on the Marine Corps a mindset. The twenty-first century battlefield, he concluded,

---

would be complex and chaotic, forcing the Marine Corps to prepare for an array of tactical and operational environments due to competitors, failed states, terrorism, ethnic and religious conflict, and possibly even weapons of mass destruction. For that reason, General Krulak pushed Marines to accept ongoing change and to pursue creative organizational innovation to meet and overcome those challenges.

To anticipate these challenges and conduct experimentation in twenty-first century warfare, Krulak founded the Commandant's Warfighting Laboratory at Quantico in October 1995. Meanwhile, Marine Corps Combat Development Command developed more immediate tactical concepts that were based on the tenets of maneuver warfare. Krulak also strived to prepare every Marine for the chaos of the urban battlefield. In January 1999, he published an article in *Leatherneck* and the *Marine Corps Gazette* on leadership in modern, multidomain warfare. Marines, he argued, should be prepared for what he called the "three-block war," where troops might provide humanitarian assistance on one city block, conduct peacekeeping operations on the next, and finally fight a mid-intensity battle on a third. Being prepared for these different, complex environments where the decisions and actions of even small unit leaders could have enormous impact required the "strategic corporal." Marines, through their training and education, needed to be prepared to be aggressive or show restraint at the appropriate times. Krulak's concepts were prescient, as the Marine Corps was on the cusp of an era where junior Marines would be tested.

---

## CHAPTER 10

# A Marine Corps for the Twenty-First Century, 2001–2025

On the morning of 11 September 2001, terrorists hijacked and flew two Boeing 767 airliners into the north and south towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. At 0937, terrorists flew another airliner into the west side of the Pentagon. Forty minutes later, passengers on a fourth airliner attempted to overwhelm hijackers who had taken control of the aircraft. The ensuing struggle resulted in the airliner crashing into the ground near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, killing all aboard.

This unprecedented assault on American home soil was carried out by 19 conspirators associated with the Islamist extremist group al-Qaeda, under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. The terrorist group specifically chose the targets for their global and symbolic significance, as the World Trade Center represented the nation's economic strength and the Pentagon American military power. Either the White House or the U.S. Capitol was the intended fourth target. The closely timed, near simultaneous departure of all aircraft from airports ensured the least amount of interference from a stunned air defense system, and the flights'

---

destinations on the West Coast ensured that maximum explosive damage resulted from airliners heavily loaded with highly volatile fuel.

The death toll of the attacks in New York City is estimated at 2,977 victims, plus those who later succumbed to fatal illnesses caused by exposure to dust at ground zero. While no active-duty Marines were killed during the attacks, 17 U.S. Marine reservists were among the 343 firefighters who died in the Twin Towers. Another 184 individuals perished at the Pentagon, including 55 military personnel.

The Marine Corps quickly responded. Immediately after the attacks, Marine Forces Reserve activated Marine Corps emergency preparedness liaison officers to assist the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the New York and Washington, DC areas. The next day, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 321 flew combat air patrols in the National Capital Region from Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. These sorties were part of Operation Noble Eagle, a vast security effort at airports, military installations, and other critical infrastructure intended to avert any follow-on terrorist attacks. Marine Corps Reserve units' fast response testified to Marine reservists' useful and effective training.

The Corps' organizational response to the attacks was to activate the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Antiterrorism) at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in October. The brigade's mission was to deter, detect, and defend against terrorist attacks, which it was designed to do by providing specialized forces to unified combatant commanders. The Service formed the brigade around the capabilities and resources of elements that already existed—the Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, the Marine Security Guard Battalion, and the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force—with a newly designated unit, the Marine Antiterrorism Battalion. With 4,800 Marines spread throughout



---

the world, the brigade provided the Marine Corps a variety of antiterrorism capabilities. In short order, though, the Service prepared to employ its more traditional air-ground-logistics team, putting to the test whether it had correctly anticipated the challenges of the twenty-first century.

*Operation Enduring Freedom,  
October 2001–March 2002*

President George W. Bush determined that the scale and nature of the 11 September attacks warranted a military response. He soon declared that the United States would strike back against not only the perpetrators but also state sponsors of terrorism and any nation that provided refuge to terrorist groups, signaling the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism. President Bush's declaration was aimed at the Taliban government in Afghanistan, which had developed close ties with al-Qaeda and provided safe haven for the group. The United States ordered the Taliban to cease support for al-Qaeda and turn over its leadership to U.S. authorities. The Taliban rejected the demands, however, and became one of the primary targets in the administration's response to the attacks.

Geography initially limited American military options in the weeks following the attacks. Landlocked in South Asia, Afghanistan was far from prepositioned U.S. forces. Conventional military operations required complicated diplomatic negotiations to secure basing facilities and overflight permissions. Sensing the need to take quick, aggressive action before the Taliban or al-Qaeda could prepare further, Bush approved a plan to insert personnel from the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. special operations forces (SOF) into Afghanistan to coordinate with anti-Taliban militia forces. These assorted groups were intended to conduct ground operations with American air support against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

---

Responsibility for U.S. operations in Afghanistan fell to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) under Army General Tommy R. Franks. The American effort in Afghanistan, called Operation Enduring Freedom, commenced with air strikes on 7 October. Using an assortment of aircraft and cruise missiles, the United States destroyed Taliban military and government targets in major Afghan cities. Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (15th MEU [SOC]) simultaneously deployed airfield security and tactical recovery forces to Jacobabad, Pakistan, in support of Air Force combat search and rescue teams.

Aircraft from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251 conducted the first Marine strike missions of the war on 18 October in preparation for SOF deployments the following day. Special forces units inserted the initial teams into Afghanistan on 19 October. In the north, Task Force Dagger, composed of elements from the U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Group, worked with anti-Taliban groups to seize Mazar-e Sharif, Kunduz, and the capital of Kabul. In the south, Task Force K-Bar, composed of 5th Special Forces Group elements, Navy SEALs, and Coalition special forces from Canada, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and Turkey, supported operations directed at the ancient city of Kandahar, the traditional base of support for the Taliban.

In addition to aviation elements, the Marine Corps' primary contribution to the early phase of the war was Naval Expeditionary Task Force 58 under the command of Brigadier General James N. Mattis. Stood up on 1 November, the Task Force 58 initially consisted of the USS *Peleliu* (LHA 5) Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), containing the 15th MEU's Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 1st Marines; Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 163; and MEU Service Support Group 15. As the Afghan militias made steady advances in the north, CENTCOM

---

looked to establish a base area in the south. The ethnic Pashtuns who made up most of Afghanistan's population dominated the southern provinces and were the main supporters of the Taliban. With limited anti-Taliban forces available in the region, U.S. conventional forces were needed to support operations against the enemy power base at Kandahar. On 25 November, Marines loaded onto rotary-wing aircraft and conducted what General Mattis later boasted was the "deepest amphibious assault from the sea in history," securing a remote landing strip in eastern Helmand Province designated Objective Rhino. The position, which U.S. forces turned into Forward Operating Base Rhino (FOB Rhino), was the first Coalition foothold in Afghanistan. In short order, more than 1,000 Marines were ashore, including elements from the 26th MEU (SOC). Marines quickly began interdiction of enemy lines of communication and provided base support for anti-Taliban militias, including one led by future Afghan president Hamid Karzai. These militias seized Kandahar on 7 December with Coalition support, marking the end of organized Taliban control of the country.

By then, Kabul had already fallen to the anti-Taliban militias operating in the north, forcing the Taliban and al-Qaeda to flee toward the southern provinces or the Pakistani border. Intelligence reports indicated that bin Laden and upward of 1,200 fighters had taken refuge roughly 50 kilometers southwest of Jalalabad in a mountainous region known as Tora Bora. Afghan militia and American SOF teams pursued the enemy to the region and began closing in by early December.

The next month, additional conventional international forces arrived in Afghanistan, providing security against the remnants of the Taliban. In February 2002, CENTCOM formed Combined Joint Task Force Mountain at Bagram Air Base, Parwan Province, around the Army's 10th Mountain Division Headquarters. The Joint task force became the senior Ameri-

---

can command in Afghanistan and reported to Central Command. From 27 February to 20 March, it undertook Operation Anaconda in an effort to drive out the last major Taliban and al-Qaeda stronghold in the Shah-i-Kot Valley. The combined force killed hundreds of fighters, but a significant number escaped into nearby Pakistan.

Aircraft from the aviation combat element of 13th MEU (SOC) remained to assist with Operation Anaconda. A detachment of Bell AH-1W SuperCobra helicopter gunships and Sikorsky CH-53E Super Stallion heavy-lift helicopters from Marine Medium Helicopter 165 flew more than 700 kilometers to the expeditionary airfield at Bagram from USS *Bonhomme Richard* (LHD 6) to support Combined Joint Task Force Mountain. The SuperCobras and McDonnell Douglas AV-8B II Harrier ground-attack aircraft attached to the USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) Battle Group provided close air support to SOF elements, while Lockheed Martin KC-130T Hercules tanker aircraft from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 234 refueled aircraft flying in support of the operation. Unfortunately, confusion while coordinating American air strikes with militia advances enabled many al-Qaeda fighters, including bin Laden, to escape across the border into Pakistan.

The Marine Corps had already begun withdrawing most of its ground and support elements in early 2002 when Army units deployed for more extended operations. Additional Marine units conducted humanitarian operations during the period and provided security for the U.S. embassy in Kabul, but the initial phase of Marine ground combat operations in Afghanistan had ended. During these early months of Operation Enduring Freedom, the Marine Corps' expeditionary posture had paid dividends, providing valuable operational capabilities while the Coalition put in place the forces and infrastructure for a more sustained effort.

---

Despite failing to kill or capture bin Laden and other senior al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders, the initial phase of Operation Enduring Freedom succeeded in overthrowing the Taliban and denying haven to terrorists. An international conference in Bonn, Germany, at the end of 2001 established an Afghan Interim Authority, with the eventual support of the United Nations, which would make plans for drafting a new constitution for the country and creating a new national government during the next five years. The United Nations offered further support by creating the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide security for Kabul. The agreement reached at Bonn also divided responsibility for overseeing security sector reforms in Afghanistan between five countries, or so-called “lead nations.” The United States took on the mission of rebuilding the Afghan National Army (ANA), which would be the primary American contribution to nation-building in the coming years.

### *Operation Iraqi Freedom, March–May 2003*

U.S. national leadership next shifted their attention to other potential regional and global threats. During his State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002, President Bush declared that Iraq, Iran, and North Korea were state sponsors of terror that sought weapons of mass destruction, labeling them an “axis of evil.” Soon, CENTCOM responded to instructions from the president and secretary of defense to begin planning for an invasion of Iraq to disarm that nation and topple Saddam Hussein and the Baathist regime. Meanwhile, Bush and his foreign policy team worked to rally international support behind the mission. By year’s end, the administration built a “coalition of the willing” that pledged to take military action if necessary, and CENTCOM had a plan that relied on a comparatively small, U.S.-led Joint combined force to overwhelm Iraqi leadership with speed and lethality rather than destroying the opposition



---

in detail. This approach, planners believed, could avoid civilian casualties, paralyze the Iraqi military, and prevent Hussein from ordering the use of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons against Coalition forces or neighboring countries.

The complex operational plan began with a brief air campaign to degrade Iraqi command and control, blinding Iraqi leadership and complicating their ability to make decisions. The ground offensive had two main avenues of advance from staging areas in Kuwait. The U.S. Army's V Corps was the primary effort, led by the 3d Infantry Division, and would attack west of the Euphrates River in a long arc before entering Baghdad's southwest neighborhoods. The supporting effort came from I MEF, the combined air-ground task force of nearly 75,000 troops under the future 34th Commandant, Lieutenant General James T. Conway, and built around the 1st Marine Division, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, 1st Force Service Support Group, and the United Kingdom's 1st Armoured Division. Marines from the 1st Marine Division under the command of newly promoted Major General James N. Mattis would seize the oil fields in the south near al-Basrah before the Iraqis could destroy them. The Marines would turn over the area to the 1st Armoured Division, which would protect I MEF's right flank while three Marine regimental combat teams advanced north on two axes between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, threatening Baghdad from the southeast. Planners knew that Hussein viewed Marines as America's shock troops, and they leveraged that reputation by assigning I MEF the traditional invasion route since ancient Mesopotamia, thereby attempting to draw Iraqi units away from the Coalition's primary effort. "You are part of the world's most feared and trusted force," Major General Mattis told his Marines before stepping off. "Keep faith in your comrades on your left and right and Marine Air overhead. . . . Demonstrate to the world there is 'No Better Friend, No Worse Enemy' than a U.S. Marine."

---

The invasion of Iraq began on 20 March 2003 after aerial strikes and SOF attacks against Iraqi observation posts and communication hubs. The most pronounced terrain feature in southern Iraq was the 170-meter-tall Safwan Hill 3 kilometers from where the Marines would cross the border. Knowing that an enemy observation post atop the hill had a line of sight 30 kilometers into Kuwait, Major General Mattis instructed his staff that he wanted Safwan “a foot shorter.” The 11th Marines and 3d MAW conducted artillery and air strikes on the position throughout the afternoon and into the evening of 20 March before Regimental Combat Team 5 (RCT-5), built around the 5th Marines and under the command of the future 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Colonel Joseph F. Dunford Jr., led the Marines into Iraq.

RCT-5 crossing the line of departure initiated what Marine planners had dubbed the “Opening Gambit,” the first 96 hours of combat that was to culminate in crossing the Euphrates River. The primary objective of the Opening Gambit was securing the southern al-Rumaylah oil fields located west of al-Basrah and its gas-oil separation plants, pumping stations, and storage facilities. The oil field was capable of producing 700,000 barrels of oil a day, which could present an ecological disaster if Hussein ordered its destruction. The 15th MEU (SOC) and the British 3 Commando Brigade first seized an offshore oil terminal and pipeline manifolds on the al-Faw Peninsula. Shortly thereafter, RCT-5 and Regimental Combat Team 7 (RCT-7), commanded by Colonel Steven A. Hummer, secured the oil infrastructure in the al-Rumaylah oil fields intact. I MEF forces achieved Opening Gambit’s objectives as planned and 72 hours ahead of schedule.

The Marines’ next task was shifting momentum west to attack across the Euphrates River at an-Nasiriyah. The 1st Marine Division planned to split its forces at an-Nasiriyah, sending



---

RCT-5 and RCT-7 up Highway 1 and Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1), under the command of Colonel Joseph D. Dowdy, up the traditional invasion route of Highway 7 to fix five enemy divisions east of the Tigris River at al-Kut. For the plan to work, the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, called Task Force Tarawa and under the command of Brigadier General Richard F. Natonski, had to secure three crossing sites over the Euphrates. The river crossing canalized the 1st Marine Division, raising concerns that the Iraqis might launch chemical or biological attacks when the Marines were at their most vulnerable.

Task Force Tarawa elements entered an-Nasiriyah on 23 March. Waiting for them was an enemy force comprised of uniformed soldiers and paramilitary fighters who used urban terrain to their advantage. Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, received a torrent of enemy fire as it advanced alone in AAV7A1s (amphibious assault vehicles, or “tracks”) and High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (Humvees) on a four-kilometer boulevard that planners referred to as “Ambush Alley” because of the potential for enemy attacks. The volume of fire increased the deeper the column went into an-Nasiriyah, and fighters in civilian clothes fired rifles and rocket-propelled grenades at the column. The Marines managed to reach the end of the gauntlet at the last bridge only to face regular Iraqi infantry in front of them. Now receiving fire from all directions, the company commander, Captain Daniel J. Wittnam, and his Marines established defensive positions, employed mortars, and coordinated artillery fire support. Fighting was made more difficult because the Marines were wearing cumbersome, hot protective suits due to the threat of chemical or biological attacks.

When a rocket-propelled grenade struck an amphibious tractor, Navy Hospitalman Apprentice Luis E. Fonseca Jr. braved enemy fire to evacuate wounded Marines from the burning vehicle. The corpsman established a casualty collection point in

---

### *Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune*

As the United States prepared for potential conflict with Japan and Germany in 1940 and 1941, the Corps purchased an area around New River, North Carolina, near the town of Jacksonville. With 22 kilometers of coastline and a large inlet, the area was deemed ideal for large amphibious exercises and housing for large numbers of Marines. Marine Barracks New River was formally established on 1 May 1941 (it was renamed Marine Barracks Camp Lejeune the following year). Once the United States entered World War II in December 1941, the Marine Corps was almost wholly focused on the Pacific, and an East Coast expeditionary force was not needed. With large unit training concentrated on the West Coast, Camp Lejeune served as the East Coast Training Center, largely for replacement troops and various specialty occupations.

Camp Lejeune gained new prominence after World War II as the Corps transitioned to a combined-arms expeditionary force-in-readiness. The 2d Marine Division was based at Lejeune after its return from the Pacific in 1946, becoming the ground combat element of FMF, Atlantic, activated that December. The 2d Marine Division, along with the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing from nearby Marine Corps Air Station New River and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, helped refine the tactics and concepts that underpinned the emerging Marine air-ground task force concept. In 1988, II Marine Expeditionary Force was activated as a permanent unit with headquarters at Camp Lejeune. Marines from Lejeune deployed to Lebanon in the 1980s, to Grenada in 1983, to Panama in 1989, and the Persian Gulf in 1990–91. They participated in many of the humanitarian operations of the 1990s, particularly in the Caribbean and West Africa. During the Global War on Terrorism, Camp Lejeune units deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Camp Lejeune-based units that are part of II Marine Expeditionary Force are service-retained and not assigned to any of the geographic combatant commands.

another amphibious tractor and began treating and caring for the wounded until enemy fire forced him to move the Marines. He organized litter teams and directed the movement of the casualties to yet another AAV under a wall of enemy machine gun

---

fire. Fonseca exposed himself to enemy fire to treat wounded Marines along the perimeter before returning to the vehicle. His timely and effective care saved the lives of numerous Marines and earned him a Navy Cross.

Captain Wittnam meanwhile ordered his company to evacuate the wounded back down Ambush Alley. Air Force Fairchild Republic A-10 Thunderbolt attack aircraft misidentified forces on the ground when the Marines were loading their wounded into AAVs and strafed the column. While Company C was pinned down at the crossroads, the rest of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, was fighting its way to the critical intersection. When it arrived, the enemy disengaged. By then, Wittnam's company had suffered a number of casualties and had an operational force of two lieutenants and only one-half of its Marines. Securing the last an-Nasiriyah bridge cost Company C 18 Marines killed and 19 wounded. Task Force Tarawa later learned it had run into a force whose mission was to delay the Coalition's advance as long as possible, and the Marines had taken on paramilitary fighters, Baath militia, and elements of two Iraqi divisions.

The fighting inside an-Nasiriyah delayed RCT-1's passage through the city until 25 March. When the regiment reached Highway 7 and turned north, the 1st Marine Division was soon driving on two routes of advance between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, the area known as the Fertile Crescent where the world's earliest civilizations formed. The Marine air-ground team worked closely during the drive. Attack helicopters provided close air support to the Marines' immediate front, and tactical and reconnaissance fixed-wing aircraft went deeper, searching for targets. During the advance, a pattern formed of uniformed Iraqis abandoning their posts while paramilitary fighters put up an ambitious but ineffective defense. Some of the stiffest resistance occurred at ad-Diwaniyah, a city near Highway 1 that RCT-5 and RCT-7 had to pass. During the fighting, a combined



Two AH-1W Super Cobras provide close-air support to Company D, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, on the march to Baghdad.

*National Archives photo no. 6634409*

antiarmor platoon from Weapons Company, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, triggered an ambush from an entrenched enemy force. Recognizing his platoon was in a kill zone, the commander, Captain Brian R. Chontosh, dismounted his vehicle and cleared a trench with his rifle and pistol. When he ran out of ammunition, he twice picked up discarded enemy weapons. Captain Chontosh ended his attack after clearing 200 meters of enemy trench and killing more than 20 soldiers, earning him the Navy Cross.

Within hours, weather began impacting the Marines' fast tempo. Winds shifted and picked up speed, and a dust storm settled in that reduced visibility, choked lungs, and stung exposed skin. The "Mother of all Sandstorms," as Coalition forces

---

termed it, slowed the advance to a crawl. Marines attempted to adjust to the conditions by covering their faces and eyes, often in vain. A 110-kilometer-per-hour wind blew sand and dust, making it difficult to communicate. The dust penetrated everything—scarves, goggles, and uniforms. This prompted Marines to seal their vehicles as much as possible. The dust still got in their lungs, making them suffer through what they called “the crud.” Daytime turned into a surreal orange that the Marines referred to as “Orange Crush,” giving the impression that someone had picked up the desert and turned it upside down. At night, it was impossible to leave the safety of a vehicle without getting lost. Adding to the misery of the weather, golf-ball-sized hail and torrential downpours collected sand and dust on the way to the ground and turned raindrops into small balls of mud.

The sun returned on the morning of 27 March, the first time in days that Marines could see beyond a few hundred meters. That same morning, Coalition headquarters ordered a 72-hour operational pause to resupply V Corps and I MEF, to the Marines’ chagrin, who argued that they were prepared to keep advancing. The pause nonetheless gave I MEF the opportunity to shorten the 1st Service Support Group’s logistics chain, which was hundreds of kilometers long by that point. Marines identified a stretch of Highway 1 near the town of Hantush that could be converted into a runway to airlift supplies for the final push into Baghdad. Major General James F. Amos, 3d MAW’s commanding general and later the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, flew to Hantush to inspect the airstrip and declare it fit for Lockheed Martin KC-130 Super Hercules transport aircraft. Within 24 hours, the airstrip was operational, which supplied the ground and aviation units with fuel and ordnance and shortened casualty evacuation response time.

Resupplied and refueled, the regimental combat teams on Highway 1 turned northeast on 1 April as planned, exploiting

---

a seam in the Iraqi artillery coverage to dash toward a crossing point over the Tigris. During the next two days, they advanced 60 kilometers and crossed the river at an-Numaniyah. Meanwhile, RCT-1, advancing up Highway 7, had succeeded in drawing the *Baghdad Division* of the *Republican Guard* away from the main body of the division as it crossed the Tigris 40 kilometers upstream. After destroying the remnants of the enemy units at al-Kut, RCT-1 made an overnight, circuitous 270-kilometer road march, where it linked back up with RCT-5 and RCT-7. With the division now concentrated on the Baghdad side of the Tigris River, the Marines initiated the final 100-kilometer attack to the capital.

When the lead elements of the 1st Marine Division approached Baghdad's suburbs on 4 April, they ran into thick black smoke from trenches that the Iraqis had filled with oil and set on fire. This added to the fog of war, but RCT-5 was able to brush aside paramilitary fighters who served as the outer defensive cordon. On 5 April, the Marines began searching for crossing sites over the Diyala River, the final natural obstacle before entering Baghdad. The next day, the 3d Infantry Division conducted reconnaissance-by-fire missions into the city, or what the Army called "Thunder Runs." The Marines met significant resistance when it approached two bridges in the southeast corner of the city. The Iraqis unsuccessfully attempted to destroy both bridges overnight but did manage to damage the decking. Major General Mattis decided to assault across one of the damaged spans with infantry, construct a ribbon bridge at the other damaged bridge, and conduct an assault river crossing with AAVs on 7 April. An Iraqi prisoner of war later told his captors that "we knew we could not win against the Americans" when we "saw 'tanks' floating across the river."

Once across the Diyala, the Marines expanded their bridgeheads and began their cordon of eastern Baghdad to

---

keep in the regime's leadership and block reinforcements. Planners expected that the enemy's best fighters would defend the capital, and they were aware that streets and canals would funnel battalions into ambushes. The regime's defense of the capital proved ineffectual, however, and the Marines of I MEF and soldiers of V Corps linked up at the Tigris on 9 April. The same day, Marines assisted Iraqis in pulling down a Saddam Hussein statue in Firdos Square, symbolically signaling the end of the Baathist regime.

Remnants of four enemy divisions still existed 200 kilometers north of the city. Within 24 hours of receiving a warning order, the deputy commanding general of 1st Marine Division, Brigadier General John F. Kelly, formed Task Force Tripoli, a brigade-sized light armored reconnaissance formation with attachments. On the evening of 11 April, the task force set out for Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit with the objective of preventing regime holdouts from mounting a final defense. Task Force Tripoli advanced more than 150 kilometers and seized Tikrit on 14 April, discovering and liberating seven American prisoners of war along the way at Samarra.

On April 15, I MEF announced the transition to "post-hostility operations." The 1st Marine Division handed over its zones in Baghdad to V Corps elements and moved south to a new area of operations by 24 April. While some Marines conducted security and stabilization operations, others redeployed to home stations. In short order, the division was reduced from 23,000 Marines to 8,000, retaining only 7 battalions of infantry and 2 light armored reconnaissance battalions. The 3d MAF left behind two detachments with 18 helicopters for support. The 2d Force Service Support Command, which had been under Marine Corps Forces Central Command during combat operations, reloaded material and equipment in Kuwait while continuing to support remaining units. The 2d Force Service

---

Support Command then formed a Special Purpose MAGTF to stay behind and remove Marine Corps assets from the theater.

The Marines who remained in Iraq worked to gain the trust of Iraqis in seven provinces by maintaining security and restoring food, health, transportation, and utility services. This policy became reciprocal. As Marines improved security and quality of life, Iraqis began to identify harmful elements in the community and deny anti-Coalition elements sanctuary. On 6 September, I MEF transferred its area of responsibility to a multinational division composed of forces from 24 different countries.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, 68 percent of the Corps' operating forces deployed overseas. Marines had executed the longest march in their history at more than 500 kilometers. The I MEF battlespace at one time was 103,000-square kilometers, larger than the state of Indiana. Marines moved and sustained 89,000 Coalition troops over land, defeated more than 8 divisions, seized 10 major cities, crossed 3 rivers, and helped remove the Baathist regime within 25 days. They achieved this at the cost of 50 Marines killed in action and 334 wounded.

### *NATO in Afghanistan, 2003*

The invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq consumed many U.S. military capabilities and relegated Afghanistan to a secondary effort. The Marine Corps' experience in Afghanistan reflected this reality. While tens of thousands of Marines participated in the quick overthrow of the Baathist regime, the Marines maintained a small presence in Afghanistan. Either by choice or necessity, the United States kept its force levels in Afghanistan relatively low compared to the mission and effort in Iraq, even as armed opposition to Coalition efforts and the developing Afghan government increased.

In April 2003, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) assumed responsibility for ISAF. This created a bifur-



---

cated mission for U.S. forces. Those supporting ISAF fell within U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and attempted to “win and hearts and minds,” as the phrase of the time went, by conducting counterinsurgency operations and nation-building efforts. American units executing counterterrorism operations, particularly special operations forces, continued as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom under the direction of Central Command and focused on disrupting and dismantling terrorist networks. This convoluted chain of command and separation of missions would continue for the next several years. The United States nonetheless welcomed NATO’s expanded role in Afghanistan while American efforts in the Global War on Terrorism focused on Iraq.

At the beginning of 2003, the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Antiterrorism) provided forces for Task Force Kabul/Marine Security Force Kabul. The brigade supplied one company from its antiterrorism battalion (3d Battalion, 8th Marines) for the U.S. embassy on a rotating basis until 2005. In late 2003, the Marine Corps also began deploying individual infantry battalions to Afghanistan, the first of which was the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines. These units augmented Combined Joint Task Force 76, the successor to Combined Joint Task Force Mountain. Missions initially involved maintaining local security with a 10-kilometer radius of Bagram. The battalion also served as the local quick reaction force and conducted numerous cordon-and-knock operations in surrounding provinces.

### *Marines Return to Iraq, March–December 2004*

On 5 November 2003, the Department of Defense announced that Marine units would return to Iraq as part of a troop rotation to replace 17 Army brigades. The Corps planned to deploy a reduced Marine division of nine infantry battalions and similarly scaled aircraft wing and force service support group. The

---

smaller-sized expeditionary force and a seven-month rotation policy for Marine forces deploying to Operation Iraqi Freedom ensured the Service could preserve its continuing operations and global commitments.

Between 15 and 28 March, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) (I MEF Fwd)—composed of the 1st Marine Division, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, and 1st Force Service Support Group—conducted a relief in place with 82d Airborne Division elements and established Multi-National Force–West (MNF–W). The area of responsibility the headquarters assumed included all of al-Anbar Province and the northern areas of Babil Province. Al-Anbar was strategically significant because of its infrastructure, which connected the major cities in central Iraq with Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.

The Marines' area of responsibility had become centers of power for an insurgency that had exploded in summer 2003. The region had always been a stronghold for Sunni Muslims, who made up approximately 40 percent of Iraq's population. Though the minority, Sunnis predominated the Baath Party and used Iraq's government to repress the Shi'a majority. Many former regime members retreated to al-Anbar after the transitional government, called the Coalition Provisional Authority, purged everyone affiliated with the Baath Party from public office and disbanded the Iraqi military in May 2003. This de-Baathification, as it was referred to, had the unintended effect of forming a powerful faction of society that had military training and was disaffected, out of work, and prepared to undermine a new Iraqi state that they believed would be filled with vengeful Shi'a bent on retribution. They joined an insurgency that was a hodgepodge of groups, including Sunni nationalists, Shi'a militia, terrorists, long-standing criminal enterprises, and a spectrum of tribal factions, all of whom warred with each other as well as the Coalition. To add to the

---

insurgency's complexity, foreign Islamist militants descended on Iraq in early 2004 to defend, as they saw it, an Arab land against foreign aggression.

The Coalition attempted to maintain a delicate balance between sovereignty and security. The Coalition Provisional Authority strived to prepare a new Iraqi state to hold elections and govern independently as quickly as possible. In the interim, it believed that reducing the Coalition's presence and promoting Iraqi sovereignty would minimize antagonizing the population and deny the insurgency a source for recruitment. The insurgents, by contrast, gambled that increasing turmoil would expand their political power, undermine the Iraqi state, and make them militarily strong enough to combat the Iraqi Security Forces. Preventing that turmoil until an Iraqi government was in power fell to Coalition headquarters in Iraq, called Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7) and under the command of Army Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez.

The Marines approached the deployment with an eye toward the Service's prior experience with insurgencies. "We are going back into the brawl," Major General Mattis—still the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division—wrote. "You will demonstrate the same uncompromising spirit that has always caused the enemy to fear America's Marines. . . . This is our test—our Guadalcanal, our Chosin Reservoir, our Hue City. . . . You are going to write history, my fine young Sailors and Marines, so write it well." Mattis encouraged his troops to study the principles of counterinsurgency found in the Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual*. He stressed patrolling city streets, forming combined units with Marines and Iraqi soldiers, and casting Marines as allies of the Iraqi populace rather than merely occupiers. Using this approach, Mattis and the I MEF (Fwd) commanding general, Lieutenant General James Conway, set the Marines to defeat the insurgency, not insurgents. The task was to prove

---

difficult. Al-Anbar is Iraq's largest province at 170,000 square kilometers (30 percent of the country's total area).

The division deployed its two regiments near al-Anbar's populated areas that clung to the banks of the Euphrates. Insurgents used towns, farms, lush vegetation, and irrigation ditches to transit up and down the river. RCT-7, under the command of Colonel Craig A. Tucker, was given responsibility for the western areas of the province, while RCT-1, under the command of Colonel John A. Toolan, took control of the province's eastern areas. The 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, attached to the Army's 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, shouldered the city of al-Ramadi, the provincial capital.

Within weeks of arriving, Marines confronted their first tests in the urban areas within their tactical area of responsibility. Chief among them was a deteriorating situation in Fallujah, a Sunni city of about 300,000 residents 50 kilometers from Baghdad that had become a sanctuary for insurgents in 2003. The Coalition's experience with Fallujah had begun with difficulty. On 28 April 2003, soldiers from the 82d Airborne Division returned fire into a threatening mob, killing 17 civilians. The action inflamed anti-American attitudes and fueled the insurgency's growth. Insurgents shot down an Army Boeing CH-47 Chinook heavy-lift helicopter in November 2003 and then three more helicopters in January 2004.

By February 2004, insurgents were attacking Iraqi police inside Fallujah, and American troops had withdrawn. Tensions exploded on 31 March, when fighters ambushed a convoy that drove into the city. A mob killed four armed contractors from Blackwater USA and dragged the bodies into the street, where they beat, burned, and hung them from the King Faisal Bridge. Quickly, footage of the mutilated remains of Americans hanging behind cheering crowds was broadcast across the world. Mattis recommended surgical precision to locate and apprehend the

---

individuals responsible for the murders. He and his staff knew the insurgents anticipated a vengeful response from the Marines, which would only strengthen anti-Coalition sentiment. Nonetheless, CJTF-7 ordered I MEF (Fwd) on 3 April 2004 to launch an immediate and large retaliatory attack in Fallujah, codenamed Operation Vigilant Resolve.

Two battalion-sized task forces from RCT-1 began cordoning the city in the early hours of 5 April. Two more battalions joined before advancing on two axes. The Marines aimed to place unrelenting pressure on insurgents who were motivated but lacked experience. The fighting was fierce, and enemy forces used every structure in the city for cover, including mosques. Insurgent propagandists established a narrative of the Marines being indiscriminate and brutal, which placed political pressure on American and Iraqi leaders. Concerned about a national backlash over civilian casualties and the destruction of religious buildings, the provisional government, called the Iraqi Governing Council, pushed Coalition Provisional Authority officials to end the fighting. On 9 April 2004, CJTF-7 ordered I MEF (Fwd) to suspend all offensive operations in Fallujah.

While Iraqi and Coalition leaders conferred about next steps in Fallujah, there was an uptick in enemy activity from ar-Ramadi to the border with Syria. On 14 April, insurgents ambushed the Headquarters Company of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, as it convoyed from the border town of al-Karābilah to Husaybah. A squad from the battalion's Company K was nearby and immediately deployed to provide assistance, but it also triggered an ambush. The Marines dismounted, secured the area, and established a roadblock. Three men fled from a car during vehicle inspections. The squad leader, Corporal Jason L. Dunham, and two of his Marines pursued and tackled one of the men. While the Marines attempted to secure the man, he dropped a live grenade. Corporal Dunham threw his helmet on

---

the grenade before it detonated, saving his fellow Marines but mortally wounding him. Dunham died eight days later at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. For his actions, Dunham became the first Marine recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War.

The increase in violence along the Euphrates and the unresolved battle in Fallujah underscored how delicate the Marines' task in al-Anbar was. Lieutenant General Conway hoped not only to maintain pressure on Fallujah but also put an Iraqi face on the battle. He suggested to CJTF-7 that the Coalition establish and send in an all-Iraqi force of former soldiers known as the Fallujah Brigade. The Iraqi Governing Council and Coalition Provisional Authority agreed, and I MEF (Fwd) turned over remaining operations to the Fallujah Brigade on 1 May. Within weeks, however, the force melted away, with many of the members joining the enemy, and Fallujah remained an insurgent stronghold.

While Marines contended with the Sunni insurgency in al-Anbar, they also faced a rising Shi'a insurrection south of Baghdad under the leadership of an influential revolutionary leader with ties to Iran, Muqtada al-Sadr. The young cleric led a movement of Shi'a who still resented their disenfranchisement under the Baathist regime and wanted to determine Iraq's future. Al-Sadr recruited followers to join his militia, called the Jaysh al-Mahdi but known to American troops as the *Mahdi Army*. Al-Sadr's rise and capacity to undermine the Coalition's objectives, compelled Iraqi authorities to issue an arrest warrant for him on 4 April for the murder of a judge. The move ignited anti-American uprisings in the Shi'a towns of al-Kut, Karbala, ad-Diwaniyah, and an-Najaf. On 7 April, Lieutenant General Sanchez ordered the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division to move to these areas and conduct Operation Resolute Sword with the mission of eliminating the *Mahdi Army*.

---

The Coalition killed between 1,500 and 2,000 of al-Sadr's fighters and nearly collapsed the insurrection within weeks. An-Najaf, the sprawling city of around 500,000 inhabitants on the banks of the Euphrates, remained dangerous. An-Najaf had been the Shi'a spiritual center, as it held the tomb of the Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, whom Shi'a believe the Islamic prophet Muhammad named as his successor. Aware of the intertwined religious and political importance of the city, the Coalition understood they could not cede control of an-Najaf to al-Sadr and his forces. Throughout April, U.S. Army elements isolated and contained the militia but did not enter the city for fear of destroying shrines and sparking a backlash. Eventually, CJTF-7 allowed Shi'a leaders to broker a truce with al-Sadr on 6 June 2004, which permitted the cleric and his fighters to remain in an-Najaf and forbade Coalition troops from approaching the city's shrines. By allowing al-Sadr to save face, the Shi'a leaders and the Coalition had provided the revolutionary and his fighters sanctuary within an-Najaf. Al-Sadr's militia soon reasserted their power, filling the vacuum left by Iraqi soldiers and policemen who had been killed or had disappeared during the two months of fighting.

The new Coalition headquarters that had replaced CJTF-7 on 15 May 2004, called Multi-National Force-Iraq, had not planned on concentrating on the Shi'a. The commander, Army General George W. Casey Jr., targeted the Sunni insurgency and former members of the Baathist regime. General Casey's objective was to reduce it to a level that the Iraqi Security Forces could contain on their own. Casey identified the upcoming National Assembly elections in January 2005 as an inflection point. After the election, the parliament and prime minister could write a constitution that would enfranchise Iraqis, set the conditions for the Iraq state to be responsible for its own security, and cement the nation's sovereignty. For this to work, Coalition forces would

---

have to clear out the cities and ensure people would go to the polls. Instability throughout al-Anbar and in Shi'a strongholds such as an-Najaf, then, endangered Casey's campaign plan and his larger strategy of making Iraq strong enough that American troops could withdraw.

By July, the simmering problem of an-Najaf became the responsibility of the newly arrived 11th MEU (SOC), under the command of Colonel Anthony M. Haslam. The MEU took control of the predominately Shi'a provinces of an-Najaf and al-Qadisiyyah. On 2 August, al-Sadr's militia engaged a patrol from the MEU's battalion landing team, the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, and then mounted an attack on an Iraqi police station three days later, sparking ferocious fighting between Marines and al-Sadr's fighters in the Wadi al-Salam Cemetery and Imam Ali Mosque. With reinforcements from two U.S. Army and four Iraqi National Guard battalions, the Marines fought the militia to a ceasefire, which Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani negotiated on behalf of the government.

The terms restrained al-Sadr's power and influence in an-Najaf and thereby allowed Coalition attention to shift from Shi'a to Sunni extremism in fall 2004. In the wake of the Fallujah Brigade's failure in May, 3,000–4,000 fighters had spent the summer transforming the city's neighborhoods into bastions. More groups had flocked to Fallujah, among them al-Qaeda in Iraq, which the Jordanian-born terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had formed. Al-Zarqawi founded his first extremist group in 1999 and fought alongside the Taliban and al-Qaeda against Coalition forces in Afghanistan in 2001. By spring 2004, he had built an organization in Iraq that conducted terrorist attacks in Baghdad. In October, he allied with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, named his group al-Qaeda in Iraq, and directed his terror operations from Fallujah. As a source of propaganda and funding, he kidnapped and executed foreigners, including Amer-



---

ican contractor Nicholas Berg. Zarqawi's foreign jihadists also assassinated Iraqi government employees and bombed government buildings, police stations, international aid stations, Shi'a mosques, and marketplaces. He aimed to make both democracy and cooperation with the United States unworkable by inflaming Sunni-Shi'a tensions and igniting a civil war.

With the likes of al-Zarqawi added to the insurgent groups already in Fallujah, the likelihood of the Iraqi Governing Council negotiating a settlement seemed remote. As with an-Najaf, the Coalition became concerned that the increased violence in al-Anbar Province could disrupt the January 2005 elections. To eliminate Fallujah as an insurgent stronghold and protect the elections, Lieutenant General John F. Sattler, who took command of I MEF (Fwd) from Lieutenant General Conway on 12 September, ordered the 1st Marine Division to conduct a large-scale clearing operation of the city. Major General Richard Natonski, newly promoted and in command of the 1st Marine Division, brought to bear lessons learned from Operation Vigilant Resolve in April as well as his own experiences in an-Nasiriyah in March 2003. Operation Phantom Fury (Operation al-Fajr to Iraqi Security Forces) involved nearly all I MEF (Fwd) ground combat elements as well as reinforcements from U.S. Army and Coalition units. Major General Natonski planned for a large-scale feint that doubled as a blocking force in the south, with elements of the 11th, 24th, and 31st Marine Expeditionary Units and the U.S. Army's 2d Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division. The actual attack would come from the north using nine Marine and U.S. Army battalions along with six Iraqi battalions.

The Second Battle of Fallujah began on 7 November 2004. For five days, Marines, sailors, and soldiers advanced through the city before reaching the southern neighborhoods by the end of 12 November and securing all their initial objectives. The 1st



During the Battle of Fallujah, the Corps saw its fiercest urban fighting since the Battle of Hue. Here, Marines from the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, climb through rubble as they clear the city.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Marine Division then divided Fallujah into six sectors, and units began methodically clearing the city of resistance and weapons caches. The battle was more ferocious than seven months before. Marines found evidence of fighters from Sudan, Syria, Jordan, Iran, and Afghanistan, along with Chechens and Palestinians. Insurgents had turned Fallujah's streets into a maze of defensive positions. Squads cleared the city house by house, engaging in point-blank firefights and hand-to-hand fighting. Some buildings were rigged with improvised explosive devices, while others were occupied by insurgents willing to fight to the death and who waited until Marines entered a room before opening fire. They sniped at Marines on the streets or rained down grenades. It was maddening for squads to clear buildings only for insur-

---

gents to reoccupy them and attack the Marines from behind. Some enemy fighters seemed to have superhuman strength, which Marines discovered was due to a myriad of drugs. For the toughest enemy positions, Marines either bulldozed buildings or called in rotary-wing support from Marine Aircraft Group 16 and fixed-wing support from Marine, Navy, and Air Force aircraft.

The close-quarters fighting led to numerous examples of bravery and heroism, exemplified in actions that occurred in what one platoon of Marines came to term the “Hell House.” When Marines from the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, became pinned down in one of Fallujah’s many buildings, First Sergeant Bradley A. Kasal from Weapons Company joined a squad that rushed to assist. He immediately encountered an insurgent after entering the first room and killed the enemy fighter. While moving to rescue a wounded Marine in a second room, First Sergeant Kasal and Lance Corporal Alex Nicoll came under small-arms fire from insurgents on the second-floor landing, and both received multiple gunshot wounds to their legs. Kasal dragged Nicoll into a bathroom before the enemy fighters threw down grenades. Kasal shielded his fellow Marine from the grenade blast and received shrapnel wounds. The squad leader, Corporal Robert J. Mitchell Jr., made his way under fire to the two Marines in the bathroom and administered aid. For three hours, more Marines tried to breach the barred windows and locked doors of Hell House. Finally, the Marines eliminated the insurgents and evacuated the wounded. A photographer snapped an image of First Sergeant Kasal being assisted out of Hell House with his uniform drenched in blood, embodying the commitment to never leave a Marine behind. For his leadership and actions, Kasal was awarded the Navy Cross.

When the Second Battle of Fallujah ended on 20 December, 70 Marines had been killed in action and 651 were wounded.

---

The 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, was hit the hardest, with 22 killed and 206 wounded. Estimated insurgent deaths were 2,000 killed and 1,200 captured. The battle defined the initial I MEF (Fwd) redeployment to Iraq and fighting that continued into 2005. Marines and soldiers fought through the city at close quarters, illustrating the importance and effectiveness of squads, teams, and individual Marines and soldiers. The Coalition had succeeded in punishing the insurgent groups who stood and fought in Fallujah. The unintended consequence, however, was scattering the remnants of the insurgency to other parts of Iraq, where they rested, refitted, and waited to resume their campaigns.

### *Operation Enduring Freedom, 2005–2007*

In late 2004, NATO began expanding its operations in Afghanistan beyond the capital of Kabul. The international Coalition and their Afghan partners established civil-military organizations, known as provincial reconstruction teams, to oversee and coordinate nation-building efforts. NATO steadily took over responsibility for these teams, expanding first into the northern provinces, an area designated as Regional Command (RC)–North, then to Afghanistan’s western provinces (RC–West). As NATO expanded its footprint, the United States reduced its effort to focus on RC–East while also supporting operations in RC–South.

From 2005 to mid-2006, Marine Corps infantry battalions operated in the vicinity of Jalalabad near the border with Pakistan and aided the local provincial reconstruction team. As U.S. forces began pushing out into more remote regions of the country, the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, conducted a series of operations in eastern Afghanistan, especially in the Korengal Valley in Kunar Province. The objective was to promote the legitimacy of the Afghan government, spoil anti-Coalition activities, and promote reconciliation with the government. During summer and

---

fall 2005, the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, continued to conduct operations to improve security and stabilize the local government in Kunar Province. Most notable of these was Operation Red Wings, during which enemy fighters engaged a fireteam of U.S. Navy SEALs. Of the 4 SEALs, 3 were killed, and a rescue helicopter with 16 aboard was shot down trying to rescue the team.

As a part of the American effort to rebuild the Afghan Army, the Marine Corps contributed personnel for embedded training teams. These generally consisted of 16 Marines who provided training and advisory assistance to Afghan National Army units. Over time, these Marine detachments rose from three deployed in 2005 to seven by early 2008. The Marine Corps effort typically consisted of one corps-level and six battalion-level teams to train and mentor Afghan soldiers. This reflected a general expansion in the American training effort, which grew to include responsibility for training the Afghan National Police beginning in 2005. While billions of dollars flowed into Afghanistan throughout the years to fund various development and nation-building efforts, reforming the Afghan security services was the primary American effort in the country beyond providing regional security and conducting counterterrorism operations.

During the mid-2000s, the Marine Corps generally provided ground combat units to Operation Enduring Freedom without dedicated air support. In 2004, however, instability in the country's central provinces prompted deployment of the 22d MEU (SOC) to Oruzgan Province, the first Marine air-ground task force deployment to Afghanistan since the Operation Enduring Freedom's opening days. Once ashore, it became the main effort for Operation Mountain Storm. The expeditionary unit's organic command-and-control and logistical apparatus enabled it to take on additional Joint attachments, including an Army battalion and Special Forces operational detachment A-teams.

---

In a series of linked operations, the extended campaign not only demonstrated the robust capabilities and flexibility of the Marine air-ground task force but also preempted enemy actions and helped set favorable conditions for national elections. The 22d MEU withdrew after a four-month deployment, and the Marine Corps would not deploy another complete air-ground task force to Afghanistan until 2008. Instead, Marine support for Operation Enduring Freedom was limited to rotating individual infantry battalions, embassy security, aviation units, and training teams.

Although the 22d MEU's brief deployment had been a success, the security situation in Afghanistan began a steady decline in 2006 after the Taliban, reconstituted and secure in safe havens in Pakistan, began a more aggressive insurgency in Afghanistan's southern and eastern provinces. Various other insurgent groups, tangentially aligned with the Taliban, also increased their attacks, putting the nascent Afghan government as well as NATO and U.S. forces on the defensive. The United States increased its forces, but only marginally, rising from 20,000 in January 2006 to roughly 30,000 at the beginning of 2008. The war in Iraq consumed significantly more American forces, limiting the availability of resources for Afghanistan. NATO also made modest increases in its troop commitments. These augmentations were not substantial enough, however, and the insurgency made steady gains in 2007 and 2008.

### *Marine Corps Special Operations*

The Marine Corps' ability to support global counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations grew on 24 February 2006 with the establishment of a Marine component that fell under the operational control of U.S. Special Operations Command. The Service's path to special operations capabilities began two decades before, in the wake of Operation Eagle Claw. In 1983,

---

Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger moved to strengthen the special operations capabilities of each Service. In response, the Marine Corps, under the 28th Commandant, General Paul X. Kelley, created the special operations capable program in 1985, designed to train Marine expeditionary units in special operations skills and tasks. Although the Corps developed the program, it was the only Service that elected not to contribute special operations forces for the United States Special Operation Command after its establishment in 1987. The Marine Corps reasoned that it had to retain its own special operations capabilities to provide maritime expeditionary forces in readiness. This decision created friction between the Corps and the command until after the 2001 terrorist attacks, when the 32d Commandant, General James L. Jones Jr., looked for ways that Marines might contribute to special operations.

Through the efforts of Lieutenant Colonel J. Giles Kyser IV, head of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force Special Operations section in Plans, Policies, and Operations at HQMC, the Marine Corps improved its troubled relationship with Special Operations Command. In December 2002, Commandant Jones announced the formation of Detachment One (Det One), a Marine special operations unit under the operational control of Special Operations Command. In March 2003, the detachment began to form. Three months later, it officially activated at Camp Del Mar on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Under the command of Colonel Robert J. Coates, Det One trained and participated in exercises for the next 10 months in preparation for deploying to Iraq on 6 April 2004. Marines of the detachment operated throughout Iraq with other Special Operations Command elements, notably providing sniper, intelligence, and fires support in fighting against the *Mahdi Army* in an-Najaf in August 2004.

The formation and deployment of Det One led the Office of

---

the Secretary of Defense to order the permanent establishment of a Marine component to Special Operations Command on 28 October 2005. The United States Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (later shortened to Marine Forces Special Operations Command, or MARSOC) activated at Camp Lejeune on 24 February 2006. During the months that followed, it drew its personnel from the 1st and 2d Force Reconnaissance Companies to form the 1st and 2d Marine Special Operations Battalions. The establishment of the command marked a new era for the Marine Corps, improving Joint integration but also increasing the Service's capabilities to wage counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations.

### *The al-Anbar Awakening in Iraq, 2006–2008*

The Coalition's strategy to defeat the insurgency in Iraq with democracy, not brute military strength, was put to the test on election day, 30 January 2005. For months, Marines and soldiers fought to ensure Iraqis felt safe enough to vote. Insurgents hoped to sow as much chaos as possible, however, and suppress voter turnout. Despite a partial Sunni boycott and an insurgent intimidation campaign that climaxed with 300 attacks on election day, 58 percent of eligible voters went to the polls nationwide. The largest loss of American lives in a single incident during the war tempered the relative success of that day, when all 30 Marines and 1 sailor aboard a CH-53 Sea Stallion died after crashing in a sandstorm on 26 January.

In al-Anbar Province, the Marines' area of operation, only 2 percent of eligible Iraqis went to the polls. Insurgents had traveled up the Euphrates after the Second Battle of Fallujah and spread their influence by infiltrating the tribes that had often supplanted and superseded central authority throughout Iraq's history. By murdering or holding tribal members hostage, insurgents co-opted smuggling routes and tribal cross-border associa-



---

tions. This allowed them to establish and fund sanctuaries in the sparsely populated Western Euphrates River Valley from where they could travel down the river and strike at cities such as Hit, ar-Ramadi, and Fallujah.

Marines targeted these insurgent-controlled areas in 11 named operations in the Western Euphrates River Valley between May and December 2005. Major General Stephen T. Johnson's II MEF (Fwd), which replaced I MEF (Fwd) in March 2005, focused on providing a secure environment for two more major national elections in October and December. The Marines were contending with an economy of force mission, however. II MEF (Fwd) deployed with two fewer battalions than its predecessor the year prior, and the element responsible for the Western Euphrates River Valley, Colonel Stephen W. Davis's Regimental Combat Team 2, had only three battalions (minus one company each) to patrol 48,000 square kilometers, roughly an area the size of South Carolina.

Fortunately for the Marines, some tribes along the border with Syria in the al-Qaim District had declared war on al-Qaeda in Iraq, still the predominant insurgent group. Though tribes were insurgents, they chafed at how the jihadists murdered anyone who resisted their appropriation of generations-old smuggling businesses and replacement of tribal law with a strict interpretation of Islam. The first open revolt against the terrorist group meant the Sunni insurgency was fracturing and al-Qaeda in Iraq now had to maintain control of its base areas while fending off Marine attacks in the Western Euphrates River Valley. In the coming months, the Marines took advantage of the rupture and struck up a tenuous but mutually beneficial pact with local tribes to share intelligence.

The opportunity for an alliance between Marines and the tribes in the Western Euphrates River Valley occurred in fall 2005 after the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Julian D. Alford's

---

3d Battalion, 6th Marines, in the al-Qaim District. The battalion used what it had learned the year prior, when its rifle companies functioned as autonomous units in Afghanistan to conduct stability operations, provide humanitarian assistance, and battle enemy forces. From his deployment experience, knowledge of counterinsurgency, and study of Marine Corps history, Lieutenant Colonel Alford concluded that local populations played a critical role in supporting and defeating an insurgency, and local elders often determined the direction of the community in a tribal society. The key terrain, then, was the population, and securing the population could improve security and stability.

The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, modified the combined action platoon concept from the Vietnam War to exploit the rift between the tribes and al-Qaeda in Iraq and establish security in the al-Qaim District. Each company partnered with an Iraqi tribe to form units that lived, ate, and patrolled together. The companies also recruited, trained, and supported Iraqi Security Forces while focusing on civil affairs and repairing public services. This cooperative relationship had the short-term effect of building trust and supporting the long-term objective of making a self-sufficient Iraqi state. Alford's relative freedom to implement his own concepts reflected leadership's allowance for commanders to find alternative means to bring stability, but it was also due to the lack of a unified approach to U.S. strategy in Iraq and the insufficient number of troops in al-Anbar for the size of the task.

By early 2006, the constant presence of Marines in al-Qaim's towns had restricted the jihadists' freedom of movement and curbed their influence in the region. The partnership with the tribes had pried the Sunni insurgency's grip from the people and improved voter turnout. Nationally, Iraqis overwhelmingly approved the referendum, and 63 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. In al-Anbar, 500,000 registered voters participated

---

in the December national elections, a marked increase from the 3,700 who had cast ballots at the beginning of the year.

More importantly, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, had created a model for Marine units throughout the rest of al-Anbar. This came at an important moment, as al-Qaeda in Iraq had renewed its murder and intimidation campaign on 5 January 2006 with a suicide bombing that killed 56 Iraqis and 2 U.S. soldiers at a police recruitment drive in ar-Ramadi. Insurgents also targeted tribal leaders in al-Anbar, murdering one-half of the tribal leaders who formed an anti-insurgent group called the al-Anbar People's Committee. A 22 February bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites, initiated a wave of sectarian violence across Iraq. By early summer, civil war gripped the country, and Coalition leaders struggled with the worst violence of the war despite the encouraging electoral progress.

Instability in al-Anbar often coincided with where the Sunni insurgency concentrated its operations. In spring 2006, insurgents declared ar-Ramadi their capital, challenging the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, commanded by Army Colonel Sean B. MacFarland. Attached to the brigade was the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William M. Journey. When preparing for his battalion's deployment, Lieutenant Colonel Journey sought out Alford on his recent experience, and the two sat on Alford's front porch at Camp Lejeune. Their conversation is testament to how lessons and experiences could be quickly transmitted across the Marine Corps' close-knit organization. "Our families, our friends," Alford commented later, "we've spent many, many hours over the last twenty years drinking beer together and, on occasion, sipping a glass of whiskey talking about this stuff." That is "a unique thing about the Marine Corps that you need to understand."

Once his battalion deployed, Journey used many of Alford's

---

tactics and techniques thanks to the considerable latitude and flexibility of Colonel MacFarland. Marines and soldiers spent summer 2006 implementing a clear-hold-build strategy in ar-Ramadi of evicting the enemy from the most dangerous neighborhoods, defending those areas, and recruiting police from outside the city via tribal engagement. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, integrated Iraqi soldiers at the platoon level, creating what Jurney called a “combined action battalion.” Marines lived inside ar-Ramadi in an array of combat outposts from which they conducted constant foot patrols. Doing so had a profound impact on the residents, demonstrating that Marines would not be leaving the city.

U.S. forces’ tribal engagement and aggressiveness in ar-Ramadi influenced local sheiks. They, too, had watched what occurred in al-Qaim District in late 2005 and early 2006, and they were satisfied with the Coalition commitment enough to encourage their members to join the police and maintain order in their own communities. American forces finally tracked down and killed al-Zarqawi in an air strike on 7 June, but the jihadist group remained dangerous, as its new leader vowed to expand the war to the region and declared the formation of the Islamic State of Iraq. The burgeoning relationship with the Coalition and the violent response from the jihadists prompted Abdul Sattar Bezia al-Rishawi, a sheikh and one-time insurgent leader, to form a tribal coalition. On 14 September, 41 sheikhs and tribal leaders publicly declared themselves aligned with Coalition forces against the Islamic State of Iraq. They pledged recruits for local Iraqi Security Forces and named their movement *Sabawa al-Anbar* (al-Anbar Awakening). Profound change occurred during the next six months, as the tribes of ar-Ramadi turned the city from an insurgent stronghold to an example of positive Iraqi-led change. The stability was replicated elsewhere, first to Fallujah and then beyond. Meanwhile, an increase of Iraqi police



Women Marines of the Lioness Program were employed in Iraq and Afghanistan to search female civilians and avoid offending local customs. Here, Cpl Nicole K. Estrada talks to local women outside the female search area in ar-Rutbah, Iraq, in March 2008. Estrada was a field wireman with Communications Company, 1st Marine Logistics Group, who volunteered for the program. *Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

and soldiers finally provided the Marines in al-Anbar the manpower they needed to consolidate battlefield gains against the jihadists and their allies.

The al-Anbar Awakening became a province-wide phenomenon, as tribes assisted in combating the Sunni insurgency rather than joining it. The Coalition attempted to capitalize on the success in al-Anbar to avoid the alarming descent into sectarian violence that was occurring elsewhere in Iraq, particularly in Baghdad. On 10 January, President Bush announced a 21,500-troop surge for Coalition headquarters. The troop increase, a mixture of extensions as well as deployments, primarily benefited the U.S. Army in Baghdad, but II MEF (Fwd) received 4,000 additional Marines. The surge, as it was termed,

---

enabled Multi-National Force-Iraq elements to leave their large base camps and engage with and secure the Iraqi population. As Marines and soldiers had done in ar-Ramadi, Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition troops used a clear-build-hold strategy, demonstrating to communities that the new government would not abandon them. Incidents of improvised explosive devices, small-arms fire, and indirect fire all fell. Iraqi police assumed responsibility of areas that troops had secured, which gave authority to people from the community and created positive connections between Iraqis and their government. As a result, the police force in al-Anbar grew from 11,000 to 24,000 in 2007.

The Islamic State of Iraq's dwindling power and the additional Marine surge battalions allowed II MEF (Fwd) to pursue enemy fighters fleeing urban areas in summer 2007. Battalions began rotating out of Iraq in late September. In 2008, through the efforts of military transition teams, the 1st and 7th Iraqi Divisions were prepared to operate in al-Anbar. The stability of the country and the improved state of the Iraqi Security Forces allowed more Coalition forces to draw down. Iraq underwent a profound transformation between 2006 and 2008. By February 2008, when I MEF (Fwd) relieved II MEF (Fwd), violent incidents were down to 50 per week from a high of more than 400. Iraqis no longer feared that interactions with Marines would jeopardize their lives or their family's safety. "No single personality was the key in Anbar, no shiny new field manual the reason why, and no 'surge' or single unit made it happen," General John F. Kelly commented. Much of the progress was a combination of clearing operations, the al-Anbar Awakening, the surge, and the flexibility and ingenuity of small-unit leaders. Together, they fractured jihadist alliances and influence, convinced many Sunni insurgents to switch sides, and pushed those still willing to fight to seek refuge elsewhere.

---

## *Operation Enduring Freedom, 2008–2009*

In Afghanistan, the insurgency grew despite the relatively small NATO force and the Afghan security forces they were helping to build. In its effort to stem the tide of violence, the U.S. Department of Defense sent the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, to southwest Afghanistan in early 2008, where it organized as Task Force 2/7. The scale of the insurgency facing Task Force 2/7 prompted senior Marines to send detachments of Sikorsky CH-53E Super Stallions and Bell AH-1W SuperCobra helicopters to provide both heavy-lift and close air support, respectively. From that point, Marines generally deployed to Afghanistan as part of a Marine air-ground task force. The 24th MEU (SOC) also arrived in Helmand Province in early 2008 and began conducting counterinsurgency operations. The MEU's organic command-and-control assets enabled the attachment of additional aircraft in support of Task Force 2/7. Nearing the end of its deployment, the MEU served as a bridge for the newly designated Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force–Afghanistan. Under the command of Colonel Duffy W. White, the unit continued to build the Marine presence, conduct counterinsurgency operations, and develop infrastructure for follow-on forces. In February 2009, President Barack H. Obama, who argued that the war in Iraq had pulled American focus away from Afghanistan, announced that an additional 17,000 troops would be sent to Afghanistan. The deployment included the 8,000-strong 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB), signaling a shift in Marine operations from Iraq to Afghanistan that the 34th Commandant, General James T. Conway, had been advocating for during the last year. The gains Marines made between fall 2008 and spring 2009 laid the foundation for the 2d MEB to begin operations soon after Brigadier General Lawrence D. Nicholson took command of Marines in southern Afghanistan. Brigadier General Nicholson launched Operation Khanjar on 2 July, rap-



Engagement with local populations is critical in counterinsurgency warfare. Marines with Company E, 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, host an economic and development shura in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom.  
*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

idly introducing 4,000 Marines and hundreds of Afghan troops into major population centers in the Helmand River Valley that the Taliban previously dominated prior to August elections. The brigade conducted follow-on operations in the fall while the American political leadership discussed the direction of the war.

On 8 September in Kunar Province, 50 Taliban fighters ambushed Marine Embedded Training Team 2-8 as its members arrived in a village for a predawn meeting with elders. Corporal Dakota L. Meyer, who was maintaining security at a patrol rally point, seized the initiative and responded with a fellow Marine in a gun truck to disrupt the enemy attack and locate the trapped four U.S. team members. Corporal Meyer killed several enemy fighters with his rifle and the gun truck's mounted machine guns on five trips into the ambush area despite switch-



---

ing vehicles twice due to enemy fire. On their fifth trip into the ambush area, Meyer dismounted to locate the cut-off team members. He found the four fallen Americans and recovered their bodies. In the six-hour battle, Meyer played a pivotal role disrupting the enemy attack and inspiring the combined force to continue fighting, earning him the Medal of Honor.

### *The End of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2009–2010*

Iraq continued to stabilize while Afghanistan began to unravel. Once the heart of the insurgency, al-Anbar Province was a success story by the end of 2008. Reflecting the extent of the Coalition drawdown, only 6 Marine battalions remained in Iraq from the 14 that deployed at the height of the surge. The transfer of operational control to Iraqi Security Forces increased on 1 September, when the Coalition handed responsibility for security in al-Anbar to Iraqi civilian authorities. The remaining Marines transitioned to an advise-and-assist mission, training Iraqi Security Forces and supporting operations when necessary.

On 14 December 2008, President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki signed the Status of Forces Agreement that provided the legal basis for the continued presence, operation, and eventual withdrawal of U.S. armed forces in Iraq. In accordance with the agreement, American combat units were scheduled to withdraw from Iraq's cities by 30 June 2009 and other areas by 31 December 2011. President Obama announced an adjustment to that timeline in a speech at Camp Lejeune in February 2009, when he revealed that the U.S. combat mission would close at the end of August 2010, though a transition force of 35,000–50,000 troops would remain until December 2011.

The final Marine headquarters withdrew on 23 January 2010, when II MEF (Fwd) transferred authority to the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division in ar-Ramadi. Nine months later, Operation Iraqi Freedom was redesignated Operation New Dawn.

---

During the seven years of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 4,419 U.S. servicemembers died and 31,993 were wounded in action. Of those numbers, 1,024 Marines were killed and 8,624 had been wounded. In a 31 August 2010 address to the nation, President Obama announced the official end of combat operations, signifying the last step toward a sovereign, democratic, and free Iraq. The U.S. military mission in Iraq formally concluded with a ceremony in Baghdad on 15 December 2011. The remaining American combat troops departed the country three days later.

### *The Surge in Afghanistan, 2009–2010*

While units redeployed from Iraq to home stations, the Marine Corps' contribution to Afghanistan increased. In June 2009, President Obama replaced Army General David McKiernan with General Stanley A. McChrystal, with the goal of disrupting, dismantling, and eventually defeating the Taliban and preventing their return to Afghanistan. General McChrystal revamped the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan from neutralizing insurgents to protecting the Afghan population. Allied forces had relied on conventional operations, but overwhelming firepower often led to collateral damage and civilian casualties. McChrystal directed forces to execute a population-centric counterinsurgency based on lessons learned in Iraq, which would separate Afghans from the insurgency and gain their support. He requested a surge of forces to support the new strategy. In early December, the president responded by announcing the deployment of another 30,000 troops, but he imposed an 18-month deadline for the surge. This self-imposed timetable signaled to all that the increase was a short-term effort to stem the violence rather than the long-term commitment of more resources to Afghanistan.

As he awaited additional forces, the Marine commander, Brigadier General Nicholson, launched an offensive in February 2010 against the village of Marjah, a Taliban stronghold



Marines with the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, provide covering fire after a sniper engaged them during a security patrol in Sangin, Afghanistan.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

and center of the opium network in central Helmand Province. Operation Moshtarak (“together” in the Dari language) was the war’s largest Joint operation at around 15,000 troops. More than 3,000 Marines and 4,400 Afghan soldiers seized the village in a dramatic display of combat power, but most of the Taliban fighters had already disappeared. This proved a common theme, as the enemy was able to blend into the local population and work from the shadows to undermine the Afghan government and the Coalition. Operation Moshtarak would nonetheless stretch throughout the year. The troop surge and increased Marine presence led to their taking control of security operations for Helmand and Nimroz Provinces in early 2010. In April, surge forces began arriving as I MEF (Fwd) replaced the 2d MEB, increasing the number of Marines deployed to the region to roughly 20,000, or 20 percent of the total number of U.S. forc-

---

es in the country. In deference to the Marine Corps' insistence that it maintain control over its air and support assets, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates approved the creation of Regional Command Southwest under the control of I MEF (Fwd). The Marine Corps' autonomy within its provinces led to a nickname for its area of operations: "Marineistan."

In July 2010, Central Command's Army General David H. Petraeus took over as the senior commander in Afghanistan. Having successfully led U.S. operations in Iraq since 2007, General Petraeus hoped to implement much of the same strategy in Afghanistan, which meant empowering the fledgling government and security forces while separating the enemy from the population. He faced daunting challenges in generating support among the Afghan people, as Taliban opposition and internal dissension clouded the September parliamentary elections. Moreover, persistent allegations of corruption at all levels of the Afghan government continued to undermine its legitimacy with the public. Finally, NATO announced in November that it planned to end combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014. This action, when combined with the 18-month timeframe of the American surge, reaffirmed the Coalition's intention to avoid remaining in Afghanistan indefinitely. Leaders hoped that this would put significant pressure on the Afghan government and its security forces to increase their respective capabilities.

Operation Moshtarak and the fight for Marjah continued during these changes. On 21 November, the Taliban attacked a patrol base that a platoon-sized Coalition force had established two days earlier. Lance Corporal William Kyle Carpenter and a fellow Marine from the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, were manning a rooftop security position when an enemy grenade landed inside the position. Lance Corporal Carpenter disregarded his own safety and jumped on the grenade. His body absorbed the blast, severely wounding him but saving the life of his fellow

---

Marine. For his selfless action, he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Marine units rotated into Afghanistan throughout 2011 and continued to conduct raids and patrols in Regional Command Southwest, suppressing the poppy harvest and eliminating Taliban caches and sanctuaries. In March, II MEF (Fwd) replaced I MEF (Fwd). Two months later, U.S. Navy SEALs raided a compound in Pakistan believed to be Osama bin Laden's hiding place. The SEALs found and killed the al-Qaeda leader along with several members of his family, finally enacting justice for the 11 September terror attacks a decade earlier.

In June 2011, President Obama announced the end of the Afghanistan surge and the American intent to withdraw more than 30,000 troops by the following summer. The next month, Marine General John R. Allen replaced General Petraeus as the senior American commander in Afghanistan. General Allen oversaw the transition to Afghan-led efforts to ensure local, regional, and national security. American units would either shutter or turn over bases and outposts to their Afghan counterparts, shrinking the Coalition's footprint as the Afghans stood up. In February 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta announced the intention to end combat missions in Afghanistan as early as mid-2013 and assign American troops an advisory role until their withdrawal in 2014. On 12 March, I MEF (Fwd) relieved II MEF (Fwd), continuing the rotation of U.S. forces while increasing the role of Afghan security forces. In late 2012, the Taliban proved that it was still dangerous when it launched an attack on Camp Bastion, an airfield and logistics base northwest of Lashkar Gah in Helmand Province. They killed two Marines, destroyed six McDonnell Douglas AV-8B Harrier IIs, and badly damaged two other Harriers from Marine Attack Squadron 211. The Taliban fighters were all captured or killed after Marines from the squadron picked up weapons and defended



Marines of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, conduct a security patrol during a mission in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, on 5 June 2014. Patrolling is a key component of counterinsurgency warfare.

*Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

the installation. Notably, it was Marine Attack Squadron 211 personnel who had done the same thing, performing as riflemen when called on, in the defense of Wake Island 71 years before.

General Joseph F. Dunford Jr. replaced General Allen as the senior American commander in Afghanistan on 10 February 2013. On 28 February, II MEF (Fwd) again relieved I MEF (Fwd), continuing counterinsurgency and training operations as the Marines turned over responsibility for security operations to Afghan forces district by district. Continuing oversight of Regional Command Southwest from Camp Leatherneck in Helmand Province, the expeditionary force remained the command element for the next year until Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan relieved it on 5 February 2014. The brigade assisted security forces in maintaining stability for a notable

---

milestone for Afghanistan, a presidential election on 5 April. A run-off election followed in June, with Ashraf Ghani replacing Hamid Karzai in a historic democratic transfer of power. In May, President Obama declared that U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan would cease by the end of the year. NATO followed this announcement by transferring responsibility for operations to the Afghan military on 18 June. On 26 August, U.S. Army General John F. Campbell succeeded General Dunford, overseeing the final drawdown and termination of Operation Enduring Freedom. Marines transferred Camp Leatherneck to Afghan forces in October, with NATO and the United States halting combat operations in Afghanistan in December.

### *Maintaining the Naval Expeditionary Force*

After more than a decade of sustained operations ashore, some skeptics began to comment that the Marine Corps had become a second land army. Commandant Conway recognized this perception when he acknowledged that the Marine Corps had a combat-hardened generation of officers and Marines who may have never stepped aboard a ship. Moreover, the character of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly the proliferation of improvised explosive devices, necessitated the Marine Corps to field vehicles that were larger, heavier, and in greater numbers than was consistent with the Service's expeditionary and amphibious ethos.

In many ways, the discussion that began around 2010 was similar to the debates that had taken place after the Vietnam War, when Marines considered what direction they should take after 10 years of combat operations. Unlike the post-Vietnam period, however, the strategic environment was more complicated in the 2010s. The United States faced, as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates put it, "a more complex future where all conflict will range across a broad spectrum of operations and lethality."

---

The Department of Defense anticipated a world where competitor states blended traditional, irregular, and cyber warfare, and terrorists and militant groups acquired more sophisticated weapons and technologies, all of which could target U.S. strengths. To anticipate confronting these range of threats, Secretary Gates instructed Secretary of the Navy Ray E. Mabus Jr. and Marine Corps leadership to undertake a Force Structure Review in August 2010. He argued that the Marine Corps should retain its “maritime soul,” as it was uniquely qualified for irregular and hybrid conflicts as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness.

The Marine Corps had, in fact, not abandoned its amphibious mission while the bulk of its operating forces rotated through Iraq and Afghanistan. Marine units continued conducting a wide range of operations around the globe in forward-based or rotationally deployed amphibious ready groups/Marine expeditionary units. These sea-based Marines provided geographic combatant commanders flexibility and utility by conducting a range of military operations, from maritime security duties to crisis response and natural disaster relief. Units also continued to participate in recurring exercises with allies and partners such as Bright Star in Egypt and UNITAS in the Western Hemisphere, the oldest recurring naval exercise. Moreover, the Marine Corps continued the Unit Deployment Program, rotating U.S.-based units through the Western Pacific for six months for training and maintaining military partnerships.

Those ties with partners became increasingly important in November 2011, when the Obama administration announced the country would pivot its focus to the Asia-Pacific region. While the United States had been occupied with counterinsurgency operations, China had grown its manufacturing industries and developed its long-range precision strike munitions and antiaccess/aerial-denial systems to target and strike anything within the operating environment. In addi-



---

tion, China created initiatives to expand its economic and political power. In 2009, it formed a geoeconomic bloc with Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and other members (BRICS) to counter the G7 nations' (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) power and influence on the global economy. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China began investing in other nations' infrastructure, expanding its reach and winning partners and allies across the world. Complimenting these initiatives were China's use of gray zone operations to expand its military presence in the South and East China Seas, violating national sovereignty and encroaching on international waters. With the interconnectedness of the global economy and one-half of the world's population located in the Asia-Pacific, the United States identified the region as vital to U.S. economic and strategic interests.

This pivot to Asia led to a naval renaissance, as the Navy-Marine Corps team was uniquely qualified to support the administration's priorities. The Marine Corps became the lead force in reshaping American power projection in the Pacific. The Service began expanding its presence in Hawaii, Japan, and Guam as part of a distributed-laydown process that would spread Marines throughout the region. A fourth area was announced in November 2011, when the administration confirmed that Marines would deploy to the Northern Territory of Australia on a rotational basis to train and conduct exercises with the Australian Defence Force. Company F, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, was the first unit to land in Australia on 2 April 2012 as part of Marine Rotational Force-Darwin. In 2013, Secretary of Defense Charles T. Hagel directed that at least 22,000 Marines should be west of the international dateline to maintain regional stability and deterrence.

The Marine presence and its participation in exercises with

---

partners were developed to establish effective working relationships and build a deterrence-in-depth strategy. This required close cooperation with the Navy, however, which General James F. Amos, the 35th Commandant (and first aviator to hold the billet), and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert worked hard to ensure. In June 2013, they argued that the nation was in a new naval era, though one that was strikingly similar to the one that the General Board of the Navy faced between the World Wars. In the 1920s and 1930s, Navy and Marine Corps leaders confronted strategic challenges that led to a flourishing period of naval thought and eventually the development of new capabilities and the amphibious warfare mission. In much the same way, General Amos and Admiral Greenert envisioned “a future naval force that thinks together, plans together, and deploys together on a wide range of ships.”

### *Operation Inherent Resolve, 2014–Present*

While the Marine Corps had been revitalizing the expeditionary force-in-readiness, the surge in Iraq had destroyed the Islamic State of Iraq and driven its remnants from Baghdad to remote areas north of Mosul, where it spent the next five years rebuilding. It reemerged under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and spread into Syria in 2011, taking advantage of a civil war there. On 11 April 2013, the group was redesignated the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Months later, it declared a campaign to diminish Iraqi Security Forces. Throughout the next year, ISIS seized control of Fallujah and other Iraqi cities, including Mosul, which it declared the capital of its caliphate.

The United States initially responded with air strikes on ISIS targets while preparing a ground response. On 1 October 2014, Special Purpose MAGTF Crisis Response–Central Command deployed to the area with 2,400 Marines and sailors from the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, a detachment from Combat Logistics

---

Battalion 5, and elements of the 3d MAW. Two weeks later, the Department of Defense announced the launch of Operation Inherent Resolve, the Coalition effort to degrade ISIS and drive it from Iraq. While U.S.-led air strikes intensified, another 1,500 troops deployed to Iraq.

Marines supported Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve from al-Asad Air Base in al-Anbar Province, where approximately 300 Marines of Task Force al-Asad trained, advised, and assisted the Iraqi 7th Division that operated in the Euphrates River Valley. A large portion of Marine support, however, came from Marine Forces Special Operations Command through the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Iraq, which deployed on New Year's Day 2016 with Colonel Andrew R. Milburn of the Marine Raider Regiment in command. The task force had a countrywide mission of degrading, dismantling, and defeating ISIS, with the aim of taking back Mosul. The Marine Raiders and other elements of the special operations task force were the only U.S. units permitted to partner with the Iraqi special operations, Sunni tribes, and Peshmerga (the military forces of Iraqi Kurdistan, the semiautonomous entity in northern Iraq) involved in direct action with ISIS. The Battle of Mosul began on 16 October 2016 and lasted until the following July, when Iraqi Security Forces defeated ISIS in the city and then initiated subsequent offensives to destroy the group. By then, MARSOC's role in the fight against ISIS had become global, which reflected the alarming breadth of the terrorist organization's reach. Special operations Marines also assisted in the liberation of Marawi, Philippines, after an ISIS-affiliated group seized the city in May 2017. By 2019, MARSOC had participated in 12 named operations across 16 countries. The same year, U.S. forces killed ISIS leader al-Baghdadi in a raid in Idlib, Syria. Throughout the fight against ISIS, MARSOC ensured the Marine Corps helped provide an important capability in Joint

---

and partnered counterterrorism operations in Iraq and across the world.

*Operation Resolute Support and the  
Withdrawal from Afghanistan, 2015–2021*

The NATO mission in Afghanistan officially became Operation Resolute Support on 1 January 2015. The United States continued to be the largest international provider of forces, functioning as Operation Freedom's Sentinel (the mission succeeding Operation Enduring Freedom). During the next six years, international force levels fluctuated between 15,000 and 20,000, focusing on advise-and-assist efforts to support the Afghan security forces. The Taliban and its affiliated groups began targeting Afghan security personnel, killing thousands of police and soldiers each year while making steady gains in establishing control over rural areas.

The American presence, which included hundreds of Marines providing embassy security and other support and advising missions, remained tenuous as President Donald J. Trump's administration sought to end U.S. operations in Afghanistan. After the administration reached a tentative peace agreement between the United States and the Taliban in February 2020, responsibility for final implementation fell to President Trump's successor, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. Despite the agreement, the Taliban launched a massive offensive in summer 2021, seizing districts throughout the country. Without solid international support, the Afghan security forces collapsed in the face of the Taliban onslaught despite thousands of security personnel dying while trying to hold their ground. In mid-June, the United States shifted to the evacuation of American, international, and Afghan personnel, known as Operation Allies Refuge. As with the final withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1975, events in Afghanistan outpaced planning estimates, and the collapse of the Afghan

---

government resulted in the chaotic exit of Coalition forces and their Afghan allies. By August, the Taliban had encircled Kabul, leading to the disintegration of the Afghan government. The United States was able to evacuate tens of thousands after the Taliban slowed its advance to allow the departures. Tragically, a rogue terrorist group conducted an attack on Hamid Karzai International Airport on 26 August. The attack killed nearly 200 people, most of them Afghan civilians, as well as 11 Marines, 1 soldier, and 1 Navy corpsman. Despite the tragedy, the United States completed its evacuation effort on 30 August, bringing the longest war in American history to a conclusion and formally ending the main phase of the Global War on Terrorism.

*Marine Corps Innovation  
for Near-Peer Threats, 2020–2025*

The pivot to Asia in the early-2010s began a wider change in the nation's focus to growing threats from near-peer competitors such as China and Russia that aimed to replace the U.S.-led rules-based international order with their own spheres of influence. In the *2018 National Defense Strategy*, the Department of Defense argued that “inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security.” The strategy identified the People's Republic of China as the nation's primary pacing threat. The United States and its allies and partners responded by offering an alternative to either peace or war by pursuing a “competition continuum,” where states are in enduring competition through a combination of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and armed conflict.

The technological advances that China had made in recent years threatened to change the character of war in the region. China devised precision-strike weapons and surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities that could accurately target and attack the fleet beyond the first island chain, the strategic geographic

---

area in the Western Pacific. China's ability to prevent the United States from amassing combat power forced the U.S. military to prepare to operate with highly mobile and distributed formations in a multidomain (land, sea, air, space, and cyber) environment, while also ensuring interoperability with the Joint Force's allies and partners. In part, the discussions that had occurred in the mid-2010s meant that the Navy and Marine Corps were at the forefront of meeting these challenges with new concepts to compete and win in the Indo-Pacific, such as distributed maritime operations, expeditionary advanced base operations, and littoral operations in contested environments.

These concepts led the Marine Corps to restructure and re-fit the Service to meet today's challenges. In March 2020, the 38th Commandant, General David H. Berger, released *Force Design 2030*, a force-restructuring plan designed for near-peer competition. A fundamental characteristic of the plan was a return to the Marine Corps' naval roots, working alongside the Navy to conduct amphibious operations in the Indo-Pacific littorals. To counter China's ability to prevent the Navy from massing assets in the first island chain, Force Design planners developed the concept of Marines acting as stand-in forces. New Marine littoral regiments and other formations were designed to conduct operations that can enable the Joint Force to retain a forward-deployed presence in the first island chain and conduct reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance activities. Marines also accepted the role of deterring China's encroachment on allied territory, denying China freedom of action at sea, and setting conditions for the introduction of naval and Joint forces. Finally, the stand-in force was designed to act as an allied and partner enabler while conducting distributed operations with lethality, survivability, and sustainability.

Today, Force Design is still being refined and honed under the guidance of the 39th Commandant, General Eric M. Smith.

---

The Marine Corps restructured some of its commands and units to make them lighter and more lethal at both close and long ranges. The Service divested several heavier assets such as tanks and cannon artillery and has invested in long-range lethal strike capabilities, including rocket artillery, the Navy/Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, and new and improved reconnaissance and radar platforms. Although Force Design has brought change to the Marine Corps, a survey of the Service's history shows how such transitions are not unprecedented. Indeed, throughout its long and distinguished history, the Marine Corps has consistently adapted to the needs of the nation in war and peace.



The dedication ceremony for the Marine Corps War Memorial, Arlington, Virginia, on 10 November 1954.

*Defense Department photo (Marine Corps) A401031B, courtesy MSgt H. B. Wells*





*Map courtesy of Pete McPhail, adapted by MCUP*

# Operations

-2025





---

# CONCLUSION

## The First 250 Years of Marines Making History, 1775–2025

It is often difficult for outsiders to understand the role of Marines compared to the other Services due primarily to the small size of the Marine Corps, its evolving nature, and its history as a multidomain force rather than one primarily associated with the air, land, or sea. Adaptability is one of the hallmarks of the Service, as seen throughout its 250-year history. The Marine Corps has recognized that it is a luxury for the United States. To survive, Marines must be willing to achieve victory no matter the circumstances in wartime and demonstrate unique capabilities in peacetime. These fundamental traits have only become embedded in the Corps' character through repeated commitment by determined and courageous Marines.

Some characteristics were on display from the start. During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Marines were perennially underfunded and undermanned but performed their traditional naval roles as ship detachments while also augmenting the Continental Army, guarding property, and manning coastal defenses, among many other tasks assigned. Throughout the

---

nineteenth century's era of sail, Marines served primarily as ship's guards, defending Navy vessels from potential mutiny and the threat of enemy ships, guarding Navy property on land, and conducting operations ashore. While the Marine Corps repeatedly fended off attempts to downsize or eliminate the Service, the Corps stepped up in the nation's hours of need both abroad at places like Derna and Mexico City as well as at home at Bladensburg and Fort Fisher.

When militaries transitioned from sailing to steam vessels in the latter nineteenth century, the role of the Marine Corps changed too. Marines were no longer primarily needed to secure ships and maintain discipline, although that job would remain. Instead, the U.S. Navy in the steam era needed Marines who could move from ship to shore to secure and defend advanced naval bases. Though the transition away from the role of ship's guard was not linear, the advanced base force, later Fleet Marine Force, concept was dominant by the early 1930s, highlighting the Marine Corps' ability to adapt. Amid this transition, Marines were involved in the small wars, conducting long-term interventions throughout Latin America, fulfilling multiple roles as a small-scale conventional force, a constabulary force, and what would now be referred to as a counterinsurgency force. Even amid a generational mission-evolution and small wars commitments, the Marine Corps mobilized and fielded a brigade-sized unit to fight a conventional land campaign on the Western Front during World War I, earning a strong reputation for bravery and skill in battle.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Marine leaders again adapted to meet the needs of the nation. Japan's rising industrial power and bid to extract natural resources from Asia threatened the global order and U.S. interests in the Pacific. Foreseeing the possibility of war with Japan, Marine Corps leaders designed, practiced, and refined amphibious assault doctrine, assuming

---

preeminence over the development of tactics, techniques, and procedures for amphibious assault. The Service also worked closely with the private sector to develop transports for ship-to-shore movement, fire support planning for amphibious operations (to include naval gunfire), and the incorporation of fixed-wing fighter attack to support Marines on the ground. The Marine Corps' adaptations to the force both before and during the war paved the way for the successful island-hopping campaigns in World War II and the eventual defeat of the Japanese Empire.

For the Marine Corps, the immediate post-World War II era was a challenging time. Marine leaders witnessed a rapid reduction in the size of the Fleet Marine Force and fought for the Service's survival. The evolution of nuclear weapons also cast doubts on the survivability of massed amphibious assaults. Consequently, Marine Corps leaders worked to adapt the Service to changing circumstances, while grappling with the challenges of ensuring that Marines remained relevant to the current threat environment. Crucial to these efforts was a relationship with congressional leaders that led to the codification of the amphibious mission into U.S. law and therefore the Marine Corps' continued existence.

During this era, Marine Corps leaders developed the concept of a force-in-readiness. Although the other Services were fixated on the threat of nuclear war, the Marine Corps understood that the nation still needed a more conventional force that could deploy rapidly and globally in response to threats. By 1950, the Marine Corps was only a fraction of its peak World War II strength, yet it retained a capable reserve force, many of whom had World War II experience. In a remarkable display of leadership and discipline, the Marine Corps was able to swiftly piece together a brigade-sized force from active-duty and reserve Marines in summer 1950 to deploy to South Korea to reinforce the Pusan Perimeter. Marines in the Korean War showed the

---

spirit and resolve to answer the call, exemplifying the value of the Marine Corps as the nation's emergency response force.

Although the Marine Corps fought to some degree as an air-ground team in World War II, it was not until the Korean War that the Service employed what would later be known as a Marine air-ground task force. Marine commanders used the concept brilliantly in the early stages of the war. The Marines' effective use of dedicated close air support proved a durable advantage and impressed their Army counterparts. Even amid war, Marine Corps leadership continued to adapt and change the force. The Service understood the untapped value of rotary-wing aircraft and began using helicopters for resupply, command and control, and casualty evacuation. New aircraft innovation drove doctrinal development as the war progressed. Consequently, the Marine Corps experimented with vertical envelopment that laid the groundwork for the air-ground team in the Vietnam War.

Marine leaders applied what they learned during the Korean War to restructure the Fleet Marine Force for the nuclear era. In 1956, the Hogaboom Board recommended incorporating the use of rotary-wing assets and vertical envelopment concepts into Marine Corps amphibious doctrine. Throughout the decade, the Service refined and standardized the Marine air-ground task force concept, creating the subdivisions currently known as the Marine expeditionary unit, Marine expeditionary brigade, and Marine expeditionary force, which allowed the Fleet Marine Forces to efficiently scale its forces for whatever crisis Marines were expected to face.

The nation once again called on the Marine Corps as a force-in-readiness in South Vietnam. As the character of the war evolved, Marines adapted and fought as both a land army and counterinsurgency force. To secure and protect the South Vietnamese people from the brutal and heavy hand of Communist forces, the Marine Corps created the Combined Action Program

---

by expanding on the small wars doctrine it had previously developed in the early twentieth century. Even as the program proved largely successful in the Marines' areas of responsibility and Marines notched repeated victories in battle against the Viet Cong and the People's Army of Vietnam, the United States was unable to implement a strategy to accomplish its national objectives in South Vietnam.

After the Vietnam War, the Marine Corps contended with a depleted force, a personnel crisis, and the advent of the all-volunteer force. In turn, the Corps aggressively pursued personnel reforms, culled underperformers, and raised standards. This turnaround allowed the Service to respond to threats in Iran, Grenada, Panama, Beirut, Liberia, and Iraq, from 1975 to 1991. These operations, which required combined arms and inter-Service cooperation, revealed that the U.S. Armed Services needed to operate as a joint force, while also revealing shortcomings in doing so. They also validated the continued value of the Marine Corps' ability to respond as a combined arms force-in-readiness. Along these lines, Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986, giving combatant commands responsibility for operations regardless of the Service and component composition of forces. The Joint force concept proved its viability in Operation Desert Storm in 1991. The Marine Corps of the late 1980s and early 1990s also made significant doctrinal reforms when Commandant General Alfred Gray published *Warfighting*, FMFM-1 (today's MCDP-1), inculcating maneuver warfare philosophy and a new warrior ethos throughout into the Marine Corps that continues today.

In 2001, Marines responded to the terrorist attack on the United States by deploying to Afghanistan in operations against the Taliban, beginning nearly 20 years of fighting in the Global War on Terrorism. The Marine Corps and the other Services fought to combat terror organizations and insurgents that at-



---

tempted to disrupt U.S. efforts to establish peace, security, and democracy in countries previously under autocratic and religious fundamentalist rule for years. Marines' service as part of the Joint force in Afghanistan, Iraq, and against terrorists operating in places like the Philippines and the Horn of Africa, while simultaneously maintaining their global commitments, illustrated the Marine Corps' flexibility and resiliency.

As commitments in support for the Global War on Terrorism waned in the 2010s, the United States' military establishment shifted focus to growing near-peer competitors. For the Marine Corps, this has meant a return to its naval roots with a focus on maritime operations in the littorals of the Pacific Ocean. *Force Design 2030* set in motion another era of change for the Marine Corps as it balances reconfiguring the force for a specific threat while retaining its capability to serve as the nation's force-in-readiness. By implementing Force Design, Marines have followed in the footsteps of Marines debating maneuver warfare in the schools at Quantico, Virginia, in the 1980s, and the Marines landing at Culebra, Puerto Rico, in the 1920s as they pioneered modern amphibious assault tactics.

Although the changing character of war is a driving force behind the evolution of the Marine Corps, the Service has a firm appreciation of its past. Marines today stand on the shoulders of those who came before them. Knowledge of that history, tradition, and culture is a source of inspiration and pride. To appreciate heritage while preparing for tomorrow's fight requires leaders capable of foreseeing the necessity for change and willing to pursue it. Throughout its history, the Marine Corps has developed leaders at all levels willing to think critically about how the Service is structured and organized to meet current threats.

Today, the Marine Corps values competent leaders who care deeply about the Marines they lead and are willing to take the initiative to achieve the commander's intent despite friction,

---

chaos, and uncertainty. As the Service enters its next 250 years, it will undoubtedly see more change, especially considering the rapid pace of technological advancement. It will continue to make Marines and leaders willing to move into harm's way to win battles and give their last full measure for their fellow Marines, the Corps, and the nation they serve.

*Semper Fidelis!*



---

# APPENDIX A

## Commandants of the Marine Corps

Maj Samuel Nicholas <sup>1</sup>	1775–ca.1781
LtCol William Ward Burrows	1798–1804
LtCol Franklin Wharton	1804–18
LtCol Anthony Gale	1819–20
Bvt BGen Archibald Henderson <sup>2</sup>	1820–59
Col John Harris	1859–64
BGen Jacob Zeilin	1864–76
Col Charles G. McCawley	1876–91
MajGen Charles Heywood	1891–1903
MajGen George F. Elliott	1903–10
MajGen William P. Biddle	1911–14
MajGen George Barnett	1914–20
LtGen John A. Lejeune	1920–29
MajGen Wendell C. Neville	1929–30
MajGen Ben H. Fuller	1930–34
MajGen John H. Russell Jr.	1934–36
Gen Thomas Holcomb	1936–43

---

Individuals are listed using their final or retired ranks.

<sup>1</sup> There was no position of “Commandant” or equivalent for the Continental Marines, but Nicholas, who was the senior Continental Marine, is considered by tradition to be the first Marine Commandant.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson’s permanent rank was colonel.

---

Gen Alexander A. Vandegrift	1944–47
Gen Clifton B. Cates	1948–51
Gen Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr.	1952–55
Gen Randolph M. Pate	1956–59
Gen David M. Shoup	1960–63
Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr.	1964–67
Gen Leonard F. Chapman Jr.	1968–71
Gen Robert E. Cushman Jr.	1972–75
Gen Louis H. Wilson Jr.	1975–79
Gen Robert H. Barrow	1979–83
Gen Paul X. Kelley	1983–87
Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr.	1987–91
Gen Carl E. Mundy Jr.	1991–95
Gen Charles C. Krulak	1995–99
Gen James L. Jones Jr.	1999–2003
Gen Michael W. Hagee	2003–6
Gen James T. Conway	2006–10
Gen James F. Amos	2010–14
Gen Joseph F. Dunford Jr.	2014–15
Gen Robert B. Neller	2015–19
Gen David H. Berger	2019–23
Gen Eric M. Smith	2023–

---

# APPENDIX B

## Sergeants Major of the Marine Corps

Wilbur Bestwick	1957–59
Francis D. Rauber	1959–62
Thomas J. McHugh	1962–65
Herbert J. Sweet	1965–69
Joseph W. Dailey	1969–73
Clinton A. Puckett	1973–75
Henry H. Black	1975–77
John R. Massaro	1977–79
Leland D. Crawford	1979–83
Robert E. Cleary	1983–87
David W. Sommers	1987–91
Harold G. Overstreet	1991–95
Lewis G. Lee	1995–99
Alford L. McMichael	1999–2003
John L. Estrada	2003–7
Carlton W. Kent	2007–11
Micheal P. Barrett	2011–15
Ronald L. Green	2015–19
Troy E. Black	2019–23
Carlos A. Ruiz	2023–

---

# APPENDIX C

## Marine Corps Medal of Honor Recipients

### *Civil War, 1861–1865*

Sgt Richard Binder (a.k.a. Richard Bigle)

Sgt John Henry Denig

Ord Sgt Isaac N. Fry

Sgt Michael Hudson

Cpl John F. Mackie

Sgt James Martin

Sgt Andrew Miller

Ord Sgt Christopher Nugent

Cpl Miles M. Oviatt

Cpl John Rannahan

Sgt James S. Roantree

Pvt John Shivers

Cpl Willard M. Smith

Ord Sgt David Sprowle

Pvt Henry A. Thompson (a.k.a. Roderick P. Connelly)

Cpl Andrew J. Tomlin

Sgt Pinkerton R. Vaughn

---

Recipients' ranks are those as identified in the award citation and may not reflect an individual's rank during the action for which the Medal of Honor was awarded.

---

### *Korean Expedition, 1871*

Cpl Charles Brown  
Pvt John Coleman  
Pvt James Dougherty  
Pvt Michael McNamara  
Pvt Michael Owens  
Pvt Hugh Purvis

### *Spanish-American War, 1898*

Pvt Daniel Campbell  
Pvt Oscar W. Field  
Pvt John Fitzgerald  
Pvt Joseph J. Franklin  
Sgt Philip Gaughan  
Pvt Frank Hill  
Pvt Michael L. Kearney  
Pvt Hermann W. Kuchmeister (a.k.a. Hermann W. Kuchmeister)  
Pvt Harry L. MacNeal  
Pvt James Meredith (a.k.a. Patrick F. Ford Jr.)  
Pvt Pomeroy Parker  
Sgt John H. Quick  
Pvt Joseph F. Scott  
Pvt Edward Sullivan  
Pvt Walter S. West

### *Samoa, 1899*

Sgt Bruno A. Forsterer  
Pvt Henry L. Hulbert  
Sgt Michael J. McNally

### *Philippine Campaign, 1899–1902*

Col Hiram I. Bearss  
Pvt Howard M. Buckley  
Sgt Harry Harvey  
Pvt Joseph H. Leonard (a.k.a. Joseph Melvin)  
Col David D. Porter  
Cpl Thomas F. Prendergast



---

### *China Relief Expedition, 1900*

Sgt John M. Adams (a.k.a. George L. Day)  
Cpl Harry C. Adriance  
Cpl Edwin N. Appleton  
Pvt Erwin J. Boydston  
Pvt James Burnes  
Pvt Albert R. Campbell  
Pvt William L. Carr  
Pvt James Cooney  
Cpl John O. Dahlgren  
Pvt Daniel J. Daly  
Pvt Harry Fisher (a.k.a. Franklin J. Phillips)  
Sgt Alexander J. Foley  
Pvt Charles R. Francis  
Pvt Louis R. Gaiennie  
Pvt Henry W. Heisch  
Pvt William C. Horton  
Pvt Martin Hunt  
Pvt Thomas W. Kates  
Pvt Clarence E. Mathias  
Pvt Albert Moore  
Drummer John A. Murphy  
Pvt William H. Davis (a.k.a. William Henry Murray)  
Pvt Harry W. Orndoff  
Cpl Reuben J. Phillips  
Pvt Herbert I. Preston  
Pvt David J. Scannell  
Pvt France Silva  
GySgt Peter Stewart  
Sgt Clarence E. Sutton  
Pvt Oscar J. Upham  
Sgt Edward A. Walker  
Pvt Frank A. Young  
Pvt William Zion

### *Vera Cruz, 1914*

Maj Randolph C. Berkeley  
Maj Smedley D. Butler

---

Maj Albertus W. Catlin  
Capt Jesse F. Dyer  
Capt Eli T. Fryer  
Capt Walter N. Hill  
Capt John A. Hughes  
LtCol Wendell C. Neville  
Maj George C. Reid

*Haitian Campaign, 1915*

Maj Smedley D. Butler  
GySgt Daniel J. Daly  
Pvt Samuel Gross (a.k.a. Samuel Marguilies)  
Sgt Ross L. Iams  
1stLt Edward A. Ostermann  
Capt William P. Upshur

*Dominican Campaign, 1916*

Cpl Joseph A. Glowin  
1stLt Ernest C. Williams  
1stSgt Roswell Winans (a.k.a. Ross Lindsey Winans)

*World War I, 1917–1918*

Sgt Louis Cukela  
GySgt Charles F. Hoffman (a.k.a. Ernest August Janson)  
Pvt John J. Kelly  
Sgt Matej Kocak  
Cpl John H. Pruitt  
GySgt Robert G. Robinson  
GySgt Fred W. Stockham  
2dLt Ralph Talbot

*Haitian Campaign, 1919–1920*

Cpl William R. Button  
Sgt Herman H. Hanneken

*Nicaraguan Campaign, 1928–1932*

1stLt Christian F. Schilt  
Cpl Donald L. Truesdell (a.k.a. Donald L. Truesdale)

---

## *World War II, 1941–1945*

PFC Harold C. Agerholm  
PFC Richard B. Anderson  
Maj Kenneth D. Bailey  
Sgt John Basilone  
LtCol Harold W. Bauer  
Cpl Lewis K. Bausell  
Cpl Charles J. Berry  
1stLt Alexander Bonnyman Jr.  
SSgt William J. Bordelon  
Maj Gregory Boyington  
Cpl Richard E. Bush  
PFC William R. Caddy  
1stLt George H. Cannon  
Cpl Anthony Casamento  
Col Justice M. Chambers  
Sgt Darrell S. Cole  
Maj Henry A. Courtney Jr.  
Cpl Anthony P. Damato  
Cpl James L. Day  
1stLt Jefferson J. DeBlanc  
Capt Robert H. Dunlap  
LtCol Aquilla J. Dyess  
Col Merritt A. Edson  
Capt Henry T. Elrod  
PFC Harold G. Epperson  
Cpl John P. Fardy  
Capt Richard E. Fleming  
Capt Joseph J. Foss  
PFC William A. Foster  
Maj Robert E. Galer  
Pvt First Class Harold Gonsalves  
Sgt Ross F. Gray  
PFC Henry Gurke  
Pvt Dale M. Hansen  
1stLt Robert M. Hanson  
Sgt William G. Harrell  
Cpl Louis J. Hauge Jr.  
1stLt William D. Hawkins

---

PFC Arthur J. Jackson  
PFC Douglas T. Jacobson  
PlSgt Joseph R. Julian  
Sgt Elbert L. Kinser  
PFC Richard E. Kraus  
PFC James D. La Belle  
2dLt John H. Leims  
PFC Jacklyn H. Lucas  
1stLt Jack Lummus  
1stLt Harry L. Martin  
PFC Leonard F. Mason  
GySgt Robert H. McCard  
Capt Joseph J. McCarthy  
Pvt Robert M. McTureous Jr.  
PFC John D. New  
Sgt Robert A. Owens  
Pvt Joseph W. Ozbourn  
PlSgt Mitchell Paige  
PFC Wesley Phelps  
Pvt George Phillips  
Capt Everett P. Pope  
1stLt John V. Power  
PFC Charles H. Roan  
1stLt Carlton R. Rouh  
PFC Donald J. Ruhl  
PFC Albert E. Schwab  
Col David M. Shoup  
Pvt Franklin E. Sigler  
PFC Luther Skaggs Jr.  
Maj John L. Smith  
Pvt Richard K. Sorenson  
Cpl Tony Stein  
1stLt James E. Swett  
Sgt Herbert J. Thomas  
Sgt Clyde A. Thomason  
Sgt Grant F. Timmerman  
MajGen Alexander A. Vandegrift  
1stLt Kenneth A. Walsh  
GySgt William G. Walsh

---

Pvt Wilson D. Watson  
Cpl Hershel W. Williams  
Capt Louis H. Wilson Jr.  
PFC Robert L. Wilson  
PFC P. Witek

*Korean War, 1950–1953*

Cpl Charles G. Abrell  
Capt William E. Barber  
PFC William B. Baugh  
Pvt Hector A. Cafferata Jr.  
Cpl David B. Champagne  
PFC Stanley R. Christianson  
1stLt Henry A. Commiskey Sr.  
Cpl Jack A. Davenport  
LtCol Raymond G. Davis  
Cpl Duane E. Dewey  
PFC Fernando L. Garcia  
PFC Edward Gomez  
SSgt Ambrosio Guillen  
Sgt James E. Johnson  
PFC John D. Kelly  
Pvt Jack W. Kelso  
SSgt Robert S. Kennemore  
PFC Herbert A. Littleton  
1stLt Baldomero Lopez  
Sgt Daniel P. Matthews  
Sgt Frederick W. Mausert III  
PFC Alford L. McLaughlin  
1stLt Frank N. Mitchell  
PFC Walter C. Monegan Jr.  
PFC Whitt L. Moreland  
2dLt Raymond G. Murphy  
Maj Reginald R. Myers  
2dLt George H. O'Brien Jr.  
PFC Eugene A. Obregon  
Cpl Lee H. Phillips  
Sgt James I. Poynter  
2dLt George H. Ramer

---

2dLt Robert D. Reem  
SSgt William E. Shuck Jr.  
PFC Robert E. Simanek  
Capt Carl L. Sitter  
2dLt Sherrod E. Skinner Jr.  
SSgt Archie Van Winkle  
Cpl Joseph Vittori  
SSgt Lewis G. Watkins  
TSgt Harold E. Wilson  
SSgt Williams G. Windrich

*Vietnam War, 1964–1975*

PFC James Anderson Jr.  
LCpl Richard A. Anderson  
PFC Oscar P. Austin  
LCpl Jedh C. Barker  
1stLt Harvey C. Barnum Jr.  
2dLt John P. Bobo  
PFC Daniel D. Bruce  
PFC Robert C. Burke  
GySgt John L. Canley  
PFC Bruce W. Carter  
PFC Raymond M. Clausen Jr.  
PFC Ronald L. Coker  
SSgt Peter S. Connor  
Col Donald G. Cook  
LCpl Thomas E. Creek  
Sgt Rodney M. Davis  
LCpl Emilio A. De La Garza Jr.  
PFC Ralph E. Dias  
PFC Douglas E. Dickey  
Sgt Paul H. Foster  
Capt Wesley L. Fox  
Sgt Alfredo Gonzalez  
Capt James A. Graham  
2dLt Terrence C. Graves  
GySgt Jimmie E. Howard  
LCpl James D. Howe  
PFC Robert H. Jenkins Jr.

---

LCpl Jose F. Jimenez  
PFC Ralph H. Johnson  
LCpl Miguel Keith  
GySgt Allan J. Kellogg Jr.  
Maj Howard V. Lee  
Capt James E. Livingston  
PFC Gary W. Martini  
Cpl Larry L. Maxam  
2dLt John J. McGinty III  
Maj Robert J. Modrzejewski  
Cpl William D. Morgan  
PFC Melvin E. Newlin  
LCpl Thomas P. Noonan Jr.  
Cpl Robert E. O'Malley  
LCpl Joe C. Paul  
Cpl William T. Perkins Jr.  
Sgt Lawrence D. Peters  
PFC Jimmy W. Phipps  
Sgt Richard A. Pittman  
Maj Stephen W. Pless  
LCpl William R. Prom  
1stLt Frank S. Reasoner  
Sgt Walter K. Singleton  
Cpl Larry E. Smedley  
SSgt Karl G. Taylor Sr.  
Maj Jay R. Vargas  
LCpl Lester W. Weber  
LCpl Roy M. Wheat  
PFC DeWayne T. Williams  
PFC Alfred M. Wilson  
LCpl Kenneth L. Worley

*Operation Enduring Freedom, 2001–2014*

LCpl William K. Carpenter  
Cpl Dakota L. Meyer

*Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003–2010*

Cpl Jason L. Dunham

---

*Noncombat Activities*

Cpl James A. Stewart (a.k.a. James B. Bradley) (1872)

Cpl John Morris (1881)

Sgt John H. Helms (1901)

Pvt Louis F. Pfeifer (a.k.a. Louis Fred Theis) (1901)

Pvt Albert J. Smith (1921)



---

# APPENDIX D

## Chronology of Significant Events

**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.
- 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 Uruga, 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 counter-attack 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 Ma-

---

rine 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 Toungh 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 non-combat roles alongside the remaining 240,000 troops.
- 29 April 1975:** The 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade conducts Op-

---

eration 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 clearing the city and withdraw by the end of the month, leaving the city 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.

---

# APPENDIX E

## U.S. Marine Corps Battle Streamers

Battle streamers represent U.S. and foreign unit awards as well as periods of service, expeditions, and campaigns in which the Marine Corps has participated, from the American Revolution to today. Following World War I, units inscribed battle honors directly on their colors. The system became impractical, however, due to a multiplicity of honors and the limited space available. As a result, a Marine Corps Board recommended attaching streamers to the staff of the organizational colors on 29 July 1936. This system was formalized on 3 November 1939 with Marine Corps Order No. 157, and it is still in practice today. The following 55 streamers represent the history and accomplishments of the Marine Corps. Marine Barracks Washington, DC, holds the official battle colors of the Service. A unit's sergeant major typically holds the unit colors to which the authorized award and campaign streamers are attached.

### **1. Presidential Unit Citation (Navy) Streamer with six silver and four bronze stars**



### **2. Presidential Unit Citation (Army) Streamer with one silver oak leaf cluster**



---

**3. Joint Meritorious Unit Award Streamer**



**4. Navy Unit Commendation Streamer**



**5. Valorous Unit Award (Army) Streamer**



**6. Meritorious Unit Commendation (Navy-Marine Corps) Streamer**



**7. Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) Streamer**



**8. Revolutionary War Streamer**



**9. Quasi-War with France Streamer**



**10. Barbary Wars Streamer**



**11. War of 1812 Streamer**



**12. African Slave Trade Streamer**



**13. Operations against West Indian Pirates Streamer**



**14. Indian Wars Streamer**



**15. Mexican War Streamer**



---

**16. Civil War Streamer**



**17. Marine Corps Expeditionary Streamer with 13 silver stars, 4 bronze stars, and 1 silver “W”**



**18. Spanish Campaign Streamer**



**19. Philippine Campaign Streamer**



**20. China Relief Expedition Streamer**



**21. Cuban Pacification Streamer**



**22. Nicaraguan Campaign Streamer**



**23. Mexican Service Streamer**



**24. Haitian Campaign Streamer with one bronze star**



**25. Dominican Campaign Streamer**



**26. World War I Victory Streamer with one silver and one bronze star, one Maltese cross, and Siberia and West Indies clasps**



**27. Army of Occupation of Germany Streamer**





---

**28. Second Nicaraguan Campaign Streamer**



**29. Yangtze Service Streamer**



**30. China Service Streamer with one bronze star**



**31. American Defense Service Streamer with one bronze star**



**32. American Campaign Streamer**



**33. European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Streamer with one silver and four bronze stars**



**34. Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Streamer with eight silver and two bronze stars**



**35. World War II Victory Streamer**



**36. Navy Occupation Service Streamer with Europe and Asia clasps**



**37. National Defense Service Streamer with three bronze stars**



**38. Korean Service Streamer with two silver stars**



**39. Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamer with five silver stars**



---

**40. Vietnam Service Streamer with three silver and three bronze stars**



**41. Southwest Asia Service Streamer with three bronze stars**



**42. Kosovo Campaign Streamer with two bronze stars**



**43. Afghanistan Campaign Streamer with one silver and one bronze star**



**44. Iraq Campaign Streamer with one silver and two bronze stars**



**45. Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Streamer with one silver star and two bronze stars**



**46. Global War on Terrorism Service Streamer**



**47. Inherent Resolve Campaign Streamer with four bronze stars**



**48. Philippine Defense Streamer with one bronze star**



**49. Philippine Liberation Streamer with two bronze stars**



**50. Philippine Independence Streamer**



**51. French Croix de Guerre Streamer with two palms and one gold star**



---

**52. Philippine Presidential Unit Citation Streamer with two bronze stars**



**53. Korean Presidential Unit Citation Streamer**



**54. Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation of the gallantry cross with palm streamer**



**55. Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation Civil Actions Streamer with palm**



---

# SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

It is impossible to tell the entire 250-year history of the Marine Corps in a single volume of this size. The following works expand on the history related in these pages. They tell a more detailed story or provide more focus on specific aspects of Marine Corps history. This is not a comprehensive list. Rather, these works are intended as a starting place for Marines and others who wish to deepen their study and knowledge of the history of our Corps.

## *General Histories of the Corps*

These works provide a look at the development of the Marine Corps as an institution.

Millett, Allan R. *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. Rev. and exp. ed. New York: Free Press, 1991.

Millett, Allan R., and Jack Shulimson. *Commandants of the Marine Corps*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004.

O'Connell, Aaron B. *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps*. 1st ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Venable, Heather P. *How the Few Became the Proud: Crafting the Marine Corps Mystique, 1874–1918*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019.

---

## Conflicts

The following works provide more detailed accounts of Marine Corps participation in specific conflicts and are listed in rough chronological order by conflict.

Smith, Charles R. *Marines in the Revolution: A History of the Continental Marines in the American Revolution, 1775–1783*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1975.

Bohm, MajGen Jason Q., USMC. *Washington's Marines: The Origins of the Corps and the American Revolution, 1775–1777*. Haverstown, PA: Savas Beatie, 2023.

Armstrong, Benjamin. *Small Boats and Daring Men: Maritime Raiding, Irregular Warfare, and the Early American Navy*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Naval War of 1812 or the History of the United States Navy during the Last War with Great Britain; to Which Is Appended an Account of the Battle of New Orleans*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987.

Bauer, K. Jack (Karl Jack). *Surfboats and Horse Marines: U.S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846–48*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1969.

Sullivan, David M. *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War*, 4 vols. Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 1997–2000.

Roberts, Jerry A. *U.S. Marines in Battle: Guantánamo Bay, 10 June–9 August 1898*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2020.

Abdow, Emily. *The Boxer Rebellion: Bluejackets and Marines in China, 1900–1901*. Washington, DC: Naval History and Heritage Command, Department of the Navy, 2023.

Daugherty III, Leo J. *The Marine Corps and the State Department: Enduring Partners in United States Foreign Policy, 1798–2007*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009.

Evans, Col Stephen S., USMCR, ed. *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare, 1898–2007: Anthology and Selected Bibliography*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008.

McClellan, Maj Edwin N., USMC. *The United States Marine Corps in the World War*. Updated and Rev. 3d ed. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2014.

- 
- Hough, LtCol Frank O., USMCR, Maj Verle E. Ludwig, USMC, and Henry I. Shaw Jr. *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*. Vol. 1, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*. Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958.
- Shaw Jr., Henry I., Maj Douglas T. Kane, USMC. *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*. Vol. 2, *Isolation of Rabaul*. Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1963.
- Shaw Jr., Henry I., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin T. Turnbladh. *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*. Vol. 3, *Central Pacific Drive*. Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1966.
- Garand, George W., and Truman R. Strobridge. *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*. Vol. 4, *Western Pacific Operations*. Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1971.
- Frank, Benis M., and Henry I. Shaw Jr. *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*. Vol. 5, *Victory and Occupation*. Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1968.
- Sherrod, Robert Lee. *History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*. Washington, DC: Combat Forces Press, 1952.
- Frank, Richard B. *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*. New York: Penguin, 1992.
- Robertson, Breanne, ed. *Investigating Iwo: The Flag Raisings in Myth, Memory, & Esprit de Corps*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2019.
- Smith, Charles R., ed. *U.S. Marines in the Korean War*. Washington, DC: History Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 2007.
- Whitlow, Capt Robert H., USMCR. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Advisory & Combat Assistance Era, 1954–1964*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1977.
- Shulimson, Jack, and Maj Charles M. Johnson, USMC. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup, 1965*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1978.

- 
- Shulimson, Jack. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War, 1966*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1982.
- Telfer, Maj Gary L., USMC, LtCol Lane Rogers, USMC, and V. Keith Fleming Jr. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese, 1967*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1984.
- Shulimson, Jack, LtCol Leonard A. Blaisol, USMC, Charles R. Smith, and Capt David A. Dawson, USMC. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1997.
- Smith, Charles R. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Stand-down, 1969*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1988.
- Cosmas, Graham A., and LtCol Terrence P. Murray, USMC. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment, 1970–1971*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1986.
- Melson, Maj Charles D., USMC, and LtCol Curtis G. Arnold, USMC. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The War that Would Not End, 1971–1973*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1991.
- Dunham, Maj George R., USMC, and Col David A. Quinlan, USMC. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Bitter End, 1973–1975*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1990.
- Solis, LtCol Gary D. *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1989.
- Frank, Benis M. *U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1982–1984*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1987.
- Westermeyer, Paul W. *U.S. Marines in the Gulf War, 1990–1991: Liberating Kuwait*. Quantico, VA: History Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 2014.
- Reynolds, Col. Nicholas E., USMCR (Ret). *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Basrah, Baghdad and Beyond*. Washington, DC: History Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 2007.
- Lowrey, Col Nathan S., USMCR. *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001–*

---

2002: *From the Sea*. Washington, DC: History Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 2011.

Westermeyer, Paul W., ed. *The Legacy of Belleau Wood: 100 Years of Making Marines and Winning Battles, an Anthology*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2018.

### *Biographies, Autobiographies, and Memoirs*

The heart of the Marine Corps is the individual Marine, and a proper study of Marine Corps history requires examination of the lives of legendary Marines.

Boyington, Gregory. *Baa Baa Black Sheep*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958.

Butler, Smedley D., and Anne Cipriano Venzon. *General Smedley Darlington Butler: The Letters of a Leatherneck, 1898–1931*. New York: Praeger, 1992.

Fick, Nathaniel. *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Officer*. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin, 2005.

Hoffman, Col Jon T., USMCR. *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC*. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2001.

Krulak, LtGen Victor H., USMC (Ret). *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999.

Leckie, Robert. *Helmet for My Pillow*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957.

Lejeune, John Archer. *The Reminiscences of a Marine*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 1990.

Peterson Jr., Frank E., and J. Alfred Phelps. *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013.

Proser, Jim. *No Better Friend, No Worse Enemy: The Life of General James Mattis*. New York: Broadside Books, 2018.

Roberts, Charley. *Devil Dog Dan Daly: America's Fightin'est Marine*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2021.

Sledge, E. B. *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1981.

Strecker, Mark. *Smedley D. Butler, USMC: A Biography*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011.

Ulbrich, David J. *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Mak-*



- 
- ing of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936–1943.* Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011.
- Venzon, Anne Cipriano. *From Whaleboats to Amphibious Warfare: Lt. Gen. “Howling Mad” Smith and the U.S. Marine Corps.* Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

---

# INDEX

- Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps, 34, 36, 387
- Act for the Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps, 13
- Adams, John, 13, 16, 18, 386
- ad-Diwaniyah, Iraq, 316, 327
- Afghan Interim Authority, 310
- Afghan National Army (ANA), 310, 334
- Afghanistan, 250, 270, 306–10, 315, 321–22, 329, 331, 333–35, 339, 342, 344–53, 357, 369–70, 397–98, 403
- aircraft
- AH-1T SeaCobra, 278, 289
  - AH-1W SuperCobra, 309, 317, 344
  - AV-8B Harrier II, 217, 309, 350
  - C-130 Hercules, 257, 271, 309, 318
  - CH-46 Sea Knight, 248, 260, 278
  - CH-53E Super Stallion, 258, 302, 309, 337, 344
  - EA-6B Prowler, 217, 301
  - F4U-1A Corsair, 156, 171, 177, 199, 204, 216
  - F-35B Lightning II, 217
  - F/A-18 Hornet, 217, 301, 397
  - KC-130 Hercules, 309, 318
  - OV-10 Bronco, 292
- Aisne-Marne offensive, 101, 106. *See also* Second Battle of the Marne
- al-Anbar Province, Iraq, 323, 325, 327, 329–30, 337, 339–46, 356
- al-Asad Air Base, Iraq, 356
- al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr, 355–56
- al-Basrah, Iraq, 295, 312–13
- Alford, LtCol Julian D., 338–41
- al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia, 292–93
- al-Kut, Iraq, 314, 319, 327
- Allen, Gen John R., 350–51
- al-Qaeda, 304, 306, 308–10, 329, 350, 397
- al-Qaeda in Iraq, 329, 338–40. *See also* Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.
- al-Qaim, Iraq, 338–41
- al-Sadr, Muqtada, 327–29

- 
- al-Zarqawi, Abu Musab, 329–30, 341
  - Ambush Alley, 314, 316
  - American Revolution, 5, 11, 142, 399
  - Amos, Gen James F., 318, 355, 374
  - Angaur Island, 17172
  - an-Najaf, Iraq, 327–30, 336
  - an-Nasiriyah, Iraq, 313–14, 316, 330, 397
  - an-Numaniyah, Iraq, 319
  - ar-Ramadi, Iraq, 325–26, 338, 340–41, 343, 346, 397
  - Articles of Confederation, 11
  - Assunpink Creek, 7–8, 386
  - Axis Powers, 128, 156
  - Azores, 107, 111
  
  - Baath Party, 290, 296, 310, 316, 321, 323, 327–28
  - Babil Province, Iraq, 323
  - Bagaduce Harbor, 10
  - Bahamas, 6, 8, 386
  - Baghdad, Iraq, 290, 312, 317–20, 325, 327, 329, 342, 347, 355–56, 397
  - Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, 308–9, 322
  - Barbary States (wars), 12, 18–22, 32, 36, 387, 400
  - Barber, Capt William E., 206, 209, 211, 382
  - Barnett, MajGen George, 87, 95–96, 103, 373
  - Barney, Commo Joshua, 29
  - barrier forts, 47–48, 52, 388
  - Barron, Commo Samuel, 21
  - Barrow, Gen Robert H., 239, 247, 265–68, 272, 374
  - Basilone, GySgt John, 151–52, 175–76, 380
  - Bataan, 139–40
  - battles, U.S.
    - Battle of Alligator Creek, 151–52
    - Battle of Baltimore, 29–30, 52
    - Battle of Belleau Wood, 98–100, 103, 390
    - Battle of Bladensburg, 17, 29, 32, 387
    - Battle of Blanc Mont, 104, 391
    - Battle of Bloody Ridge (Edson's Ridge), 141, 152
    - Battle of Bull Run, 17, 53, 388
    - Battle of Chapultepec, 34, 43–45, 52, 388
    - Battle of Château-Thierry, 97, 106
    - Battle of Coyotepe Hill, 81–83
    - Battle of Guam, 141–42, 164, 167–69, 391–92
    - Battle of Guadalcanal, 141, 148–54, 156, 161, 202, 324, 392
    - Battle of Hampton Roads, 54
    - Battle of Henderson Field, 150–52, 202
    - Battle of Hue City, 324, 395
    - Battle of Inchon, 200–6, 211, 216, 389, 393
    - Battle of al-Khafji, 292–93
    - Battle of Khe Sanh, 239, 243–45, 395
    - Battle of Iwo Jima, 173–79, 183, 393–94
    - Battle of La Mesa, 43
    - Battle of Marjah, 347–9
    - Battle of Midway, 138, 146–48, 150
    - Battle of Naktong, 195, 197–200
    - Battle of New Orleans, 30–31, 34, 55, 387
    - Battle of North Point, 29
    - Battle of Okinawa, 174, 177, 179–82, 393
    - Battle of Peleliu, 170–72, 180, 202, 393
    - Battle of Saipan, 42, 164–66, 168, 392

- 
- Battle of Soissons, 98–99, 101, 103, 106, 390
- Battle of Tarawa, 156, 157, 159–63, 169, 392
- Battle of Wake Island, 138, 351, 391, 398
- Battle of the Coral Sea, 140, 146
- Battle of the Thames, 25
- Battle of the Pusan Perimeter, 195–200, 205, 216, 367, 393
- Second Battle of the Marne, 101, 106. *See also* Aisne-Marne offensive.
- Bearss, Col Hiram I., 74, 377
- Beirut Barracks Bombing, 273–76, 394, 396
- Beirut International Airport. 274–76
- Beijing (Peking), 73, 128
- de Bellevue, 1stLt Francis B., 30–31
- Berger, Gen David H., 359, 374, 398
- Betio, 159–61, 392
- Biddle, MajGen William P., 87, 373
- Biden Jr., Joseph R., 357
- bin Laden, Osama, 304, 308–10, 329, 350
- Bluefields, Nicaragua, 81, 121
- Bonnyman Jr., 1stLt Alexander, 161, 380
- Boomer, LtGen Walter E., 252
- Bordelon, SSgt William J., 161, 380
- Bougainville, 141, 154–56, 392
- Boxer Rebellion, 76–77, 82, 84, 198, 389
- Boyd, Col John R., 282–83
- Boyington, Maj Gregory, 155–56, 380
- Branch, 2dLt Frederick C., 142
- British Royal Marines, 63, 66, 100, 208
- British Royal Navy, 5, 7, 9, 24–25, 31, 100
- Brown, Cpl Charles, 59, 377
- Brown, John, 17, 49–51, 388
- Buckner Jr., LtGen Simon B., 179, 181
- Burrows, LtCol William Ward, 13, 17–18, 32, 64, 373, 386
- Bush, George H. W., 280, 290, 292, 294, 298, 300
- Bush, George W., 306, 310, 342, 346
- Bush, 1stLt William, 26
- Butler, MajGen Smedley D., 81–82, 84, 88, 91–92, 127, 378–79
- Button, Cpl William R., 92, 379
- Cahill, 2dLt John H., 197
- Cactus Air Force, 150
- Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, 350, 397
- Camp David, Afghanistan, 17
- Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, 351–52
- Cannon, 1stLt George H., 147, 380
- Canton, China, 47, 52, 388
- Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, 89, 301
- Carl, Capt Marion E., 150–51
- Carlson, LtCol Evans F., 141
- Carmick, Maj Daniel, 16, 23, 30–31
- Carpenter, LCpl William Kyle, 349, 384
- Carter Doctrine, 270
- Carter, James E. “Jimmy,” 270, 272–73
- Cates, Gen Clifton B., 101, 188, 195, 217, 374
- Caroline Islands, 114
- Casey Jr., Gen George W., 328–29
- Cavite, Philippines, 67, 73–75, 139, 389
- Central Intelligence Agency, 188, 225, 306
- Central Powers, 94
- Champagne-Marne defensive, 101
- Chapman, LtCol Harlan P., 255–56
- Chapman Jr., Gen Leonard F., 251, 374

- 
- Chichi Jima, 184  
Chindong-ni, Korea, 196–97  
Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), 128–28, 221  
Chontosh, Capt Brian R., 317  
Chosin Reservoir Campaign, 202,  
206–12, 324, 394  
Chu Lai, South Vietnam, 228, 233,  
236, 238, 242, 395  
Civil Rights movement, 191, 264  
Civil War, U.S., 36, 46, 48, 55,  
57–58, 65–66, 82, 376–77, 388,  
390–91, 401  
Cleveland, Grover, 61  
Clinton, William J. “Bill,” 300  
Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraq,  
323–27  
Cold War, 185–87, 192, 249, 264,  
273, 296, 302  
Cole, BGen Eli K., 94, 103, 129  
Commandant of the Marine Corps,  
U.S., 5, 8, 13–20, 31–38, 44–45,  
54–55, 61–66, 68, 71, 77, 83,  
85, 87–88, 95–96, 101, 103,  
112–15, 126, 129, 132, 134,  
137, 145–46, 150, 161, 167,  
186, 188–91, 195, 217–18, 239,  
251–52, 256, 265, 267–68, 272,  
283–86, 303, 312–13, 318,  
336, 344, 352, 355, 359, 369,  
373–74, 386–88, 391, 394, 396  
Communism, 127, 184–86, 189,  
192–93, 206, 208, 220, 222–25,  
227–29, 231, 233, 235–36, 238,  
241–42, 245–46, 249, 254,  
256–57, 260, 273, 276, 302,  
368, 394–96  
Congress, U.S., 5, 8, 11–15, 31, 34,  
36–37, 52, 63, 67, 83, 86–87,  
90, 100, 103, 116, 126, 138,  
189, 226, 257, 264–67, 278,  
369, 386–87  
Conolly, RAdm Richard L., 167–68  
Continental Marines, 5–11, 142, 365,  
373, 386  
Continental Navy, 5–6, 9–11  
Con Thien, South Vietnam, 239  
Conway, Gen James T., 312, 324, 327,  
330, 344, 352, 374  
Corregidor, the Philippines, 139–40,  
184, 391  
Craig, BGen Edward A., 195–97, 215  
Creek War, 34, 36–39, 387  
Crist, Gen George B., 287  
Crowson, PFC Allen C., 178  
Cua Viet River, 253–54  
Culebra, Puerto Rico, 129–30, 370  
Cunningham, LtCol Alfred A., 107–9,  
111, 390  
Cushman Jr., Gen Robert E., 268, 374  
Cushman, BGen Thomas J., 196, 216  
Da Krong Valley, South Vietnam,  
247–48, 395  
Da Nang, South Vietnam, 227–28,  
231, 235–36, 238, 245, 251–52,  
257, 394–95  
Daly, SgtMaj Daniel J., 77, 82, 84, 91,  
98, 378–79  
Daniels, Josephus, 95  
Dartiguenave, Philippe Sudré, 90  
Davis, MajGen Raymond G., 209–10,  
247, 382  
demilitarized zone (DMZ), 236, 248,  
285  
Department of Defense, U.S., 188,  
217, 255, 268, 272–73, 277–78,  
282, 322, 344, 353, 356, 358  
Department of State, U.S., 89, 298  
Derna, Libya, 20–22, 366, 387  
Devereux, Maj James P. S., 138–39  
Dewey, Commo George, 6, 73, 85,  
389  
Diyala River, Iraq, 319

- 
- Dong Ha, South Vietnam, 238,  
 253–54  
 Doyen, BGen Charles A., 97  
 Drewry's Bluff, VA, 55, 388  
 Dunham, Cpl Jason L., 326–27, 384  
 Dunford, Gen Joseph F., 313, 351–52,  
 374  
  
 Easter Offensive, 252–55, 278  
 Eaton, William, 19, 21–22, 387  
 Edson, Capt Alvin, 42, 44  
 Edson, Col Merritt A., 123–24, 141,  
 380  
 Elrod, Capt Henry T., 139, 380  
 Eisenhower, Dwight D., 222  
 Elliott, MajGen George F., 68–70, 73,  
 83, 373  
 Ellis, Maj Earl H. "Pete," 129  
 Eniwetok Atoll, 162–63  
 Euphrates River, 312–16, 325,  
 327–28, 337–38, 356, 397  
 Exploring Expedition, U.S., 39–40  
  
 Fallujah Brigade, 327, 329  
 Fallujah, Iraq, 325–27, 330–33,  
 337–38, 341, 355, 397  
 Farragut, Adm David G., 55, 57, 388  
 Fillmore, Millard, 47, 388  
 Fitzpatrick, 2dLt John, 7  
 First Barbary War, 21–22, 387  
 Fleet Exercise Number IV, 129  
 Fleming, Capt Richard E., 148, 380  
 Fonseca Jr., HA Luis E., 314–16  
 Ford, Gerald R., 257, 261  
 Formosa (Taiwan), 58, 114, 221  
 Forney, LtCol James, 62  
 forts, U.S.  
     Fort Coyotepe, 81–83  
     Fort Fisher, 57, 366, 388  
     Fort McHenry, 30, 52  
     Fort Montagu, 6, 8  
     Fort Pickens, 52  
     Fort Rivière, 82, 91  
     Fort Sumter, 51, 55, 388  
 Forward Operating Base Rhino, 308,  
 397  
 Foss, Capt Joseph J., 150–51, 380  
 French Revolution (French Revolu-  
 tionary Wars), 12, 22  
 Frontera, Mexico, 42, 44  
 Fuller, MajGen Ben H., 124, 132,  
 373, 391  
  
 Gale, LtCol Anthony, 31–32, 34, 373  
 Gamble, 1stLt John Marshall, 27–28  
 Gates, Robert M., 349, 352–53  
 Geiger, MajGen Roy S., 164, 181–82  
*Gendarmerie d'Haiti (Garde d'Haiti)*,  
 91–92, 120, 202  
 General Board of the Navy, 86–87,  
 114, 355  
 Gilbert Islands, 40, 114, 156, 158–60,  
 162  
 Gio Linh, South Vietnam, 252–53,  
 285  
 Global War on Terrorism, 306, 315,  
 322, 358, 369–70, 403  
 Goldwater-Nichols Department of  
 Defense Reorganization Act,  
 278–79, 281, 369  
 "Good Neighbor Policy," 124  
 Gray, Gen Alfred M., 283–86, 302,  
 369, 374, 396  
 Great Lakes, 24–25, 387  
 "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot,"  
 166  
 Great Railroad Strike, 62  
 Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity  
 Sphere, 128  
 Greene, 1stLt Israel, 49–51, 388  
 Grenada, 250, 276–79, 284, 315, 369,  
 396  
 Guam, 67, 71–73, 114, 136, 138, 142,  
 164, 167–69, 354, 391–92

- 
- Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, 68–71, 80, 85, 87, 120–21, 129, 136, 300, 389  
*Guardia Nacional Dominicana*, 93, 118, 121–25, 202  
 Gulf of Tonkin Incident, 226  
 Gulf War, 289–96  
  
 Hagaru-ri, North Korea, 206, 208–11  
 Hamhung, North Korea, 206, 211  
 Hamid Karzai International Airport, 358, 398  
 Han River, 59  
 Hanneken, Sgt Herman H., 92, 379  
 Hanoi, North Vietnam, 223–24, 227, 242, 255–56  
 Hantush, Iraq, 318  
 Harpers Ferry Raid, 17, 49, 51, 388  
 Harrison, William Henry, 24–25  
 Hathcock Jr., SSgt Carlos N., 239–40  
 Hawaii (Sandwich Islands), 28, 40, 58, 71–72, 129–30, 132, 137, 147, 159, 162, 354  
 Hawkins, 1stLt William D., 161, 380  
 Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 308, 344–45, 348, 350–51, 397  
 Henderson, Bvt BGen Archibald, 20, 33–50, 373, 387–88  
 Heywood, MajGen Charles, 54, 61–63, 65, 68, 77, 373  
 Ho Chi Minh, 223, 226, 236  
 Hogaboom Board, 218–20, 368, 394  
 Holcomb, Gen Thomas, 134, 137, 146, 373  
 Hoover, Herbert, 120–23  
 House Armed Services Committee, 188–89, 218  
 Huerta, Victoriano, 88–89  
 humanitarian operations, 35, 187, 220, 295–303, 309, 315, 339  
 Huntington, LtCol Robert W., 68, 71, 389  
 Hussein, Saddam, 286, 295, 310, 312–13, 320  
 Il-Sung, Kim, 192–93  
 International Legation (Legation Quarter), 75–78, 389  
 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), 310, 321–22  
 Iran-Iraq War, 286, 289  
 Iranian Revolution, 270, 286  
 Iraqi Army, 293–94, 397  
 Iraqi Governing Council, 326–27, 330  
 Iraqi Republican Guard, 319  
 Iraqi Security Forces, 324, 328, 330, 339, 341, 343, 346, 355–56  
 Islamic Republic of Iran, 289  
 Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, 341, 343, 355, 398. *See also* al-Qaeda in Iraq.  
 Jackson, Andrew, 30–31, 34, 36–39, 387  
 Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 308, 333  
 Jefferson, Thomas, 17–19, 23, 64, 386  
 Jesup, Bvt MajGen Thomas S., 39  
 Johnson, Lyndon B., 226–28, 231, 236, 246  
 Johnson, Sgt Opha May, 95, 390  
 Joint Chiefs of Staff, 158, 162, 188–89, 195–96, 201, 217, 238, 272, 279, 396–97  
 Jones Jr., Gen James L., 336, 374  
 Jones, Capt John Paul, 9  
 Jurney, LtCol William M., 340–41  
 Kabul, Afghanistan, 307–10, 322, 333, 358, 398  
 Kai-shek, Chiang, 127, 184, 193  
 Kandahar, Afghanistan, 307–8, 397  
 Karamanli, Hamet, 19–21  
 Karamanli, Yusuf, 22  
 Karzai, Hamid, 308, 352

- 
- Kasal, 1stSgt Bradley A., 332  
 Kelly, BGen John F., 320, 343  
 Kelly, Pvt John J., 104, 379  
 Kelley, Gen Paul X., 272, 336, 374  
 Kennedy, John F., 225–26  
 Khe Sanh, South Vietnam, 239,  
     243–45, 395  
 Khmer Rouge, 256–58, 260–61, 396  
 Koh Tang, Cambodia, 261, 396  
 Kojo, North Korea, 206  
 Korengal Valley, Afghanistan, 333  
 Krulak, Gen Charles C., 302–3, 374  
 Krulak, LtGen Victor H., 154, 231  
 Kunar Province, Afghanistan, 333–34,  
     345  
 Kuwait City, 290, 293–94, 396  
 Kwajalein, Marshall Islands, 162–63,  
     224, 392  
  
 Lake Erie, 25, 387  
 Lake Ontario, 25  
 Lawrence, Capt James, 27  
*Leatherneck* magazine, 303  
 “Leatherneck Square,” South Vietnam,  
     239  
 Lee, GySgt William A., 122  
 Lejeune, LtGen John A., 14–15,  
     71, 78, 84, 88–89, 94, 103–5,  
     112–16, 129, 131, 137, 373, 391  
 Leyte, Philippines, 174  
 Lincoln, Abraham, 51, 64  
 Lind, William S., 282–83  
 Long Patrol, 141  
 López, 1stLt Baldomero, 203–4, 382  
 Louverture, Toussaint, 16  
 Low, Frederick F., 59  
 Lucas, PFC Jacklyn H., 176, 178,  
     381  
 Lunga River, Solomon Islands, 149  
  
 M1826 officer’s sword, 20  
 MacArthur, Gen Douglas, 139, 154,  
     158, 170, 174, 193, 200–1, 203,  
     205  
 Mackie, Cpl John F., 55–56, 376, 388  
 Madison, James, 23–24  
 Magill, 2dLt Louis J., 69  
 Mahan, Alfred Thayer, 85  
*Mahdi Army*, 327, 336  
 Majuro, Marshall Islands, 162–63,  
     392  
 Makin Raid, 141  
 Managua, Nicaragua, 81, 121  
 Manila, the Philippines, 67, 73, 82  
 Manila Bay, 67, 73, 139, 389  
 Mao Zedong, 184, 193  
 Mariana Islands, 67, 114, 158,  
     163–69, 182  
*Marine Corps Gazette*, 124, 303  
 Marine Corps installations  
     Camp Lejeune, NC, 137, 142–  
         44, 146, 251, 264, 305,  
         315, 337, 340, 346, 392  
     Camp Pendleton, CA, 137, 145,  
         195, 214, 250, 336, 391  
     Marine Barracks Philadelphia  
         Navy Yard, PA, 108  
     Marine Barracks Washington,  
         DC, 13, 17, 29, 63, 82,  
         116, 399  
     Marine Corps Air Station Quan-  
         tico, VA, 117  
     Marine Corps Base Quantico  
         (Marine Barracks Quanti-  
         co), VA, 117  
     Marine Corps Recruit Depot Par-  
         ris Island (Marine Barracks  
         Parris Island), SC, 95, 111,  
         116, 136, 146, 218  
     Marine Corps Recruit Depot San  
         Diego (Marine Barracks  
         San Diego), CA, 95, 136,  
         145, 391  
 Montford Point, NC, 142–43, 392



- 
- Marine Corps Schools
- Amphibious Warfare School, 283–85
  - The Basic School (Basic Course), 65, 116–17, 134, 202
  - Command and Staff College, 117, 286
  - Expeditionary Warfare School, 117
  - Field Officers' Course, 116, 124
  - Mountain Warfare Training Center, 190
  - Reserve Officers' Course, 134
  - School of Advanced Warfighting, 117, 286
  - School of Application, 63–64
  - Signal School, 116
  - Officer Candidates School, 117, 139, 142
  - Marine Corps University (MCU), 284–86
  - Marine Corps War College, 286
- Marjah, Afghanistan, 347, 349, 397
- Marshall Islands, 159–59, 162–64
- Martin, Graham A., 258, 260
- Matanikau River, Guadalcanal, 152
- Mattis, MajGen James N., 307–8, 312–13, 319, 324–25
- Mayaguez* incident, 260–61, 279, 396
- McCawley, Col Charles G., 55, 61, 63, 373, 389
- McChrystal, Gen Stanley A., 347
- McClellan, Maj Edwin N., 14
- McDowell, BGen Irvin, 52–53
- McGinty III, 2dLt John J., 237, 384
- McHenry, James, 12
- McKinley, William, 65–67
- Medal of Honor, 55–56, 59, 68–70, 74, 77, 82, 84, 88, 91, 98, 104, 106, 126, 139, 147–48, 152, 156, 161, 172, 175, 178, 183, 204, 210, 214, 234, 242, 327, 346, 350, 376–85, 388
- Mekong River, Vietnam, 256–57
- Meuse-Argonne offensive, 104–6, 391
- Mexican-American War, 34, 40–46, 52, 388, 400
- Meyer, Cpl Dakota L., 345–46, 384
- Midway Island, 136, 138, 146–48, 150
- Miller, Capt Samuel, 29, 32, 387
- military publications
- Fleet Training Publication* 167, 132
  - Force Design 2030*, 359–60, 370, 398
  - General Order 241, The Fleet Marine Force*, 132, 391
  - Small Wars Manual*, 124, 324
  - Tentative Landing Manual*, 132
  - Warfighting*, FMFM-1 (also, MCDP-1), 285, 286, 369, 396
- Miryang, South Korea, 197–98
- Mississippi River, 22–23, 37, 55, 388
- Mitchell Jr., Cpl Robert J., 332
- Modrzejewski, Maj Robert J., 237, 384
- Mogadishu, Somalia, 295, 297
- Monroe, James, 31–33, 387
- Monroe Doctrine, 65, 78
- Monrovia, Liberia, 299–300
- Mosul, Iraq, 295, 355–56
- Mullan, Capt Robert, 7
- Multi-National Force–Iraq, 328
- Multi-National Force–West (MNF–W), 323
- Munda, Solomon Islands, 154
- Murray, LtCol Raymond L., 201
- Myers, Maj Reginald R., 208–9, 382
- Naktong River, South Korea, 195, 197–200
- Namur Island, 162–63, 392
- Nanjing, China, 128

- 
- Napoleonic Wars, 24
  - Nassau, 6, 8, 386
  - National Liberation Front, South Vietnam, 224
  - National Security Act of 1947, 188, 278–79, 393
  - National Security Council, 188
  - Natonski, MajGen Richard F., 314, 330
  - North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 270, 296, 321–22, 333, 335, 344, 349, 352, 357
  - Navajo, 143–45
  - Navy Cross, 109–10, 122, 150, 176, 202, 243, 249, 252, 254, 277–78, 316–17, 332
  - Navy, Imperial Japanese, 152, 164, 166
  - Neville, MajGen Wendell C., 88, 373, 379
  - New Britain, 154–56, 379
  - New Georgia Islands, 154, 392
  - New Guinea, 140, 154, 158, 170, 392
  - New Orleans, LA, 23, 30–31, 34, 55, 387
  - New Providence raid, 6–8, 386
  - Newberry, Truman H., 86
  - Newton, LtCol George R., 198
  - Nicaragua,
    - Civil War, 80–83, 390, 401–2
    - occupation of, 121–25, 202, 391
  - Nicholas, Maj Samuel, 5–9, 373, 386
  - Nicholson, BGen Lawrence D., 344, 347
  - Nimitz, Adm Chester W., 158, 162–64, 179
  - Nixon Doctrine, 258
  - Nixon, Richard M., 249–50, 254, 256, 265
  - Norfolk (Gosport) Navy Yard, VA, 52, 62
  - Noriega, Manuel Antonio, 279–81
  - North Carolina, 51, 54, 57, 137, 264, 305, 315
  - North Korean People's Army (NKPA), 193, 195–99, 205–6, 212
    - NKPA *4th Division*, 198–99
    - NKPA *6th Division*, 197
  - North Sea, 270
  - Northwest Territory, 24
  - Norway, 270, 307
  - Nuku Hiva, 28
  - Obama, Barack H., 344, 346–47, 350, 352–53
  - O'Bannon, 1stLt Presley N., 20–22, 387
  - Ocotal, Nicaragua, 125
  - O'Grady, Capt Scott F., 302
  - Okinawa, 174, 177, 179–82, 225, 250–51, 258, 393
  - Olongapo, the Philippines, 74–75
  - O'Malley, Cpl Robert E., 233–34, 384
  - operations, U.S. military
    - Allies Refuge, 357
    - Anaconda, 309
    - Buffalo, 239
    - Cartwheel, 154–56, 158, 392
    - Cimarron, 239
    - Desert Shield, 290, 292, 294, 396
    - Desert Storm, 291–94, 298, 369, 396
    - Dewey Canyon, 247–49, 395
    - Eagle Claw, 270–72, 278–79, 335
    - Eagle Pull, 257–59
    - Earnest Will, 287, 289
    - Eastern Exit, 297
    - Enduring Freedom, 306–10, 322, 333–35, 344–45, 352, 357, 384
    - Freedom's Sentinel, 357
    - Frequent Wind, 257–61, 396

- 
- Galvanic, 158  
Hastings, 237–38  
Iceberg, 179  
Inherent Resolve, 355–56, 398, 403  
Iraqi Freedom, 310–11, 321, 323, 346–47, 384–85, 397  
Just Cause, 279–81, 396  
Khanjar, 344–45  
Killer, 212  
Millpond, 225  
Moshtarark, 348–49  
Mountain Storm, 334  
New Dawn, 346  
Noble Eagle, 305  
Phantom Fury (Operation al-Fajr), 330, 397  
Prairie, 238  
Praying Mantis, 289  
Provide Comfort, 296  
Red Wings, 334  
Resolute Support, 357–58  
Restore Hope, 297  
Ripper, 212  
Rolling Thunder, 227  
Shuffly, 226, 394  
Starlite, 233–34, 397  
Vigilant Resolve, 326, 330, 397  
Urgent Fury, 276–78, 396  
Watchtower, 149, 158  
Orote, Guam, 167–68
- Pace, Gen Peter, 397  
Palau Island, 170–71, 174, 393  
Palestine Liberation Organization, 273  
Palma, Tomás Estrada, 79  
Panama, 58–59, 61, 78–79, 83, 94, 113, 130, 136, 250, 279–80, 315, 369, 389, 396  
Panama Canal, 389  
Panama Canal Zone, 130  
Panama City, 61, 279–80
- Paris, 109, 255  
Paris Peace Accords, 255  
Parris Island, SC, 54, 95, 111, 116, 136, 146, 218  
Pathet Lao, 225  
Patriot War, 23  
Pate, Gen Randolph M., 218–19, 374  
Pavuvu, Solomon Islands, 156  
Pearl Harbor, HI, 40, 137–40, 148, 162, 164, 202, 391  
Peck, Pascal Paoli, 21–22  
Peleliu, 170–72, 180, 202, 393  
Pendleton, MajGen Joseph H., 81, 93–94, 250  
Penobscot Bay, ME, 9  
People's Republic of China, 358  
Péralte, Charlemagne Masséna, 92  
Percival, Capt John, 40  
Perry, Commo Oliver H., 25, 387  
Perry, Commo Matthew C., 44, 47–48, 388  
Persian Gulf, 250, 270, 272, 287, 289–90, 297, 315  
Pershing, Gen John J., 103–4  
Petersen Jr., LtGen Frank E., 269  
Petraeus, Gen David H., 349–50  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 256, 258  
Phu Bai, Vietnam, 228, 238  
Pless, Maj Stephen W., 242, 384  
Poland, 128, 134  
Polk, James K., 41–43  
Pope, Col Percival C., 73  
Porter, Col David D., 377  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 89–90, 301, 390  
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 140  
Port Royal, SC, 54–55, 95  
Potomac River, 52, 54, 117  
Preble, Commo Edward, 19  
Puller, LtGen Lewis B. “Chesty,” 122–24, 172, 201–2, 206, 208  
Purvis, Pvt Hugh, 59, 377  
Putnam, Maj Paul A., 139

- 
- Pyongyang, North Korea, 205, 209  
 Quallah Battoo, Sumatra, 35, 387  
 Quang Nam Province, South Vietnam, 229, 239  
 Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam, 229, 237, 245, 247, 253–54, 257  
 Quasi War, 16–18, 32, 400  
 Quick, Sgt John H., 69–70, 377  
 Quilali, Nicaragua, 125
- Rabaul, New Guinea, 154–56, 158, 392  
 Reagan, Ronald W., 273, 176, 287  
 Red Army, China, 127  
 Reid, Col George C., 85, 379  
 Reynolds, Maj John G., 52–54, 388  
 Revolutionary War (American Revolution), 10–12, 22, 365, 386, 392, 400  
 Ribbon Creek Incident, 218  
 Rio Grande River, 41  
 Ripley, Capt John W., 253–54  
 Robinson, GySgt Robert Guy, 110, 379  
 Roi Island, Marshall Islands, 162–63, 392  
 Rodgers, Commo John, 29, 59  
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 124, 128, 134, 136, 138, 142, 146, 250  
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 67, 78–79, 86  
 Rosenthal, Joe, 173, 393  
 Rowell, Maj Ross E., 125  
 Rupertus, MajGen William H., 155, 172  
 Russell Islands, 154  
 Russell Jr., MajGen John H., 120, 373  
 Russia (Soviet Union), 94, 186, 354, 358, 389
- Saigon, South Vietnam, 224, 226, 229, 231, 234, 242, 246, 252, 254–60, 396
- Saint-Mihiel, France, 103–4, 390  
 Sam, Vilbrun Guillaume, 89  
 Samar, the Philippines, 74, 389  
 Samarra, Iraq, 320, 340  
 Sampson, RAdm William T., 67–68, 70  
 Sanchez, LtGen Ricardo S., 324, 327  
 Sandino, César Augusto, 123–25  
 Sangin, Afghanistan, 348  
 Santiago, Cuba, 68, 70, 80, 93  
 Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 16, 93, 390  
 Schilt, 1stLt Christian F., 125, 379  
 Schmidt, MajGen Harry, 164, 174  
 Schmitt, Capt John F., 286  
 Scott, MajGen Winfield, 38, 44–45, 388  
 Second Opium War, 47  
 Second Seminole War, 34, 36–37, 39, 44  
 Second Sino-Japanese War, 128  
 Seoul, South Korea, 59, 193, 204–5, 213, 393  
 Seymour Expedition, 76–77  
 Shafter, MajGen William R., 70  
 Shah-i-Kot Valley, Afghanistan, 309  
 Shanghai, China, 47, 127–28, 139, 391  
 Shepherd Jr., Gen Lemuel C., 14, 167–68, 184, 186, 200, 217–18, 374  
 Sherman, Adm Forrest P., 195  
 Shi'a, 296, 323, 327–30, 340
- ships  
     American  
         *Alfred* (1775), 5–8  
         *Alliance* (1778), 9–10  
         *Greenwich* (1813), 27  
         *Ranger* (1777), 9  
         *Sally*, 16–17  
         USS *Annapolis* (PG 10), 81  
         USS *Argus* (1803), 21–22

- 
- USS *Baltimore* (C 3), 67, 72
  - USS *Congress* (1842), 46
  - USS *Constellation* (1797), 12, 16, 38, 264
  - USS *Constitution* (1797), 12, 16, 25–26, 31, 34, 40, 387
  - USS *Dolphin* (PG 24), 69
  - USS *Galena* (1862), 55–56, 388
  - USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3), 57, 302
  - USS *Maine* (1895), 66–67, 389
  - USS *Princeton* (CVS 37/LPH 5), 216
  - foreign
    - HMS *Cyane*, 31, 34
    - HMS *Guerriere*, 25–26, 387
    - HMS *Levant*, 31, 34
    - HMS *Reindeer*, 26
    - Tripoli* (polacca), 19
    - Sandwich* (France), 16, 18
  - Shoup, Gen David M., 161, 374, 381
  - Shuri Line, 180–81
  - Smith, Gen Eric M., 359, 374
  - Smith, MajGen Holland M., 130, 160, 164, 166, 174, 392
  - Smith, MajGen Julian C., 160–62
  - Smith, MajGen Oliver P., 200–1, 206–8, 210–12
  - Smith, LtCol Ray L., 252, 277–78
  - Solomon Islands, 114, 140–41, 149, 154, 156, 158, 170, 180
  - Somoza, Anastasio, 124
  - Sommeppy, France, 104
  - Sousa, John Philip, 64, 389
  - Spanish-American War, 65–71, 79, 82, 84–85, 108, 377, 389
  - Stahl, Sgt Mykle E., 243
  - Strait of Hormuz, 287, 289
  - Subic Bay, the Philippines, 73
  - Suez Canal, 73
  - Sunni, 323, 325, 327–30, 337–40, 342–43, 356
  - Suribachi, Mount, Iwo Jima, 173–74, 176, 183, 393
  - Tabasco River, Mexico, 44
  - Taft, William Howard, 86
  - Taiping Rebellion, 47
  - Talbot, 2dLt Ralph, 110, 379
  - Taliban, 306–10, 329, 335, 345, 347–50, 357–58, 369, 397
  - Tampico, Mexico, 42, 88, 220, 390
  - Tan Son Nhut airport, Vietnam, 258, 260
  - Tanker War, 287–89
  - Taplett, Col Robert D., 203, 209
  - Tarawa, 156–63, 169, 392
  - task forces
    - Combined Joint Task Force 7, 324
    - Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, 356
    - Combined Joint Task Force Mountain, 308–9, 322
    - Combined Task Force Provide Comfort, 296
    - Joint Task Force Guantanamo, 300
    - Joint Task Force Sea Angel (Joint Task Force Productive Effort), 298–99
    - Naval Expeditionary Task Force 58, 166, 307
    - Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, 272
    - Task Force 58, 166, 307
    - Task Force Faith, 207–8, 211
    - Task Force Tripoli, 320
  - Taylor, Charles, 299–300
  - Taylor, Zachary, 41–43

- 
- Tehran, Iran, 271  
 Terrett, Bvt Maj George H., 45, 52  
 Thiaucourt, France, 104  
 Tientsin, China, 72, 75–77, 127, 198  
 Tigris River, 312, 314, 316, 319–20  
 Tikrit, Iraq, 320  
 Tilton, Capt McLane, 59  
 Tinian, Mariana Islands, 164, 167–69, 224, 392  
 Tokyo (Edo), Japan, 47, 165, 183  
 Tora Bora, Afghanistan, 308  
 Torrey, BGen Philip H., 134  
 Triple Entente, 94  
 Tripoli, 12, 18–21, 45  
 Truk Atoll, 164, 184  
 Truman, Harry S., 191–93, 205, 393  
 Trump, Donald J., 357  
 Tulagi, Solomon Islands, 141, 150, 392  
 Tun Tavern, 7  
  
 United Nations (UN), 192–93, 195, 221, 289, 310  
 Upshur, Capt William P., 91, 379  
 U.S. Air Force, 188, 192, 211–12, 214, 222, 254, 258–59, 261, 267, 271, 273, 280, 282, 290, 296, 302, 307, 316, 332  
 U.S. Army  
     82d Airborne Division (USA), 290, 323, 325  
     23d “Americal” Infantry Division, 153  
     1st Infantry Division (1st Expeditionary Division), 171, 325  
     2d Infantry Division (2d Division), 198, 330  
     3d Infantry Division, 206, 312, 319  
     7th Infantry Division, 160, 163, 201, 206–7  
     25th Infantry Division, 153, 196  
     27th Infantry Division, 160, 181  
     77th Infantry Division, 167  
     81st Infantry Division, 171–72  
     106th Infantry Division, 163  
     10th Mountain Division, 301, 308  
     5th Regimental Combat Team, 196–97  
     American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), 96–97, 103  
     V Army Corps, 105  
     First Army (American), 103–5  
     Eighth Army, 193, 195–96, 198, 200, 205, 208, 212–13  
     Tenth Army, 179, 181–82  
 U.S. commands  
     Central Command (CENTCOM), 250, 272–73, 287, 291, 293, 298, 307–10, 320, 322, 349, 355, 398  
     European Command (EUCOM), 273, 296, 322  
     Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV), 226–27, 229, 231, 233, 236, 242, 246–47  
     Pacific Command, 236, 250, 256, 273  
     Regional Command East, 333  
     Regional Command North, 333  
     Regional Command South, 333  
     Regional Command Southwest (Marineistan), 349–51  
     Southern Command, 182, 273  
     Special Operations Command, 141, 272, 335–37, 356, 397  
 U.S. Marine Corps  
     Ground  
         36th Marine Depot Company, 178  
         Fox Company, 2d Battalion,

- 
- 7th Marines, 206, 208–9, 211
  - 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, 203, 397
  - 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 202, 209, 351
  - 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, 121, 246
  - 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, 206, 344, 355
  - 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, 300, 322, 345
  - 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, 208, 331–33
  - 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, 98, 203, 317, 348
  - 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, 280, 339–40, 396
  - 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, 209, 326
  - 1st Defense Battalion, 139
  - 6th Defense Battalion, 147
  - 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion, 280, 291, 396
  - 6th Machine Gun Battalion, 97, 106
  - 1st Raider Battalion, 141
  - 2d Raider Battalion, 141, 147
  - 1st Marines (RCT-1), 206, 314, 316, 319, 325–26
  - 2d Marines (RCT-2), 338
  - 3d Marines (3d Regiment) (3d Marine Littoral Regiment), 93
  - 4th Marines (4th Regiment), 93, 391
  - 5th Marines (5th Regiment) (RCT-5), 96–97, 196–97, 390
  - 6th Marines (6th Regiment), 97, 101, 106, 390
  - 7th Marines (RCT-7), 206, 209
  - 7th Marines, 202, 205–6, 209, 233, 326, 344, 351, 355, 395
  - 9th Marines, 247, 249, 251, 255, 261, 297, 349, 395
  - 11th Marines, 213, 313
  - 12th Marines, 248, 395
  - 22d Marines, 163
  - 26th Marines, 243–44
  - 28th Marines, 173–74, 176
  - 1st Marine Raider Regiment, 141, 154
  - 1st Marine Division, 149–50, 152, 155–56, 171–72, 189, 195, 200–1, 204–8, 211–13, 236, 238–39, 241–42, 250, 292, 294, 312–14, 316, 319–20, 323–24, 330, 392–95, 397
  - 2d Marine Division, 136, 153, 156, 160, 168, 179, 283, 291–94, 315, 39293, 396
  - 3d Marine Division, 154–55, 167–68, 174, 176, 184–85, 220, 228, 237–39, 241–43, 247, 392–93, 395
  - 4th Marine Division, 163–64, 168, 184–85, 392
  - 5th Marine Division, 174, 176, 184–85, 393
  - Battalion Landing Team 1/8, 274–75, 396
  - Marine Raider Regiment (Marine Special Op-

- 
- erations Regiment),  
141, 356
  - Aviation
    - 1st Marine Aircraft Wing,  
126, 184, 196, 200,  
209, 214, 220, 228,  
238, 395
    - 2d Marine Aircraft Wing,  
126, 171, 315
    - 3d Marine Aircraft Wing,  
292, 312, 323
    - 1st Marine Aeronautic  
Company, 107, 111
    - 1st Marine Aviation Force,  
107, 109, 111
    - Marine Aircraft Group 12,  
216, 220
    - Marine Aircraft Group 16,  
278, 332
    - Marine Aircraft Group 33,  
177, 195, 205, 216
    - Marine Heavy Helicop-  
ter Squadron 462,  
258–59
    - Marine Helicopter Squadron  
1 (HMX-1), 117, 393
    - Marine Fighting Squadron  
211, 139
    - Marine Fighting Squadron  
214, 156, 205, 216
    - Marine Fighting Squadron  
323, 216
    - Marine Fighter Attack  
Squadron 321, 305
    - Night Fighter Squadron  
513, 196
    - Marine Observation Squad-  
ron 6, 196, 216
    - Marine Observation Squad-  
ron 7/M, 125
  - Support/Logistics
    - 1st Force Service Support  
Group, 292, 312, 318,  
323
    - 2d Force Service Support  
Group, 292, 300
  - Combined Arms/Marine Air-  
Ground Task Force (MAGTF)
    - 1st Advance Base Brigade,  
87–88
    - 11th Marine Expeditionary  
Unit, 298
    - 13th Marine Expeditionary  
Unit, 290, 298
    - 15th Marine Expeditionary  
Unit, 297, 307, 397
    - 22d Marine Expeditionary  
Unit (22d Marine  
Amphibious Unit),  
299
    - 24th Marine Expeditionary  
Unit (24th Marine  
Amphibious Unit),  
296, 301–2
    - 26th Marine Expeditionary  
Unit, 299
    - 32d Marine Amphibious  
Unit, 273
    - 1st Marine Brigade (1st  
Brigade), 73, 136
    - 2d Marine Brigade (2d  
Brigade) (2d Marine  
Expeditionary Brigade  
[Task Force Tarawa]),  
121, 136
    - 3d Marine Brigade (3d  
Brigade), 98, 127
    - 4th Marine Brigade (4th  
Brigade) (4th Marine  
Expeditionary  
Brigade) (4th Marine  
Amphibious Brigade),  
97–98, 103, 106,  
390–91



- 
- 5th Brigade (5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade), 82, 103
  - 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, 290–91
  - 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (9th Marine Amphibious Brigade), 228, 394
  - 1st Provisional Brigade, 79, 167, 195–200, 215–16, 392–93
  - 2d Provisional Brigade, 93–94
  - III Amphibious Corps, 164, 168–69, 179, 181, 392–93
  - V Amphibious Corps, 160, 162–64, 170, 174, 392–93
  - III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF), 228–29, 231, 233, 235–38, 243, 394–95
  - I Marine Expeditionary Force, 250, 291, 315, 323
  - II Marine Expeditionary Force, 315
  - Advanced Base Force, 83–88, 117, 366
  - Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Forces, 287, 298–99
  - Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Forces, 299, 301, 321, 344, 355, 398
  - Marine Corps Organizations
    - Adjutant and Inspector Department, 115
    - code talkers, 145
    - Detachment One (Det One), 336
    - Division of Operations and Training, 115, 126
    - Fleet Marine Force, 132–33, 136, 174, 187, 189, 200, 231, 366–68, 391
    - Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, 315
    - Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 200, 256
    - Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC), 14, 115–16, 126, 217, 284, 336, 390
    - Lioness Program, 342
    - Marine Band, 17, 64, 389
    - Marine Corps Forces
      - Central Command, 291, 320
    - Marine Corps Recruiting Command, 117
    - Marine Corps Reserve, 95, 116, 134, 190, 305, 390
    - Marine Corps Security Force Battalion (Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, Atlantic), 299, 305
    - Marine Drum and Bugle Corps, 17
    - Marine Forces Special Operations Command, 141, 337, 356, 397
    - Marine Raiders, 141, 356
    - Shepherd Board, 186
    - Women's Reserve, 146, 190–91
  - U.S. Naval Academy, 113, 134

- 
- U.S. Navy
    - Asiatic Fleet, 59, 72
    - Gulf Coast Squadron, 42, 44
    - Mediterranean Squadron, 19, 35, 387
    - Navy Special Service Squadron, 121
    - Pacific Squadron, 42–43, 47
    - Potomac Flotilla, 54
    - Sixth Fleet, 189, 221, 276, 394
    - West India Squadron, 38–39
  - Valparaiso, Chile, 28
  - Vandegrift, Gen Alexander A., 150, 153, 186, 374, 381
  - vehicles, military
    - AAV7A1 amphibious assault vehicle, 314
    - landing craft, vehicle, personnel (LCVP) (Higgins Boat), 160–61, 203
    - landing vehicle, tracked (LVT), 160–61, 164, 204
    - M60A1 battle tank, 294
  - Vera Cruz, Mexico, 44, 82, 88–90, 94, 378–79, 390
  - Verdun, 103
  - Viet Cong, 224, 226–29, 231, 233–38, 241–42, 245–46, 255–56, 369, 395
  - Viet Minh, 223–24
  - Vietnam (Indochina), 216, 223–65, 268–69, 278, 281, 283, 285, 327, 339, 352, 357, 368–96, 383–84, 394–96, 403–4
  - Vietnamization, 249–52
  - Vietnam, South (Republic of Vietnam)
    - Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), 228, 231, 235–36, 253, 395
    - Popular Forces, 232
    - Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), 226, 228, 231, 235, 237, 245, 249, 252–54, 256
    - Vietnamese Marine Corps, 225, 252–54
    - Vietnam, North (Democratic Republic of Vietnam), 223, 234
    - People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), 224, 227, 235–39, 242–43, 245, 247, 252–54, 256–58
    - Vietnam War, 223–62
      - I Corps Tactical Zone, 206, 229, 231–32, 236, 243, 247
      - V Corps, 70, 312, 318, 320
      - X Corps, 201, 205–6
      - XXIV Corps, 179–81
      - Tet Offensive, 242–47
    - Wade, BGen Sidney S., 222
    - Waldron, 1stLt Nathaniel S., 38
    - Walker, Gen Walton H., 193, 197
    - Waller, BGen Littleton W. T., 74, 77, 79, 89, 94, 389
    - Wallingford, Lt Samuel, 9
    - Walls Jr., BGen George H., 300
    - Walt, MajGen Lewis W., 228
    - War Department, U.S., 12, 96, 106
    - War of 1812, 24–34, 36, 387, 400
    - “War Plan Orange,” 129
    - Warsaw Pact, 282
    - Washington, George, 7–9, 386
    - Westmoreland, Gen William C., 229, 231, 242–43, 247
    - Wharton, LtCol Franklin, 17, 31–32, 34, 373
    - Williams, Capt John, 23
    - Williams, Capt Lloyd, 98
    - Wilkes, Lt Charles, 39–40
    - Wilson, Gen Louis H., 256, 265–68, 374, 382, 396

---

Wilson, Woodrow, 88–89, 94, 96	Wyly, LtCol Michael D., 283
Wittnam, Capt Daniel J., 314, 316	
Wolmi-Do, South Korea, 203	XYZ Affair, 16
Wonsan, North Korea, 205–6	
World Trade Center, NYC, 304	Yalu River, 205–6, 208
World War I, 82, 84, 94–111, 113–15, 117, 366, 379, 390, 399, 401	Yudam-ni, North Korea, 206, 208, 210
World War II, 116–17, 124, 131, 133–34, 136–83, 185–202, 206, 218, 224, 250, 261, 293, 315, 367, 380–81, 391, 393, 402	Yugoslavia, 301
	Zeilin, BGen Jacob, 47, 62–63, 66, 373, 388