

United States Marine Corps  
**Professional Development Series**



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# **Marine History**

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Compiled by: Staff Sergeant Michael W. Landreville

# History of the United States Marine Corps

## **1775-1800**

- 10 November 1775 – Marine Corps Created by Congress
- 28 November 1775 – Captain Samuel Nicholas becomes first Commandant
- 3 March 1776 – First Amphibious Landing at New Providence the Bahamas
- 4 July 1776 – United States of America Declares Independence
- 19 October 1781 – U.S. Wins War for Independence
- 11 July 1798 – U.S. Marine Corps is Official Formed

On 10 November 1775, the Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia passed a resolution stating that "two Battalions of Marines be raised" for service as landing forces with the fleet. This resolution, sponsored by John Adams, established the Continental Marines and marked the birth date of the United States Marine Corps. Serving on land and at sea, these first Marines distinguished themselves in a number of important operations, including their first amphibious raid into the Bahamas in March 1776, under the command of Captain (later Major) Samuel Nicholas. Nicholas, the first commissioned officer in the Continental Marines, remained the senior Marine officer throughout the American Revolution and is considered to be the first Marine Commandant. The Treaty of Paris in April 1783 brought an end to the Revolutionary War. Following the Revolutionary War and the formal re-establishment of the Marine Corps on 11 July 1798, Marines saw action in the quasi-war with France (1798-1800), landed in Santo Domingo (1800).

## **1801-1850**

- 27 April 1805 – Lt Presley O'Bannon Leads attack against Derna Tripoli and presented the Mamaluk Sword by Pasha.
- 18 June 1812 – War of 1812 Begins Washington DC Burned
- 24 December 1814 – War of 1812 Ends
- 8 January 1815 – Marines Defeat British at New Orleans
- 17 October 1820 – Archibald Henderson appointed Commandant  
Holds position for 34 years, Grand Old Man of the Marine Corps
- 12 March 1824 – Story in McGuffey's Reader tells of Marine Fame
- 8 February 1836 – Captain Alvin Edson leads attack at Quallah Batto
- 23 June 1836 – Colonel Commanedant Henderson Leads 462 Marines in Battle in Second Seminole War, Florida
- 13 May 1846 – U.S. Declares war on Mexico
- 13 September 1847 – Battle of Chapultepec Hill, Halls of Montezuma

The Marine Corps took part in many operations against the Barbary pirates along the "Shores of Tripoli" (1801-1815). Marines participated in numerous naval operations during the War of 1812, as well as participating in the defense of Washington at Bladensburg, Maryland (1814) and fought alongside Andrew Jackson in the defeat of the British at New Orleans (1815). The decades following the War of 1812 saw the Marines protecting American interests around the world, in the Caribbean (1821-1822), at the Falkland Islands (1832), Sumatra (1831-32), and off the coast of West Africa (1820-61), and also close to home in the operations against the Seminole Indians in Florida (1836-42). During the Mexican War (1846-48), Marines seized enemy seaports on both the Gulf and Pacific coasts. While landing parties of Marines and sailors were seizing enemy ports along the coast, a battalion of Marines marched and fought all the way to the "Halls of Montezuma," Mexico City.

### **1851-1899**

- 14 July 1853 – Marines Land in Japan to force trade
- 20 November 1856 – Marines take forts in Canton, China
- 12 April 1861 – Civil War Begins
- 9 April 1865 – Civil War Ends
- 1 October 1880 – John Philip Sousa becomes 17<sup>th</sup> Marine Band Leader
- 15 February 1898 – 28 Marines Killed when USS Maine Blows up in Havana Harbor. Spanish-American War begins
- 10 June 1898 – Marines Capture Guantanamo Bay, Cuba from Spain
- 10 December – Spanish American War Ends.

Marines served ashore and afloat in the Civil War (1861-1865). Although most service was with the Navy, a battalion fought at Bull Run and other units saw action with the blockading squadrons and at Cape Hatteras, New Orleans, Charleston, and Fort Fisher. The last third of the 19th century saw Marines making numerous landings throughout the world, especially in the Orient and in the Caribbean area.

Following the Spanish-American War (1898), in which Marines performed with valor in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, the Corps entered an era of expansion and professional development. It saw active service in the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902)

## **1900-1940**

- 31 May 1900 – Boxer Rebellion Peking China Dan Daily win 1<sup>st</sup> Medal of Honor. Aids in Killing 8000 Boxers.
- 5 November 1903 - Major John LeJeune leads Marines in Panama to ensure independence from Columbia.
- 22 May 1912 – 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Alfred A. Cunningham Becomes first Marine Pilot
- 2 August 1914 – WWI Begins. Panama Canal Opens
- 6 April 1917 – US Enters WWI
- 6 June 1918 – Marine Fight in Belleau Wood, France “Devil Dogs”
- 10 November 1918 – 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Regiments Awarded Coix de Gaure
- 11 November 1918 – WWI Ends
- 7 December 1933 – Fleet Marine Forces Organized
- 1 September 1939 – WWII begins when Germany invades Poland
- 17 June 1940 – France surrenders to Germany

The Boxer Rebellion in China (1900), and “The Banana Wars” in numerous other nations, including Nicaragua (1899, 1909-10, 1912-13), Panama (1901, 1902, 1903-04), Dominican Republic (1903-1904), 1916-24), Cuba (1906-09, 1912, 1917), Mexico (1914), and Haiti (1915-34).

In World War I the Marine Corps distinguished itself on the battlefields of France as the 4th Marine Brigade earned the title of "Devil Dogs" for heroic action at Belleau Wood, Soissons, St. Mihiel, Blanc Mont, and in the final Meuse-Argonne offensive (1918). Marine aviation which dates from 1stLt Alfred A. Cunningham beginning aviation training in the summer of 1912, also played a part in the war effort, flying day bomber missions over France and Belgium. More than 30,000 Marines had served in France and more than a third were killed or wounded in six months of intense fighting. During the two decades before World War II, the Marine Corps began to develop in earnest the doctrine, equipment, and organization needed for amphibious warfare.

## **1941-1949**

- 7 December 1941 – Japan attacks Pearl Harbor
- 10 December 1941 – Guam falls
- 23 December 1941 – Wake falls
- 1 June 1941 – First Black Marine joins
- 7 August 1942- 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Lands on Guadalcanal
- 13 February 1943 – First Women Marine joins
- 21 June 1943 – Marine land on New Georgia
- 1 November 1943 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division Lands on Bougainville
- 20 November 1943 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division Lands on Tarawa
- 1 February 1944 – 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Lands in Marshall Islands
- 15 June 1944 – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions Land on Siapan
- 21 July 1944 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Division lands on Guam

- 15 September 1944 – 1<sup>st</sup> Division lands on Peleliu
- 19 February 1945 – 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions land on Iwo Jima
- 23 February 1945 – Flag Raised on Iwo Jima 25,851 Marine Casualties  
Over 67,000 Japanese Casualties
- 1 April 1945 - 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division lands on Okinawa
- 6 August 1945 – Hiroshima becomes first city to be Atom Bombed
- 9 August 1945 – Nagasaki becomes second city to be Atom Bombed
- 14 August 1945 – Japan Surrenders
- 30 August 1945 – 4<sup>th</sup> Marines First to land in Tokyo Bay
- 26 July 1947 – National Defense Act Signed
- 23 May 1948 – First use of Helicopters by Marines in New River

The success of this effort was proven first on Guadalcanal, then on Bougainville, Tarawa, New Britain, Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Saipan, Guam, Tinian, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. By the end of the war in 1945, the Marine Corps had grown to include six divisions, five air wings, and supporting troops. Its strength in World War II peaked at 485,113. The war had cost the Marines nearly 87,000 dead and wounded and 81 Marines had earned the Medal of Honor. While Marine units were taking part in the post-war occupation of Japan and North China, studies were being undertaken at Quantico, Virginia, which concentrated on attaining a "vertical envelopment" capability for the Corps through the use of helicopters.

### **1950-1979**

- 25 June 1950 – North Korea invades South Korea
- 2 August 1950 – 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade lands at Pusan
- 15 September 1950 – 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division lands at Inchon to retake Seoul
- 2 November 1950 – 500,000 Chinese Communist cross into Korea
- 28 November 1950 – 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division fights 8 Chinese and begins  
"Chosin Reservoir" breakout
- 27 July 1953 – Korean War Ends
- 20 October 1962 – Cuban Missile Crisis
- 2 November 1963 – South Vietnam Government Coup
- 27 October 1965 – Battle of Chu Lai
- 20 January 1968 – Battle of Khe Sanh
- 31 January 1968 – TET Offensive Begins – Battle of Hue City
- 25 June 1971 – Last Marine Ground Units Leave Vietnam
- 30 April 1975 – Last American to leave Viet Nam is Marine Embassy Det
- 4 November 1979 – Teheran, Iran Embassy falls. Hostages for 444 days
- 21 November 1979 – Seven Marines defend Embassy in Islamabad,  
Pakistan. Over 200 killed.

Landing at Inchon, Korea in September 1950, Marines proved that the doctrine of amphibious assault was still viable and necessary. After the recapture

of Seoul, the Marines advanced to the Chosin Reservoir only to see the Chinese Communists enter the war. After years of offensives, counter-offensives, seemingly endless trench warfare, and occupation duty, the last Marine ground troops were withdrawn in March 1955. More than 25,000 Marines had been killed or wounded during the Korean War.

In July 1958, a brigade-size force landed in Lebanon to restore order there. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, a large amphibious force was marshaled but not landed. In April 1965, a brigade of Marines landed in the Dominican Republic to protect Americans and evacuate those who wished to leave.

The landing of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade at Da Nang in 1965 marked the beginning of large-scale Marine involvement in Vietnam. By summer 1968, after the enemy's Tet Offensive, Marine Corps strength in Vietnam rose to a peak of approximately 85,000. The Marine withdrawal began in 1969 as the South Vietnamese began to assume a larger role in the fighting; the last ground forces were out of Vietnam by June 1971. The Vietnam War, longest in the history of the Marine Corps, exacted a high cost as well with over 13,000 Marines killed and more than 88,000 wounded. In July 1974 Marines aided in the evacuation of U.S. citizens and foreign nationals during the unrest of Cyprus. The following year saw Marines evacuating embassy staffs, American citizens, and refugees in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and Saigon, Republic of Vietnam. Later, in May 1975, Marines played an integral role in the rescue of the crew of the SS Mayaguez captured off the coast of Cambodia. The mid-1970s saw the Marine Corps assume an increasingly significant role in defending NATO's northern flank as amphibious units of the 2d Marine Division participated in exercises throughout northern Europe. The Marine Corps also played a key role in the development of the Rapid Deployment Force, a multi-service organization created to insure a flexible, timely military response around the world when needed. The Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) concept was developed to enhance this capability by prestaging equipment needed for combat in the vicinity of the designated area of operations, and reduce response time as Marines travel by air to linkup with MPS assets.

### **1980-2007**

- 23 June 1980 – Marines Land in Lebanon to Evacuate Civilians
- 18 April 1983 – Terrorist Blow up Embassy in Beirut
- 23 October 1983 – 220 Marines Killed in terrorist bombing of airport barracks
- 25 October 1883 – Granada Invaded to prevent communist take-over
- 20 December 1989 – Operation Just Cause Panama Invasion
- 2 August 1990 – Kuwait Invaded by Iraq
- 25 August 1990 – 7<sup>th</sup> MEB Lands in Jubylh Saudi Arabia
- 16 January 1991 – Desert Storm Begins
- 24 February 1991 – 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Divisions Begin Attack to liberate Kuwait

- 28 February 1991 – Desert Storm Ends.
- 14 April 1991 – Marines Protect Kurds in Northern Iraq
- 30 April 1991 – Marines help millions after Cyclone kill 125,000 in Bangladesh.
- 9 December 1992 – Marines land in Somalia
- 20 June 1993 – Marines Return to Mogadishu to regain peace
- 20 September 1994 - 1900 Marines land in Haiti to support new government
- 8 June 1995 – Marines Rescue USAF Pilot in Bosnia Herzegovina
- 30 May 1997 – Marines Evacuate 2500 from Zaire
- 7 August 1998 – US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania Destroyed 213 dead, 13<sup>th</sup> MEU sends in 500 Marines for support
- 1 March 1999 – Marines Aid Thousands in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch
- 24 March 1999 – Marines support NATO forces in Kosovo
- 22 November – 1999 Last Marine Unit Leaves Panama
- 5 August 2000 – 500 Marines Fight forest fires
- 12 October 2000 – USS Cole Attacked 21 Killed. FAST Team sent
- 11 September 2001 – World Trade Center Destroyed, Pentagon Damaged in worst attack on US in 60 Years
- 15 October 2001 – 26th MEU departs for Afghanistan to attack Taliban
- 11 November 2001 – Operation Enduring Freedom Begins
- 8 January 2002 – Marines from 13<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> MEU invade Afghanistan, Camp Rhino, Kandahar, Kubal
- 20 March 2003 – Operation Iraqi Freedom Begins
- April 2003 – Baghdad Falls
- 4 April 2004 – First Battle of Fallujah (Vigilant Resolve)
- 7 November 2004- Second Battle of Fallujah (Phantom Fury)
- 2005 – Present Marines Maintain Presence in Western Iraq and Al Anbar Province.

The 1980s brought an increasing number of terrorist attacks on U.S. embassies around the world. Marine Security Guards, under the direction of the State Department, continued to serve with distinction in the face of this challenge. In August 1982, Marine units landed at Beirut, Lebanon, as part of the multi-national peace-keeping force. For the next nineteen months these units faced the hazards of their mission with courage and professionalism. In October 1983, Marines took part in the highly successful, short-notice intervention in Grenada. As the decade of the 1980s came to a close, Marines were summoned to respond to instability in Central America. Operation Just Cause was launched in Panama in December 1989 to protect American lives and restore the democratic process in that nation. Less than a year later, in August 1990, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait set in motion events that would lead to the largest movement of Marine Corps forces since World War II. Between August 1990 and January 1991, some 24 infantry battalions, 40 squadrons, and more than 92,000

Marines deployed to the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Desert Shield. Operation Desert Storm was launched 16 January 1991, the day the air campaign began. The main attack came overland beginning 24 February when the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions breached the Iraqi defense lines and stormed into occupied Kuwait. Meanwhile, the threat from the sea in the form of two Marine Expeditionary Brigades held in check some 50,000 Iraqis along the Kuwait coast. By the morning of 28 February, 100 hours after the ground war began, almost the entire Iraqi Army in the Kuwaiti theater of operations had been encircled with 4,000 tanks destroyed and 42 divisions destroyed or rendered ineffective. Overshadowed by the events in the Persian Gulf during 1990-91, were a number of other significant Marine deployments demonstrating the Corps' flexible and rapid response. Included among these were non-combatant evacuation operations in Liberia and Somalia to rescue civilians and diplomats, and humanitarian lifesaving operations in Bangladesh, the Philippines, and northern Iraq. In December 1992, Marines landed in Somalia marking the beginning of a two-year humanitarian relief operation in that famine-stricken and strife-torn nation. In another part of the world, land and carrier-based Marine Corps fighter-attack squadrons and electronic warfare aircraft supported Operation Deny Flight in the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. During April 1994, Marines once again demonstrated their ability to protect American citizens in remote parts of the world when a Marine task force evacuated 142 U.S. citizens from Rwanda in response to civil unrest in that country. Closer to home, Marines went ashore in September 1994 at Cap Haitien, Haiti, as part of the U.S. force participating in the restoration of democracy in that country. During this same period Marines were actively engaged in providing assistance to the Nation's counter-drug effort, assisting in battling wild fires in the western United States, and aiding in flood and hurricane relief operations. Today's Marine Corps stands ready to continue in the proud tradition of those who so valiantly fought and died at Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, Chosin and Khe Sanh. As stated by the Corps' 31st Commandant, General Charles C. Krulak:

"Our warfighting legacy is one of duty, strength, sacrifice, discipline, and determination. These themes are cornerstones of the individual Marine and of our Corps. Indeed, they are woven into the very fabric of our battle color. However, while we reflect on our past, let us also rededicate ourselves to a future of improvement. For, as good as we are now, we must be better tomorrow. The challenges of today are the opportunities of the 21st century. Both will demand much of us all."

Combining a long and proud heritage of faithful service with the leadership and resolve to face tomorrow's challenges will keep the Marine Corps the "best of the best."

## **Marine Corps Casualties**

**KIA** - Killed in Action

**WIA** - Wounded in Action

<b>Conflict</b>	<b>KIA</b>	<b>WIA</b>
Revolutionary War	49	70
Quasi-War with France	6	11
Barbary Wars	4	10
War of 1812	46	33
Creek-Seminole Indian War	8	1
Mexican War	11	47
Civil War-Union	148	131
Spanish-American War	7	13
Samoa (1899)	0	2
Boxer Rebellion	9	17
Nicaragua (1912)	5	16
Mexico (1914)	5	13
Dominican Republic (1916-1920)	17	50
Haiti (1915-1934)	10	26
Nicaragua (1926-1933)	47	66
World War I	2,457	8,894
World War II	19,733	67,207
Korean War	4,267	23,744
Dominican Republic (1965)	9	25
Vietnam War	13,067	88,633
Lebanon (1982-1984)	240	151
Grenada (1983)	3	15
Persian Gulf (1988) (Oil Platforms)	2	0
Panama (1989)	2	3
Persian Gulf War (1990-1991)	24	92
Somalia (1992-1994)	2	15
Afghanistan (2001-200X)	89	647
Iraq (2003-2007 (FEB))	888	6765