**United States Marine Corps**

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*"USMC" redirects here. For other uses, see* [*United States Maritime Commission*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Maritime_Commission)*and* [*University of St. Michael's College*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_St._Michael%27s_College)*.*

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| **United States Marine Corps** |
| [United States Marine Corps portal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AUnited_States_Marine_Corps) |
| **Active** | November 10, 1775 - present |
| **Country** | [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) |
| **Branch** | [Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps) |
| **Type** | [Amphibious](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_warfare) |
| **Role** | [Naval Infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_%28military%29) |
| **Size** | 201,031 active (as of 2/28/2009) 40,000 reserve (as of 2009)  |
| **Part of** | [Department of Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense)[Department of the Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_the_Navy) |
| **Headquarters** | [Headquarters Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Headquarters_Marine_Corps) |
| **Nickname** | *The Few, The Proud* |
| **Motto** | [Semper Fidelis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semper_Fidelis#The_United_States_Marine_Corps) |
| **Colors** | [Scarlet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarlet_%28color%29) & [Gold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_%28color%29)          |
| **March** | [Semper Fidelis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semper_Fidelis#The_United_States_Marine_Corps) |
| **Engagements** | [Revolutionary War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_War)[Quasi-War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quasi-War)[Barbary Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbary_Wars)[War of 1812](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_1812)[Seminole Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seminole_Wars)[Mexican–American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican%E2%80%93American_War)[American Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War)[Spanish–American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish%E2%80%93American_War)[Philippine–American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine%E2%80%93American_War)[Boxer Rebellion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boxer_Rebellion)[The Banana Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Banana_Wars)[World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I)[World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II)[Korean War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War)[Vietnam War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War)[Gulf War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War)[Kosovo War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_War)[Operation Enduring Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Enduring_Freedom)[Operation Iraqi Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Iraqi_Freedom) |
| **Decorations** | [Presidential Unit Citation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Unit_Citation_%28United_States%29)[Joint Meritorious Unit Award](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Meritorious_Unit_Award)[Navy Unit Commendation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navy_Unit_Commendation)[Valorous Unit Award](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valorous_Unit_Award)[Meritorious Unit Commendation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meritorious_Unit_Commendation)[Croix de Guerre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croix_de_guerre_1914-1918_%28France%29)[Philippine Presidential Unit Citation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Unit_Citation_%28Philippines%29)[Korean Presidential Unit Citation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Unit_Citation)[Vietnam Gallantry Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_Gallantry_Cross)[Vietnam Civil Actions Medal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_Civil_Actions_Medal) |
| **Commanders** |
| [**Commandant**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commandant_of_the_Marine_Corps) | Gen [James T. Conway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_T._Conway) |
| [**A. Commandant**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assistant_Commandant_of_the_Marine_Corps) | Gen [James F. Amos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_F._Amos) |
| [**Sergeant Major**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant_Major_of_the_Marine_Corps) | SgtMaj [Carlton W. Kent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_W._Kent) |
| **Insignia** |
| [**Eagle, Globe, and Anchor**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle%2C_Globe%2C_and_Anchor) |  |
| **Aircraft flown** |
| [**Attack**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack_aircraft) | [AV-8B](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AV-8B_Harrier_II), [F/A-18D](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F/A-18_Hornet#C.2FD) |
| [**Electronicwarfare**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_warfare) | [EA-6B](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EA-6B_Prowler) |
| [**Fighter**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fighter_aircraft) | [F/A-18A/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F/A-18_Hornet#A.2FB)[C](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F/A-18_Hornet#C.2FD) |
| [**Helicopter**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helicopter) | [AH-1W](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AH-1_SuperCobra), [UH-1N](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UH-1N_Twin_Huey), [CH-46E](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-46_Sea_Knight), [CH-53D](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-53D_Sea_Stallion), [CH-53E](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-53E_Super_Stallion), [MV-22](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-22_Osprey) |
| [**Reconnaissance**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surveillance_aircraft) | [RQ-7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RQ-7_Shadow), [ScanEagle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ScanEagle) |
| [**Transport**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cargo_aircraft) | [KC-130J](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-130J_Super_Hercules) |

The **United States Marine Corps** (**USMC**) is a branch of the [United States Armed Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Armed_Forces) responsible for providing [force projection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_power_projection) from the sea, using the mobility of the [United States Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy) to rapidly deliver [combined-arms task forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Air-Ground_Task_Force). It is one of seven [uniformed services of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniformed_services_of_the_United_States). In the civilian leadership structure of the United States military, the Marine Corps is a component of the [Department of the Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_of_the_Navy), often working closely with [U.S. naval forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy_operating_forces_organization) for training, transportation and logistics purposes; however, in the military leadership structure the Marine Corps is a separate branch.

Captain [Samuel Nicholas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Nicholas) formed two battalions of [Continental Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Marines) on 10 November 1775 in [Philadelphia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia) as [naval infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_%28military%29). Since then, the mission of Marine Corps has evolved with changing military doctrine and [American foreign policy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_policy_of_the_United_States). The Marine Corps served in [every American armed conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_the_United_States) and attained prominence in the 20th century when its theories and practices of [amphibious warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_warfare_%28United_States%29) proved prescient and ultimately formed the cornerstone of the [Pacific campaign](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_War) of [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II). By the mid-20th century, the Marine Corps had become the dominant theorist and practitioner of amphibious warfare. Its ability to respond rapidly to regional crises gives it a strong role in the implementation and execution of American foreign policy.

The United States Marine Corps includes 203,557 (as of June 30, 2009) active duty Marines and just under 40,000 [reserve Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Forces_Reserve). It is the smallest of the United States' armed forces in the [Department of Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense) (the [United States Coast Guard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Coast_Guard) is smaller, about one-fifth the size of the Marine Corps, but is under the [Department of Homeland Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Homeland_Security)). The Marine Corps is nonetheless larger than the entire armed forces of many significant military powers; for example, it is larger than the active duty [Israel Defense Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces) or the whole of the [British Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Army).

The Marine Corps is highly cost-effective. The cost per Marine is $20,000 less than the cost of a serviceman from the other services, and the entire force can be used for both hybrid and major combat operations, that is, the Marines cover the entire [Three Block War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Block_War).

**Mission**

The United States Marine Corps serves as an amphibious force-in-readiness. As outlined in [10 U.S.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Title_10_of_the_United_States_Code) [§ 5063](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/10/5063.html) and as originally introduced under the [National Security Act of 1947](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Act_of_1947), it has three primary areas of responsibility:

* "The seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and other land operations to support [naval campaigns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_warfare);
* The development of tactics, technique, and equipment used by [amphibious landing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_warfare) forces; and
* Such other duties as the [President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) may direct."

This last clause, while seemingly redundant given the president's position as [Commander-in-chief](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commander-in-chief), is a codification of the [expeditionary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expeditionary_warfare) duties of the Marine Corps. It derives from similar language in the [Congressional](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress) acts *"For the Better Organization of the Marine Corps"* of 1834, and *"Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps"* of 1798. In 1951, the [House of Representatives'](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_House_of_Representatives) [Armed Services Committee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_House_Committee_on_Armed_Services) called the clause "one of the most important statutory — and traditional — functions of the Marine Corps." It noted that the corps has more often than not performed actions of a non-naval nature, including its famous actions in the [War of 1812](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_1812), at [Tripoli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Barbary_War), [Chapultepec](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chapultepec), numerous [counter-insurgency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-insurgency) and occupational duties (such as those in Central America), [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), and the [Korean War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War). While these actions are not accurately described as support of naval campaigns nor as amphibious warfare, their common thread is that they are of an expeditionary nature, using the mobility of the Navy to provide timely intervention in foreign affairs on behalf of American interests.

In addition to its primary duties, the Marine Corps has missions in direct support of the [White House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_House) and the [State Department](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_State). The [Marine Band](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Band), dubbed the "President's Own" by [Thomas Jefferson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Jefferson), provides music for state functions at the White House. Marines guard presidential retreats, including [Camp David](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_David), and the marines of the Executive Flight Detachment of [HMX-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMX-1) provide helicopter transport to the President and [Vice President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vice_President_of_the_United_States), using the call signs "[Marine One](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_One)" and "Marine Two" respectively. By authority of the 1946 Foreign Service Act, the [Marine security guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Security_Guard) of the Marine Embassy Security Command provide security for American [embassies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomatic_mission), [legations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legation), and [consulates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consul_%28representative%29) at more than 140 posts worldwide.

**Historical mission**

The Marine Corps was founded to serve as an infantry unit aboard naval vessels and was responsible for the security of the ship and her crew by conducting offensive and defensive combat during [boarding actions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boarding_%28attack%29) and defending the ship's officers from [mutiny](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutiny); to the latter end, their quarters on ship were often strategically positioned between the officers' quarters and the rest of the vessel. Continental Marines also manned raiding parties, both at sea and ashore. America's first amphibious assault landing occurred early in the [Revolutionary War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War) as the Marines gained control of a [British](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire) ammunition depot and naval port in [New Providence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Providence), [Bahamas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahamas). The role of the Marine Corps has since expanded significantly; as the importance of its original naval mission declined with changing naval warfare doctrine and the professionalization of the Naval service, the corps adapted by focusing on what were formerly secondary missions ashore. The Advanced Base Doctrine of the early 20th century codified their combat duties ashore, outlining the use of Marines in the seizure of bases and other duties on land to support naval campaigns.

Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Marine detachments served aboard Navy cruisers, battleships and carriers. Marine detachments (generally one platoon per cruiser, a company for battleships or carriers) served their traditional duties as ship's landing force, manning the ship's weapons and providing shipboard security. Marine detachments were also augmented by members of the ship's company for landing parties, especially in the Caribbean and Mexico campaigns of the early 20th centuries. Marines would also develop tactics and techniques of amphibious assault on defended coastlines in time for use in [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II). Throughout World War II, Marines continued to serve on capital ships. They often were assigned to man anti-aircraft batteries. When gun cruisers were retired by the 1960s, the remaining Marine detachments were only seen on battleships and carriers. Its original mission of providing shipboard security finally ended in the 1990s when nuclear weapons were withdrawn from active deployment and the battleships were retired.

**Capabilities**

Marines from the [13th Marine Expeditionary Unit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/13th_Marine_Expeditionary_Unit)

The Marine Corps fulfills a vital role in national security as an amphibious, expeditionary, air-ground combined arms task force, capable of forcible entry from the air, land and sea.

While the Marine Corps does not employ any unique combat arms, as a force it has the unique ability to rapidly deploy a combined-arms task force to almost anywhere in the world within days. The basic structure for all deployed units is a [Marine Air-Ground Task Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Air-Ground_Task_Force) (MAGTF) that integrates a [ground combat element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ground_combat_element), an [aviation combat element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aviation_combat_element) and a [logistics combat element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logistics_combat_element) combat component under a common [command element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Command_element_%28United_States_Marine_Corps%29). While the creation of joint commands under the [Goldwater-Nichols Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldwater-Nichols_Act) has improved inter-service coordination between each branch, the Corps' ability to permanently maintain integrated multi-element task forces under a single command provides a smoother implementation of combined-arms warfare principles.

The close integration of disparate Marine units stems from an organizational culture centered around the infantry. Every other Marine capability exists to support the infantry. Unlike some Western militaries, the corps remained conservative against theories proclaiming the ability of new weapons to win wars independently. For example, [Marine aviation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Aviation) has always been focused on [close air support](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Close_air_support) and has remained largely uninfluenced by air power theories proclaiming that [strategic bombing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_bombing) can single-handedly win wars.

This focus on the infantry is matched with the doctrine that "Every Marine is a rifleman", a focus of Commandant [Alfred M. Gray, Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_M._Gray%2C_Jr.), emphasizing the infantry combat abilities of every Marine. All enlisted Marines, regardless of military specialization, receive training as a [rifleman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifleman); all officers receive training as infantry platoon commanders. Marines have demonstrated the value of this culture many times throughout history. For example, at [Wake Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Wake_Island), when all of the Marine aircraft were shot down, pilots continued the fight as ground officers, leading supply clerks and cooks in a final defensive effort. As a result, a large degree of initiative and autonomy is expected of junior Marines, particularly the [NCOs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-commissioned_officer) ([corporals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporal) and [sergeants](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant)), as compared with many other military organizations. The Marine Corps emphasizes authority and responsibility downward to a greater degree than the other military services. Flexibility of execution is implemented via an emphasis on "commander's intent" as a guiding principle for carrying out orders; specifying the end state but leaving open the method of execution.

The amphibious assault techniques developed for World War II evolved, with the addition of [air assault](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_assault) and [maneuver warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maneuver_warfare) doctrine, into the current "*Operational Maneuver from the Sea*" doctrine of power projection from the seas. The Marines are credited with the development of helicopter insertion doctrine and were the earliest in the American military to widely adopt maneuver-warfare principles which emphasize low-level initiative and flexible execution.

The Marine Corps relies on the Navy for [sealift](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sealift) to provide its rapid deployment capabilities. In addition to basing a third of the [Marine Corps Operating Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Operating_Forces) in Japan, [Marine Expeditionary Units](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Expeditionary_Unit) (MEU) are typically stationed at sea. This allows the ability to function as first responders to international incidents. The [United States Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army) now maintains [light infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_infantry) units capable of rapid worldwide deployment, but those units do not match the combined-arms integration of a MAGTF and lack the logistics that the Navy provides. For this reason, the Marine Corps is often assigned to non-combat missions such as the evacuation of Americans from unstable countries and providing [humanitarian relief](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanitarian_aid) during natural disasters. In larger conflicts, Marines act as a stopgap, to get into and hold an area until larger units can be mobilized. The corps performed this role in [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) and the [Korean War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War), where Marines were the first significant combat units deployed from the United States and held the line until the country could mobilize for war. To aid rapid deployment, the [Maritime Pre-Positioning System](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Sealift_Command#Prepositioning_Program) was developed: fleets of [container ships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Container_ship) are positioned throughout the world with enough equipment and supplies for a [Marine Expeditionary Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Expeditionary_Force) to deploy for 30 days.

**Doctrine**

Two small manuals published during the 1930s would establish USMC doctrine in two areas. The [Small Wars Manual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_Wars_Manual) laid the framework for Marine [counter-insurgency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-insurgency) operations from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan while the [Tentative Landing Operations Manual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_warfare_%28United_States%29) established the doctrine for the amphibious operations of World War II.

**History**

Main article: [History of the United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps)

**Origins**

The United States Marine Corps traces its institutional roots to the [Continental Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Marines) of the [American Revolutionary War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War), formed at [Tun Tavern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tun_Tavern) in [Philadelphia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia), by a resolution of the [Second Continental Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Continental_Congress) on 10 November 1775, to raise 2 [battalions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battalion) of Marines. That date is regarded and celebrated as the date of the Marine Corps' "birthday". At the end of the American Revolution, both the [Continental Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Navy) and Continental Marines were disbanded in April 1783. Although individual Marines stayed on for the few American naval vessels left, the last Continental Marine was discharged in September 1783. The institution itself would not be resurrected until 1798. In that year, in preparation for the [Naval War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quasi-War) with [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_French_Republic), Congress created the United States Marine Corps. Marines had been enlisted by the War Department as early as August 1797 for service in the new build frigates authorized by Congress. The "Act to provide a Naval Armament" of March 18, 1794 authorizing them had specified the numbers of Marines to be recruited for each frigate.

The Marines' most famous action of this period occurred during the [First Barbary War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Barbary_War) (1801–1805) against the [Barbary pirates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbary_pirate), when [William Eaton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Eaton_%28soldier%29) and First Lieutenant [Presley O'Bannon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presley_O%27Bannon) led seven Marines and 300 [mercenaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercenary) in an effort to capture [Tripoli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripoli). Though they only reached [Derna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Derne), the action at Tripoli has been immortalized in the [Marines' hymn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marines%27_hymn) and the [Mameluke Sword](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mameluke_Sword) carried by Marine officers.

During the [War of 1812](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_1812), Marine naval detachments took part in the great [frigate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frigate) duels that characterized the war, which were the first American victories in the conflict. Their most significant contributions were delaying the British march to [Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington%2C_D.C.) at the [Battle of Bladensburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Bladensburg) and holding the center of Gen. [Andrew Jackson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson)'s defensive line at the [defense of New Orleans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_New_Orleans). By the end of the war, the Marines had acquired a well-deserved reputation as expert [marksmen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marksman), especially in ship-to-ship actions.

After the war, the Marine Corps fell into a depression that ended with the appointment of [Archibald Henderson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Henderson) as its fifth commandant in 1820. Under his tenure, the Corps took on expeditionary duties in the [Caribbean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caribbean), the [Gulf of Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Mexico), [Key West](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Key_West%2C_Florida), [West Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Africa), the [Falkland Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falkland_Islands), and [Sumatra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumatra). Commandant Henderson is credited with thwarting [President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) Jackson's attempts to combine and integrate the Marine Corps with the Army. Instead, [Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress) passed the *Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps* in 1834, stipulating that the Corps was part of the [Department of the Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_the_Navy) as a sister service to the Navy. This would be the first of many times that the existence of the Corps was challenged.

James Walker, [*Storming of Chapultepec* (1847)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chapultepec)

Commandant Henderson volunteered the Marines for service in the [Seminole Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seminole_Wars) of 1835, personally leading nearly half of the entire Corps (two battalions) to war. A decade later, in the [Mexican–American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican%E2%80%93American_War) (1846–1848), the Marines made their famed [assault on Chapultepec Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chapultepec) in Mexico City, which would be later celebrated by the phrase "From The Halls of Montezuma" in Marines' hymn. In the 1850s, the Marines would see further service in [Panama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama) and Asia, escorting [Matthew Perry's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Calbraith_Perry) [East India Squadron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_India_Squadron) on its historic trip to the Far East.

With their vast service in foreign engagements, the Marine Corps played a moderate role in the [Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War) (1861–1865); their most prominent task was [blockade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockade) duty. As more and more states [seceded](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordinance_of_Secession) from the [Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_%28American_Civil_War%29), about half of the Corps' officers also left the Union to join the [Confederacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_States_of_America) and form the [Confederate States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_States_Marine_Corps), which ultimately played little part in the war. The battalion of recruits formed for the [First Battle of Bull Run](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Battle_of_Bull_Run) (First Manassas) performed poorly, retreating with the rest of the Union forces.

Five Marines with fixed [bayonets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayonet), and their NCO with his sword at the [Washington Navy Yard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Navy_Yard), April 1864

**Interim: Civil War to World War I**

The remainder of the 19th century was marked by declining strength and introspection about the mission of the Marine Corps. The Navy's transition from [sail](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailing_ship) to [steam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steamboat) put into question the need for Marines on naval ships. Meanwhile, Marines served as a convenient resource for interventions and landings to protect American lives and interests overseas. The Corps was involved in over 28 separate interventions in the 30 years from the end of the American Civil War to the end of 19th century. They would also be called upon to stem political and labor unrest within the United States. Under Commandant [Jacob Zeilin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Zeilin)'s tenure, Marine customs and traditions took shape: the Corps adopted the [Marine Corps emblem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle%2C_Globe%2C_and_Anchor) on 19 November 1868. It was also during this time that "[The Marines' Hymn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marines%27_hymn)" was first heard. Around 1883, the Marines adopted their current motto "[*Semper Fidelis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semper_Fidelis)" ([English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language): *Always Faithful*).

[John Philip Sousa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Philip_Sousa), the musician and composer, enlisted as a Marine apprentice at the age of 13, serving from 1867 until 1872, and again from 1880 to 1892 as the leader of the [Marine Band](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Band).

During the [Spanish–American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish%E2%80%93American_War) (1898), Marines led American forces ashore in the [Philippines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippines), [Cuba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba), and [Puerto Rico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto_Rico), demonstrating their readiness for deployment. At [Guantánamo Bay, Cuba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guant%C3%A1namo_Bay), the Marines seized an [advanced naval base](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guantanamo_Bay_Naval_Base) that remains in use today. Between 1899 and 1916, the Corps continued its record of vigorous participation in foreign expeditions, including the [Philippine–American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine%E2%80%93American_War), the [Boxer Rebellion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boxer_Rebellion) in China (1899–1901), [Panama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama), the Cuban Pacifications, the [Perdicaris Incident](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ion_Perdicaris) in [Morocco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morocco), [Veracruz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veracruz), [Santo Domingo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santo_Domingo), and the [Banana Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banana_Wars) in [Haiti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_occupation_of_Haiti) and [Nicaragua](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_occupation_of_Nicaragua); the experiences gained in [counter-insurgency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-insurgency) and guerrilla operations during this period were consolidated into the [*Small Wars Manual*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_Wars_Manual).

**World War I**

Georges Scott, [*American Marines in Belleau Wood (1918)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Belleau_Wood)

During [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) veteran Marines served a central role in the late American entry into the conflict. Unlike the Army, the Marine Corps had a deep pool of officers and NCOs with battle experience, and experienced a smaller expansion. Here, the Marines fought their famed battle at [Belleau Wood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Belleau_Wood), creating the Marines' reputation in modern history. While its previous expeditionary experiences had not earned it much acclaim in the Western world, the Marines' fierceness and toughness in France earned them the respect of the Germans, who rated them of [stormtrooper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stormtrooper) quality. Though Marines and American media reported that Germans had nicknamed them *Teufel Hunden* as meaning "[Devil Dogs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil_Dog)," there is no evidence of this in German records (as *Teufelshunde* would be the proper German phrase), it was possibly American [propaganda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda). Nevertheless, the name stuck. The Corps had entered the war with 511 officers and 13,214 enlisted personnel, and by 11 November 1918 had reached a strength of 2,400 officers and 70,000 men.

Between the World Wars, the Marine Corps was headed by Commandant [John A. Lejeune](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_A._Lejeune), and under his leadership, the Corps presciently studied and developed amphibious techniques that would be of great use in World War II. Many officers, including Lt. Col. [Earl Hancock "Pete" Ellis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl_Hancock_Ellis), foresaw a war in the Pacific with [Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_Japan) and took preparations for such a conflict. Through 1941, as the prospect of war grew, the Corps pushed urgently for joint amphibious exercises and acquired amphibious equipment that would prove of great use in the upcoming conflict.

[USMC War Memorial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USMC_War_Memorial), modeled on Joe Rosenthal's famous [photograph of the flag raising at Iwo Jima](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raising_the_Flag_on_Iwo_Jima)

**World War II**

In [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), the Marines played a central role in the [Pacific War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_War). The battles of [Guadalcanal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Guadalcanal), [Bougainville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bougainville_Campaign), [Tarawa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tarawa), [Guam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Guam), [Tinian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tinian), [Saipan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Saipan), [Peleliu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Peleliu), [Iwo Jima](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Iwo_Jima), and [Okinawa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Okinawa) saw fierce fighting between Marines and the [Imperial Japanese Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Japanese_Army).

[Philip Johnston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Johnston_%28code_talker%29) proposed the use of [Navajo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navajo_language) as a [code language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_talker#Use_of_Navajo) to the Corps. The idea was accepted, and the Navajo code was formally developed and modeled on the [Joint Army/Navy Phonetic Alphabet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Army/Navy_Phonetic_Alphabet).

During the battle of Iwo Jima, photographer [Joe Rosenthal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe_Rosenthal) took the famous photograph [*Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raising_the_Flag_on_Iwo_Jima) of five Marines and one Navy [Corpsman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospital_Corpsman) raising the [American flag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_the_United_States) on [Mt. Suribachi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iwo_Jima). [Secretary of the Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Secretary_of_the_Navy) [James Forrestal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Forrestal), having come ashore earlier that day, said of the flag raising, "...the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years." The acts of the Marines during the war added to their already significant popular reputation. By war's end, the Corps expanded from two [brigades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigade) to six [divisions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Division_%28military%29), five [air wings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wing_%28air_force_unit%29), and supporting troops, totaling about 485,000 Marines. In addition, 20 [defense battalions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_defense_battalions) and a [parachute battalion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paramarines) were set raised. Nearly 87,000 Marines were casualties during World War II (including nearly 20,000 killed), and 82 were awarded the [Medal of Honor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medal_of_Honor).

Despite Secretary Forrestal's prediction, the Corps faced an immediate institutional crisis following the war due to the low budget. Army generals pushing for a strengthened and reorganized defense establishment also attempted to fold the Marine mission and assets into the Navy and Army. Drawing on hastily assembled Congressional support, the Marine Corps rebuffed such efforts to dismantle the Corps, resulting in statutory protection of the Marine Corps in the [National Security Act of 1947](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Act_of_1947). Shortly afterward, in 1952 the [Douglas-Mansfield Bill](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Douglas-Mansfield_Bill&action=edit&redlink=1) afforded the Commandant an equal voice with the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff) on matters relating to the Marines and established the structure of [three active divisions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_divisions) and [air wings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_aircraft_wings) that remain today.

**Korean War**

Marine lieutenant [Baldomero Lopez](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baldomero_Lopez) scaling the seawall at [Inchon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Inchon)

The [Korean War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War) (1950–1953) saw the hastily formed [Provisional Marine Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Provisional_Marine_Brigade) holding the defensive line at the [Pusan Perimeter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pusan_Perimeter). To execute a [flanking maneuver](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flanking_maneuver), General [Douglas MacArthur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_MacArthur) called on Marine air and ground forces to make an amphibious landing at [Inchon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Inchon). The successful landing resulted in the collapse of [North Korean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea) lines and the pursuit of North Korean forces north near the [Yalu River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yalu_River) until the entrance of the [People's Republic of China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Republic_of_China) into the war. Chinese troops surrounded, surprised and overwhelmed the overextended and outnumbered American forces. X Corps, which included the [1st Marine Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Marine_Division_%28United_States%29) and the Army's 7th Infantry Division, regrouped and inflicted heavy casualties during their fighting withdrawal to the coast, now known as the [Battle of Chosin Reservoir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chosin_Reservoir). Marines would continue a battle of attrition around the [38th Parallel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/38th_parallel_north) until the 1953 armistice. The Korean War saw the Corps expand from 75,000 regulars to a force of 261,000 Marines, mostly reservists. 30,544 Marines were killed or wounded during the war and 42 were awarded the Medal of Honor.

[Operation Hastings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Hastings): Marines on patrol near [Cam Lo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cam_Lo)

**Vietnam War**

The Marine Corps served an important role in the [Vietnam War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War) taking part in such battles as [Da Nang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Da_Nang), [Hue City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Hue), and [Khe Sanh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Khe_Sanh). Individuals from the USMC operated in the Northern I Corps Regions of [South Vietnam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Vietnam). While there, they were constantly engaged in a [guerrilla war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_warfare) against the [National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Front_for_the_Liberation_of_South_Vietnam) (NLF) and an intermittent conventional war against the [North Vietnamese Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_People%27s_Army) (NVA). Portions of the Corps were responsible for the less-known [Combined Action Program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined_Action_Program) (CAP) that implemented unconventional techniques for [counter-insurgency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-insurgency) and worked as military advisors to the [Republic of Vietnam Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Vietnam_Marine_Corps). Marines were withdrawn in 1971, and returned briefly in 1975 to evacuate [Saigon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ho_Chi_Minh_City) and attempt a rescue of the crew of the [Mayagüez](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayag%C3%BCez_incident).

Vietnam was the longest war for Marines; by its end, 13,091 had been killed in action, 51,392 had been wounded, and 57 Medals of Honor had been awarded. Due to policies concerning rotation, more Marines were deployed for service during Vietnam than World War II.

While recovering from Vietnam, the Corps hit a detrimental low point in its service history caused by [courts-martial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Court-martial) and Non-Judicial Punishments related partially to increased [Unauthorized Absences and Desertions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desertion) during the war. Overhauling of the Corps began in the late 1970s, discharging the most delinquent, and once quality of new recruits improved, the Corps focused on reforming the NCO Corps, a vital functioning part of its forces.

**Interim: Vietnam to the War on Terror**

After Vietnam, the Marines resumed their expeditionary role, participating in the 1980 Iran hostage rescue attempt [Operation Eagle Claw](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Eagle_Claw), the [invasion of Grenada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Grenada) (Operation Urgent Fury) and the [invasion of Panama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_invasion_of_Panama) (Operation Just Cause). On 23 October 1983, the Marine headquarters building in [Beirut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beirut), [Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon), was [bombed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1983_Beirut_barracks_bombing), causing the highest peacetime losses to the Corps in its history (220 Marines and 21 other service members of the [24th Marine Expeditionary Unit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24th_Marine_Expeditionary_Unit) were killed) and leading to the American withdrawal from the country. The year of 1990 saw Marines of the Joint Task Force Sharp Edge save thousands of lives by evacuating the British, French and American Nationals from the violence of the [Liberian Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Liberian_Civil_War). During the [Persian Gulf War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War) (1990–1991), Marine task forces formed the initial core for Operation Desert Shield, while United States and Coalition troops mobilized, and later liberated [Kuwait](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuwait) in Operation Desert Storm. Marines participated in combat operations in [Somalia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia) (1992–1995) during Operations [Restore Hope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Restore_Hope), Restore Hope II, and [United Shield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_United_Shield) to provide humanitarian relief.

**Global War on Terrorism**

Marines from [1st Battalion 7th Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Battalion_7th_Marines) enter a palace in [Baghdad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baghdad)

Following the [11 September 2001 attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/11_September_2001_attacks) President [George W. Bush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_W._Bush) announced the [War on Terrorism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Terrorism). The stated objective of the Global War on Terror is "the defeat of [Al-Qaeda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Qaeda), other [terrorist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism) groups and any nation that supports or harbors terrorists". Since then, the Marine Corps, alongside other military and federal agencies, has engaged in global operations around the world in support of that mission.

**Operation Enduring Freedom**

Marines and other American forces began staging in [Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan) and [Uzbekistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbekistan) on the border of [Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan) as early as October 2001 in preparation for [Operation Enduring Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Enduring_Freedom) The [15th](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th_Marine_Expeditionary_Unit) and [26th Marine Expeditionary Units](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/26th_Marine_Expeditionary_Unit) were the first conventional forces into Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in November 2001, and in December, the Marines seized [Kandahar International Airport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kandahar_International_Airport). Since then, Marine battalions and squadrons have been rotating through, engaging [Taliban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban) and [Al-Qaeda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Qaeda) forces.

In 2002, [Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined_Joint_Task_Force_-_Horn_of_Africa) (CJTF-HOA) was stood up at [Camp Lemonier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Lemonier) to provide regional security. Despite transferring overall command to the Navy in 2006, the Marines continued to operate in the [Horn of Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horn_of_Africa) into 2007.

**Operation Iraqi Freedom**

Main article: [Iraq War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq_War)

Most recently, the Marines have served prominently in the Iraq War. The [I Marine Expeditionary Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Marine_Expeditionary_Force), along with the Army's [3rd Infantry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_Infantry_Division_%28United_States%29), spearheaded the [2003 invasion of Iraq](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq). The Marines left Iraq in the summer of 2003, but returned for occupation duty in the winter of 2004. They were given responsibility for the [Anbar Province](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anbar_Province), the large desert region to the west of [Baghdad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baghdad). During this occupation, the Marines spearheaded both assaults on the city of [Fallujah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallujah) in April ([Operation Vigilant Resolve](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Battle_of_Fallujah)) and November 2004 ([Operation Phantom Fury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Fallujah)). Their time in Iraq has also courted controversy with the [Haditha incident](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haditha_incident) and the [Hamdania incident](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamdania_incident). They currently continue to operate throughout Iraq.

**Organization**

Main article: [Organization of the United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps)

The [Department of the Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_the_Navy), led by the [Secretary of the Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Secretary_of_the_Navy), oversees both the Marine Corps and the Navy. The most senior Marine officer is the [Commandant of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commandant_of_the_Marine_Corps), responsible for organizing, recruiting, training, and equipping the Marine Corps so that it is ready for operation under the command of the [Unified Combatant Commanders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unified_Combatant_Command). The Marine Corps is organized into four principal subdivisions: [Headquarters Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Headquarters_Marine_Corps) (HQMC), the Operating Forces, the Supporting Establishment, and the [Marine Forces Reserve](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Forces_Reserve) (MARFORRES or USMCR).

The Operating Forces are further subdivided into three categories: Marine Corps Forces (MARFOR) assigned to unified commands, [Marine Corps Security Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Security_Force_Regiment) guarding high-risk naval installations, and [Marine Corps Security Guard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Security_Guard) detachments at American embassies. Under the "Forces for Unified Commands" memo, Marine Corps Forces are assigned to each of the regional unified commands at the discretion of the [Secretary of Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Secretary_of_Defense) with the approval of the President. Since 1991, the Marine Corps has maintained component headquarters at each of the regional unified combatant commands. Marine Corps Forces are further divided into [Marine Forces Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Forces_Command) (MARFORCOM) and [Marine Forces Pacific](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Forces_Pacific) (MARFORPAC), each headed by a [Lieutenant General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lieutenant_General_%28United_States%29). MARFORCOM has operational control of the [II Marine Expeditionary Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/II_Marine_Expeditionary_Force); MARFORPAC has operational control of the [I Marine Expeditionary Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Marine_Expeditionary_Force) and [III Marine Expeditionary Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/III_Marine_Expeditionary_Force).

The Supporting Establishment includes [Marine Corps Combat Development Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Combat_Development_Command) (MCCDC), [Marine Corps Recruit Depots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Boot_Camp), [Marine Corps Logistics Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Logistics_Command), [Marine bases](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_installations) and [air stations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_installations#Marine_Corps_Air_Stations), Recruiting Command, and the [Marine Band](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Band).

**Relationship with other services**

In general, the Marine Corps shares many resources with the other branches of the [United States military](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_of_the_United_States). However, the Corps has consistently sought to maintain its own identity with regards to mission, funding, and assets, while utilizing the support available from the larger branches. While the Marine Corps has far fewer [installations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_installations) both in the US and worldwide than the other branches, most [Army posts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Army_installations), [Naval stations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Navy_installations), and

**United States Army**

The Marine Corps combat capabilities in some ways overlap those of the [United States Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army), the latter having historically viewed the Corps as encroaching on the Army's capabilities and competing for funding, missions, and renown. The attitude dates back to the founding of the [Continental Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Marines), when General [George Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington) refused to allow the initial Marine battalions to be drawn from among his [Continental Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Army). Most significantly, in the aftermath of World War II, Army efforts to restructure the American defense establishment included the dissolution of the Corps and the folding of its capabilities into the other services. Leading this movement were such prominent Army officers as General [Dwight D. Eisenhower](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_D._Eisenhower) and [Army Chief of Staff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_Chief_of_Staff) [George C. Marshall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_C._Marshall). While the rivalry is still present today, most Marines and soldiers adopt a more cooperative attitude when operating jointly. Doctrinally, Marines focus on being expeditionary and independent, while the Army tends more toward overwhelming force with a large support element. The emphasis on mobility and [combined arms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined_arms) makes the Marine Corps a much lighter force than the Army. The Marine Corps maintains a larger percentage of its personnel and assets in the combat arms ([infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infantry), [artillery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artillery), [armor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armoured_warfare), and [close air support](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Close_air_support)) than the Army. However, the Army maintains much larger and diverse [armor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armor), [artillery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artillery), ground transport, and logistics forces, while the Marines have a larger and more diverse aviation arm, which is usually organic to the MAGTF. Marines tend to have better cohesion as an expeditionary unit, as well as being completely [amphibious](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_warfare). The Army operates a great many different types of units, while the "Every Marine's a rifleman" creed shows the Marines' focus on standardized infantry units with the other arms in support roles. This commitment to standardized units can be seen in the short-lived experiment of the [Marine Raiders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Raiders), while the [75th Ranger Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/75th_Ranger_Regiment) has continued for the last four decades.

The Marines often utilize the Army for the acquisition of ground equipment (as well as benefiting from Army research and development resources), training resources, and other support concepts. The majority of [vehicles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_vehicles_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps) and [weapons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_weapons_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps) are shared with, modified, or inherited from Army programs.

Culturally, Marines and soldiers share most of the common US military slang and terminology, but the Corps utilizes a large number of [naval terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_nautical_terms) and traditions incompatible with the Army lifestyle, as well as their own [unique vernacular](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_acronyms_and_expressions). Many Marines regard their [culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps) to have a deeper warrior tradition, with the ethos that every Marine is a rifleman and emphasis on cross-training and combat readiness despite actual job, be it infantry or otherwise.

**United States Navy**

The [amphibious assault ship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_assault_ship) [USS Belleau Wood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Belleau_Wood_%28LHA-3%29)

The Marine Corps' sister service under the Department of the Navy is the [United States Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy). As a result, the Navy and Marine Corps have a close relationship, more so than with other branches of the military. Whitepapers and promotional literature have commonly used the phrase "Navy-Marine Corps Team", or to "the Naval Service". Both the [Chief of Naval Operations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_of_Naval_Operations) (CNO) and Commandant of the Marine Corps report directly to the Secretary of the Navy.

Cooperation between the two services begins with the training and instruction of Marines. The Corps receives a significant portion of its officers from the [United States Naval Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Naval_Academy) and [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_Reserve_Officer_Training_Corps) (NROTC). NROTC staff includes Marine instructors, while Marine [drill instructors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drill_instructor) contribute to training of officers in the [Navy's Officer Candidate School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Officer_Candidate_School_%28U.S._Navy%29). [Marine aviators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Aviation) are trained in the Naval Aviation training pipeline.

Training alongside each other is viewed as critical, as the Navy provides transport, logistical, and combat support to put Marine units into the fight, for example, the [Maritime Prepositioning ships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maritime_Prepositioning_ship) and [naval gunfire support](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_gunfire_support). Most Marine aviation assets ultimately derive from the Navy, with regards to acquisition and funding, and Navy [aircraft carriers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aircraft_carrier) typically deploy with a Marine squadron alongside Navy squadrons. Marines do not recruit or train noncombatants such as [chaplains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaplain) or medical/dental personnel; naval personnel fill these roles. Some of these sailors, particularly [Hospital Corpsmen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospital_Corpsman) and [Religious Programs Specialists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Programs_Specialist), generally wear Marine uniforms emblazoned with Navy insignia. Conversely, the Marine Corps is responsible for conducting land operations to support naval campaigns, including the seizure of naval and air bases. Both services operate a network security team in conjunction.

Marines and Sailors share many naval traditions, especially terminology and customs. Marine Corps [Medal of Honor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medal_of_Honor) recipients wear the Navy variant of this and other awards; and with few exceptions, the awards and badges of the Navy and Marine Corps are identical. The Navy's [Blue Angels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Angels) flight demonstration team is staffed by both Navy and Marine officers and enlisted men, and includes a Marine [C-130 Hercules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-130_Hercules) aircraft.

In 2007, the Marine Corps joined with the Navy and Coast Guard to adopt a new maritime strategy called [*A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Sea power*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Cooperative_Strategy_for_21st_Century_Seapower) that raises the notion of prevention of war to the same philosophical level as the conduct of war. This new strategy charts a course for the Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Corps to work collectively with each other and international partners to prevent regional crises, manmade or natural, from occurring or reacting quickly should one occur to avoid negative impacts to the United States.

**United States Air Force**

Marines unload [CH-46 helicopters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-46_Sea_Knight) from an Air Force [C-5 Galaxy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-5_Galaxy)

While the majority of Marine [aviation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Aviation) assets ultimately derive from the Navy, some support is drawn from the [United States Air Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Air_Force). The Marine Corps also makes extensive use of the [Air Mobility Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Mobility_Command) to [airlift](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airlift) Marines and equipment around the globe.

**Air-ground task forces**

Main article: [Marine Air-Ground Task Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Air-Ground_Task_Force)

Today, the basic framework for deployable Marine units is the [Marine Air-Ground Task Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Air-Ground_Task_Force) (MAGTF), a flexible structure of varying size. A MAGTF integrates a [ground combat element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ground_combat_element) (GCE), an [aviation combat element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aviation_combat_element) (ACE), and a [logistics combat element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logistics_combat_element) (LCE) under a common [command element](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Command_element_%28United_States_Marine_Corps%29) (CE), capable of operating independently or as part of a larger coalition. The MAGTF structure reflects a strong tradition in the Corps towards self-sufficiency and a commitment to [combined arms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined_arms), both essential assets to an [expeditionary force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expeditionary_force) often called upon to act independently in discrete, time-sensitive situations. The history of the Marine Corps as well has led to a wariness of overreliance on its sister services, and towards joint operations in general.

A MAGTF varies in size from the smallest, a [Marine Expeditionary Unit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Expeditionary_Unit) (MEU), based around a reinforced infantry [battalion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battalion) and a composite [squadron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squadron), up to the largest, a [Marine Expeditionary Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Expeditionary_Force) (MEF), which ties together a [Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Division_%28military%29), an [Air Wing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wing_%28air_force_unit%29), and a [Logistics Group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Logistics_Group) under a MEF Headquarters Group. The seven MEUs constantly rotate between themselves and their attached components to maintain a high state of readiness. Each MEU is rated as capable of performing [special operations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special_forces). The three MEFs contain the vast majority of Active duty deployable forces.

**Special warfare**

Main article: [United States Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Forces_Special_Operations_Command)

See also: [United States Marine Corps Special Operations Capable Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Special_Operations_Capable_Forces)

Although the notion of a Marine special forces contribution to the [United States Special Operations Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Special_Operations_Command) (USSOCOM) was considered as early as the founding of USSOCOM in the 1980s, it was resisted by the Marine Corps. Then-Commandant [Paul X. Kelley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_X._Kelley) expressed the popular belief that Marines should support Marines, and that the Corps should not fund a special warfare capability that would not support Marine operations. However, much of the resistance from within the Corps dissipated when Marine leaders watched the Corps' 15th and 26th MEU(SOC)s "sit on the sidelines" during the very early stages of [Operation Enduring Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Enduring_Freedom) while other special operations units actively engaged in operations in Afghanistan. After a three-year development period, the Corps agreed in 2006 to supply a 2,600-strong unit, Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), which would answer directly to USSOCOM.

**Personnel**

See also: [List of notable United States Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_notable_United_States_Marines) and [List of historically notable United States Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_historically_notable_United_States_Marines)

**Leadership**

[James T. Conway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_T._Conway),
[Commandant of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commandant_of_the_Marine_Corps)

[James F. Amos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_F._Amos),
[Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assistant_Commandant_of_the_Marine_Corps)

[Carlton W. Kent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_W._Kent),
[Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant_Major_of_the_Marine_Corps)

As stated above, the [Commandant of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commandant_of_the_Marine_Corps) is the highest-ranking officer of the Marine Corps; though he may not be the senior officer by time in [grade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pay_grade). He is both the symbolic and functional head of the Corps, and holds a position of very high esteem among Marines. The Commandant has the [U.S. Code Title 10](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Title_10_of_the_United_States_Code) responsibility to man, train, and equip the Marine Corps. He does not serve as a direct battlefield commander. The Commandant is a member of the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff), and reports to the [Secretary of the Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Secretary_of_the_Navy).

The [Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assistant_Commandant_of_the_Marine_Corps) acts as a deputy to the Commandant. The [Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant_Major_of_the_Marine_Corps) is the senior enlisted Marine, and acts as an advisor to the Commandant. [Headquarters Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Headquarters_Marine_Corps) comprises the rest of the Commandant's counsel and [staff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staff_%28military%29), with deputy commandants that oversee various aspects of the Corps assets and capabilities.

The current and 34th Commandant is General [James T. Conway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_T._Conway), who assumed the position on 13 November 2006. As of October 2007[[update]](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=United_States_Marine_Corps&action=edit), Marine General [James E. Cartwright](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_E._Cartwright) ([Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vice_Chairman_of_the_Joint_Chiefs_of_Staff)) is senior in terms of time in grade and billet to the commandant. The 31st and current Assistant Commandant is [James F. Amos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_F._Amos), while the 16th and current Sergeant Major is [Carlton W. Kent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_W._Kent).

**Rank structure**

Main article: [United States Marine Corps rank insignia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_rank_insignia)

As in the rest of the United States military, Marine Corps [ranks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_rank) fall into one of three categories: [commissioned officer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Officer_%28armed_forces%29), [warrant officer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29), and enlisted, in decreasing order of authority (excluding the Air Force, which does not currently appoint warrant officers). To standardize compensation, each rank is assigned a [pay grade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pay_grade).

**Commissioned Officers**

Commissioned Officers are distinguished from other officers by their [commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letters_patent), which is the formal written authority, issued in the name of the [President of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States), that confers the rank and authority of a Marine Officer. Commissioned officers carry the "special trust and confidence" of the President of the United States.

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| [**US DoD Pay Grade**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._uniformed_services_pay_grades#Officer_pay_grades) | **O-1** | **O-2** | **O-3** | **O-4** | **O-5** | **O-6** | **O-7** | **O-8** | **O-9** | **O-10** |
| Insignia |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Title | [Second Lieutenant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Lieutenant) | [First Lieutenant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Lieutenant) | [Captain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_%28United_States%29) | [Major](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_%28United_States%29) | [Lieutenant Colonel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lieutenant_Colonel_%28United_States%29) | [Colonel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonel_%28United_States%29) | [Brigadier General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigadier_General) | [Major General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_General) | [Lieutenant General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lieutenant_General_%28United_States%29) | [General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_%28United_States%29) |
| Abbreviation | 2ndLt | 1stLt | Capt | Maj | LtCol | Col | BGen | MajGen | LtGen | Gen |
| NATO Code | OF-1 | OF-2 | OF-3 | OF-4 | OF-5 | OF-6 | OF-7 | OF-8 | OF-9 |

**Warrant Officers**

See also: [Warrant Officer (United States)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29)

Warrant Officers are primarily former enlisted experts in a specific specialized field, and provide leadership generally only within that specialty.

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| [**US DoD Pay Grade**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._uniformed_services_pay_grades#Warrant_officer_pay_grades) | **W-1** | **W-2** | **W-3** | **W-4** | **W-5** |
| Insignia |  |  |  |  |  |
| Title | [Warrant Officer 1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29#Army) | [Chief Warrant Officer 2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29#Army) | [Chief Warrant Officer 3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29#Army) | [Chief Warrant Officer 4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29#Army) | [Chief Warrant Officer 5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29#Army) |
| Abbreviation | WO1 | CW2 | CW3 | CW4 | CW5 |
| NATO Code | WO-1 | WO-2 | WO-3 | WO-4 | WO-5 |

**Enlisted**

See also: [United States Marine Corps enlisted rank insignia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_enlisted_rank_insignia)

Enlisted Marines in the pay grades E-1 to E-3 make up the bulk of the Corps' ranks, usually referred to simply as "Marines" or "junior Marines". Although they do not technically hold leadership ranks, the Corps' ethos stresses leadership among all Marines, and junior Marines are often assigned responsibility normally reserved for superiors. Those in the pay grades of E-4 and E-5 are [non-commissioned officers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-commissioned_officer) (NCOs). They primarily supervise junior Marines and act as a vital link with the higher command structure, ensuring that orders are carried out correctly. Marines E-6 and higher are Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs), charged with supervising NCOs and acting as enlisted advisors to the command.

The E-8 and E-9 levels each have two ranks per pay grade, each with different responsibilities. The First Sergeant and Sergeant Major ranks are command-oriented, serving as the senior enlisted Marines in a unit, charged to assist the commanding officer in matters of discipline, administration and the morale and welfare of the unit. Master Sergeants and Master Gunnery Sergeants provide technical leadership as occupational specialists in their specific MOS.

The [Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant_Major_of_the_Marine_Corps) is a unique rank and billet conferred on the senior enlisted Marine of the entire Marine Corps, personally selected by the Commandant.

Different forms of address can be found at [United States Marine Corps rank insignia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_rank_insignia) and [List of United States Marine Corps acronyms and expressions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_acronyms_and_expressions).

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| [**US DoD Pay grade**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._uniformed_services_pay_grades#Enlisted_pay_grades) | **E-1** | **E-2** | **E-3** | **E-4** | **E-5** | **E-6** | **E-7** | **E-8** | **E-9** |
| Insignia | *No Insignia* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Title | [Private](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_%28rank%29#United_States) | [Private First Class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_First_Class#United_States) | [Lance Corporal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lance_Corporal#United_States) | [Corporal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporal#United_States_Marine_Corps) | [Sergeant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant#U.S._Marine_Corps) | [Staff Sergeant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staff_Sergeant#United_States) | [Gunnery Sergeant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunnery_Sergeant) | [Master Sergeant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_Sergeant#United_States) | [First Sergeant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Sergeant#United_States_Marine_Corps) | [Master Gunnery Sergeant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_Gunnery_Sergeant) | [Sergeant Major](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant_Major#United_States_Marine_Corps) | [Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeant_Major_of_the_Marine_Corps) |
| Abbreviation | Pvt | PFC | LCpl | Cpl | Sgt | SSgt | GySgt | MSgt | 1stSgt | MGySgt | SgtMaj | SgtMajMarCor |  |
| NATO Code | OR-1 | OR-2 | OR-3 | OR-4 | OR-5 | OR-6 | OR-7 | OR-8 | OR-9 |  |

**Military Occupational Specialty**

Main articles: [Military Occupational Specialty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Occupational_Specialty) and [List of United States Marine Corps MOS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_MOS)

The Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) is a system of job classification. Using a four digit code, it designates what field and specific occupation a Marine performs. Segregated between officer and enlisted, the MOS determines the staffing of a unit. Some MOSs change with rank to reflect supervisory positions, others are secondary and represent a temporary assignment outside of a Marine's normal duties or special skill.

A [Warrant Officer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warrant_Officer_%28United_States%29) observes recruits firing on a [rifle range](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_range).

**Initial training**

Main articles: [United States Marine Corps Recruit Training](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Recruit_Training) and [Officer Candidates School (United States Marine Corps)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Officer_Candidates_School_%28United_States_Marine_Corps%29)

Every year, over 2,000 new Marine officers are commissioned, and 38,000 recruits accepted and trained. All new Marines, enlisted or officer, are [recruited](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_recruitment) by the [Marine Corps Recruiting Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Recruiting_Command).

Commissioned officers are commissioned mainly through one of three sources: [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_Reserve_Officer_Training_Corps) (NROTC), [Officer Candidates School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Officer_Candidates_School_%28United_States_Marine_Corps%29) (OCS), or the [United States Naval Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Naval_Academy) (USNA). Following commissioning, all Marine commissioned officers, regardless of accession route or further training requirements, attend [The Basic School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Basic_School) (TBS) at [Marine Corps Base Quantico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Base_Quantico), [Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia). At TBS, second lieutenants, warrant officers, and selected foreign officers learn the art of [infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infantry) and [combined arms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined_arms) warfare. Along with the concept that *"Every Marine is a rifleman"*, every officer, regardless of his MOS/billet, is qualified to be an infantry platoon commander.

Enlisted Marines attend [recruit training](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Recruit_Training), known as [*boot camp*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boot_camp), at either [Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Recruit_Depot_San_Diego) or [Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Recruit_Depot_Parris_Island). Historically, the [Mississippi River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_River) served as the dividing line which delineated who would be trained where, while more recently, a [district system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Recruiting_Command#Structure) has ensured a more even distribution of male recruits between the two MCRD facilities. Females attend only the Parris Island depot as part of the segregated Fourth Recruit Training Battalion. All recruits must pass a fitness test to start training; those who fail receive individualized attention and training until the minimum standards are reached. Marine recruit training is the longest among the American military services; it is 13 weeks long, compared to the Army's 10 weeks.

Following recruit training, enlisted Marines then attend [School of Infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_School_of_Infantry) training at [Camp Geiger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Geiger) or [Camp Pendleton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Base_Camp_Pendleton). Infantry Marines begin their combat training, which varies in length, immediately with the Infantry Training Battalion (ITB). Marines in all other MOSs other than infantry train for 29 days in Marine Combat Training (MCT), learning common infantry skills, before continuing on to their MOS schools which vary in length.

**Uniforms**

Main article: [Uniforms of the United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniforms_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps)

left to right: Utility Uniform, Dress Uniform, Service Uniform, and Evening Dress uniforms

The Marine Corps has the most stable and most recognizable uniforms in the American military; the Blue Dress dates back to the early 19th century and the service uniform to the early 20th century. Marines' uniforms are also distinct in their simplicity; Marines do not wear [unit patches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoulder_Sleeve_Insignia_%28US_Army%29) or [United States flags](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_the_United_States) on any of their uniforms, nor name tags on their service and formal uniforms. Only a handful of skills (parachutist, air crew, explosive ordnance disposal, etc.) warrant [distinguishing badges](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Badges_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps), and rank insignia is not worn on uniform headgear (with the exception of an officer's garrison service cover). While other servicemembers commonly identify with a sub-group as much as or more than their service (ranger, submariner, aircrew, etc.), Marine uniforms do not reflect such division.

Marines have three main uniforms: Dress, Service, and Utility. The Marine Corps [Dress uniform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dress_uniform) is the most elaborate, worn for formal or ceremonial occasions. There are three different forms of the Dress uniform, the most common being the Blue Dress Uniform, also called "Dress Blues" or simply "Blues". It is most often seen in recruiting advertisements and is equivalent to [black tie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_tie). There is also a "Blue-White" Dress for summer, and [Evening Dress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mess_dress) for formal ([white tie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_tie)) occasions. Versions with a khaki shirt in lieu of the coat are worn as a daily working uniform by Marine recruiters.

The **Service Uniform** was once the prescribed daily work attire in garrison; however, it has been largely superseded in this role by the utility uniform. Consisting of olive green and khaki colors, it is commonly referred to as "Greens". It is roughly equivalent in function and composition to a [business suit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suit_%28clothing%29).

The **Utility Uniform**, currently the [Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Combat_Utility_Uniform), is a camouflage uniform intended for wear in the field or for dirty work in garrison, though it has now been standardized for regular duty. It is rendered in a distinctive [MARPAT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MARPAT) pixelated [camouflage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camouflage) (sometimes referred to as digitals or digies) that breaks up the wearer's shape, and also serves to distinguish Marine uniforms from those of other services. In garrison, the woodland uniform is worn sleeves down in winter, and the desert uniform is worn with sleeves rolled up in summer. The sleeves are rolled tightly to the biceps, exposing the lighter inside layer, and forming a neat cuff to present a crisper appearance to the otherwise formless uniform. In years past when Marines wore identical utilities to their Army and [Air Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Air_Force) counterparts, this served to distinguish them as the other services have a different practice for rolling sleeves. Marines consider the utilities a working uniform and do not permit their wear off-base, except in transit to and from their place of duty and in the event of an emergency. This, too, distinguishes them from other services, which have less stringent restrictions.

**Culture**

Main article: [Culture of the United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps)

As in any military organization, the official and unofficial traditions of the Marine Corps serve to reinforce camaraderie and set the service apart from others. The Corps' embrace of its rich culture and history is cited as a reason for its high *esprit de corps*.

A rendition of the emblem on the flag of the Marine Corps

**Official traditions and customs**

The [**Marines' Hymn**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marines%27_Hymn) dates back to the 19th century and is the oldest official song in the United States Armed Forces. The Marine motto [***Semper Fidelis***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semper_Fidelis) means *always faithful* in [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin), often appearing as *Semper Fi*; also the name of the official march of the Corps, composed by [John Phillip Sousa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Phillip_Sousa). The mottos *"Fortitudine"* (With Fortitude); *By Sea and by Land*, a translation of the [Royal Marines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Marines)' *Per Mare, Per Terram*; and *To the Shores of Tripoli* were used until 1868. The **Marine Corps emblem** is the [Eagle, Globe, and Anchor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle%2C_Globe%2C_and_Anchor), sometimes abbreviated "EGA", adopted in 1868. The **Marine Corps seal** includes the emblem, also is found on the [flag of the United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps), and establishes scarlet and gold as the official colors.

Two styles of **swords** are worn by Marines: the officers' [Mameluke Sword](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mameluke_Sword), similar to the Persian [shamshir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamshir) presented to Lt. [Presley O'Bannon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presley_O%27Bannon) after the [Battle of Derna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Derna), and the [Marine NCO sword](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Noncommissioned_Officers%27_Sword%2C_1859-Present). The [Marine Corps Birthday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_birthday_ball) is celebrated every year on the [10th of November](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/November_10) in a cake-cutting ceremony where the first slice of cake is given to the oldest Marine present, who in turn hands it off to the youngest Marine present. The celebration also includes a reading of Marine Corps Order 47, Commandant [Lejeune's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_A._Lejeune) Birthday Message. **Close Order Drill** is heavily emphasized early on in a Marine's initial training, incorporated into most formal events, and is used to teach discipline by instilling habits of precision and automatic response to orders, increase the confidence of junior officers and noncommissioned officers through the exercise of command and give Marines an opportunity to handle individual weapons.

An important part of the Marine Corps culture is the traditional seafaring [naval terminology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_nautical_terms) derived from its history with the Navy.

**Unofficial traditions and customs**

A recruiting poster makes use of the "Teufel Hunden" nickname.

Marines have several generic [nicknames](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nickname):

* [*Devil Dog*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil_Dog) is oft-disputed as well, but the tradition has expanded to include the [bulldog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulldog)'s association with the Corps, especially as a mascot.
* [*gyrene*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gyrene) has dropped out of popular use.
* [*jarhead*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jarhead) has several oft-disputed explanations.
* [*leatherneck*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leatherneck) refers to a leather collar formerly part of the Marine uniform during the Revolutionary War period.

Some other unofficial traditions include mottos and exclamations:

* [*Oorah*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oorah_%28Marines%29) is common among Marines, being similar in function and purpose to the Army's [hooah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hooah) and the Navy's [hooyah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hooyah) cries. Many possible [etymologies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology) have been offered for the term.
* *Semper Fi, Mac* was a common and preferred form of greeting in times past.
* *Improvise, Adapt and Overcome* has become an adopted mantra in many units.

**Veteran Marines**

The ethos that "*Once a Marine, Always a Marine*" has led to the objection to the use of the term "ex-Marine", leading to myriad forms of address for those no longer on active duty:

* "Marine", since the title is permanent, once earned.
* "Veteran Marine" or "Prior-service Marine" can refer to anyone who has been discharged from the Corps.
* "Retired Marine" refers to those who have completed 20 or more years of service and formally retired.
* "Former Marine" is considered acceptable among those who are honorably discharged from the United States Marine Corps.
* "Sir" or "Ma'am" is appropriate out of respect.
* According to one of the "Commandant's White letters" from Commandant [Alfred M. Gray, Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_M._Gray%2C_Jr.), referring to a Marine by their last earned rank is appropriate.
* Marines that have left service with a less than full honorable discharge might still be considered Marines (depending on the view of the individual), however that title is also in keeping with a stigma, and many will avoid the issue altogether by addressing the individual by name with no other title.

Marine performs a shoulder throw.

**Martial arts program**

Main article: [Marine Corps Martial Arts Program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Martial_Arts_Program)

In 2001, the Marine Corps initiated an internally-designed [martial arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martial_arts) program, called Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP). Due to an expectation that urban and police-type [peacekeeping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacekeeping) missions would become more common in the 21st century, placing Marines in even closer contact with unarmed civilians, MCMAP was implemented to provide Marines with a larger and more versatile set of less-than-lethal options for controlling hostile, but unarmed individuals. It is also a stated aim of the program to instill and maintain the "Warrior Ethos" within Marines. The Marine Corps Martial Arts program is an eclectic mix of different styles of martial arts melded together. MCMAP consists of [boxing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boxing) movements, [joint locking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_lock) techniques, opponent weight transfer ([Jujitsu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jujitsu)), ground grappling (mostly [wrestling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wrestling)), [bayonet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayonet), knife and [baton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Club_%28weapon%29) fighting, non-compliance joint manipulations, and airway and blood restriction [chokes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chokehold). Marines begin MCMAP training in boot camp, where they will earn the first of five available [belts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Martial_Arts_Program#Structure_.26_Belt_System).

**Equipment**

Main articles: [:Category:United States Marine Corps equipment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category%3AUnited_States_Marine_Corps_equipment) and [List of United States Marine Corps individual equipment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_individual_equipment)

Marine sniper using the [Designated Marksman Rifle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Designated_Marksman_Rifle) (DMR)

**Infantry weapons**

Main article: [List of weapons of the United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_weapons_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps)

The basic infantry weapon of the Marine Corps is the [M16 assault rifle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M16_rifle) family, with a majority of Marines being equipped with the M16A2 or M16A4 service rifles (the M16A2 is being phased out), or more recently the [M4 carbine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M4_carbine)—a compact variant. Suppressive fire is provided by the [M249 SAW](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M249_Squad_Automatic_Weapon) and [M240G](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M240_machine_gun) machine guns, at the squad and company levels respectively. In addition, indirect fire is provided by the [M203 grenade launcher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M203_grenade_launcher) in fireteams, [M224 60 mm mortar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M224_Mortar) in companies, and [M252 81 mm mortar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M252_Mortar) in battalions. The [M2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M2_Browning_machine_gun) and [MK19 automatic grenade launcher (40 mm)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mk_19_grenade_launcher) are available for use by dismounted infantry, though they are more commonly vehicle-mounted. Precision fire is provided by the [Designated Marksman Rifle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Designated_Marksman_Rifle) (DMR) and [M40A3 sniper rifle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M40_rifle).

The Marine Corps utilizes a variety of direct-fire rockets and missiles to provide infantry with an offensive and defensive anti-armor capability. The [SMAW](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoulder-Launched_Multipurpose_Assault_Weapon) and [AT4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AT4) are [unguided rockets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoulder-launched_missile_weapon) that can destroy armor and fixed defenses (e.g., bunkers) at ranges up to 500 meters. The [Predator SRAW](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FGM-172_SRAW), [FGM-148 *Javelin*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FGM-148_Javelin) and [BGM-71 TOW](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BGM-71_TOW) are [anti-tank guided missiles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-tank_guided_missile). The Javelin can utilize top-attack profiles to avoid heavy frontal armor. The Predator is a short-range [fire-and-forget](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire-and-forget) weapon; the Javelin and TOW are heavier missiles effective past 2,000 meters that give infantry an offensive capability against armor.

An [M1A1 Abrams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M1_Abrams) tank of the 13th MEU.

**Ground vehicles**

Main article: [List of vehicles of the United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_vehicles_of_the_United_States_Marine_Corps)

The Corps operates the same [High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Mobility_Multipurpose_Wheeled_Vehicle) (HMMWV) and [M1A1 Abrams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M1_Abrams) tank as does the Army. However, for its specific needs, the Corps uses a number of unique vehicles. The [LAV-25](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LAV-25) is a dedicated wheeled armored personnel carrier, similar to the Army's [Stryker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stryker) vehicle, used to provide strategic mobility. Amphibious capability is provided by the [AAV-7A1 Amphibious Assault Vehicle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_Assault_Vehicle), an armored tracked vehicle that doubles as an [armored personnel carrier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armored_personnel_carrier), due to be replaced by the [Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expeditionary_Fighting_Vehicle), a faster vehicle with superior armor and weaponry. The threat of [land mines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_mine) and [improvised explosive devices](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improvised_explosive_device) in Iraq and Afghanistan has also seen the Corps begin purchasing heavy armored vehicles that can better withstand the effects of these weapons as part of the [Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MRAP_%28armored_vehicle%29). The Marine Corps has ordered 1,960 MRAP vehicles, hoping to use them to [replace all HMMWVs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMMWV_replacement_process) on patrols in Iraq.

Prior to 2005, the Marines operated exclusively tube artillery—the [M198 155 mm howitzer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M198_howitzer), now being replaced by the [M777 155 mm howitzer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M777_howitzer). However, the Corps has expanded its artillery composition to include the [High Mobility Artillery rocket system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Mobility_Artillery_rocket_system) (HIMARS), a truck-mounted rocket artillery system. Both are capable of firing guided munitions.

**Aircraft**

[MV-22 Osprey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MV-22_Osprey)

Main article: [United States Marine Corps Aviation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Aviation)

The organic [aviation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Aviation) capability of the Marine Corps is essential to its mission. The Corps operates both [rotary-wing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helicopter) and [fixed-wing aircraft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-wing_aircraft) mainly to provide [assault support](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assault_support) and [close air support](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Close_air_support) to its ground forces. However, other aircraft types are also used in a variety of support and special-purpose roles.

The light-attack and light transport capabilities are provided by [AH-1W SuperCobras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AH-1_SuperCobra) and [UH-1N Hueys](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UH-1N_Twin_Huey), [slated to be replaced](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H-1_upgrade_program) by the [AH-1Z Viper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AH-1Z_Viper) and the [UH-1Y Venom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UH-1Y_Venom). Medium-lift squadrons flying the [CH-46E Sea Knight](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-46_Sea_Knight) and [CH-53D Sea Stallion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-53_Sea_Stallion) helicopters are in the process of converting to the [V-22 Osprey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-22_Osprey), a [tilt-rotor aircraft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilt-rotor_aircraft) with superior range and speed. Heavy-lift squadrons are equipped with the [CH-53E Super Stallion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-53E_Super_Stallion) helicopter, eventually to be replaced with the upgraded [CH-53K](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CH-53E_Super_Stallion#CH-53K).

Marine attack squadrons fly the [AV-8B Harrier II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AV-8_Harrier_II); while the fighter/attack mission is handled by the single-seat and dual-seat versions of the [F/A-18 Hornet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F/A-18_Hornet) strike-fighter aircraft. The AV-8B is a [V/STOL](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V/STOL) aircraft that can operate from [amphibious assault ships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphibious_assault_ship), land air bases and short, expeditionary airfields, while the F/A-18 can only be flown from land or aircraft carriers. Both are slated to be replaced by the STOVL B version of the [F-35 Lightning II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F-35_Lightning_II), beginning training operations in 2008.

In addition, the Corps operates its own organic [aerial refueling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerial_refueling) and [electronic warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_warfare) (EW) assets in the form of the [KC-130 Hercules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C-130_Hercules) and [EA-6B Prowler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EA-6B_Prowler). The Hercules doubles as a ground refueller and tactical-airlift transport aircraft. The Prowler is the only active tactical electronic warfare aircraft left in the United States inventory, and has been labeled a "national asset"; frequently borrowed along with Navy Prowlers and [EA-18G Growlers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EA-18G_Growler) to assist in any American combat action since the retirement of the US Air Force's own EW aircraft.

The Marines also operate [unmanned aerial vehicles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unmanned_aerial_vehicle): the [RQ-7 Shadow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RQ-7_Shadow) and [Scan Eagle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scan_Eagle) for tactical reconnaissance.

Marine Fighter Training Squadron 401 ([VMFT-401](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VMFT-401)), operates [F-5E, F-5F and F-5N Tiger II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northrop_F-5) aircraft in support of air combat adversary ([aggressor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissimilar_air_combat_training)) training. Marine Helicopter Squadron One ([HMX-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMX-1)) operates the [VH-3D Sea King](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H-3_Sea_King) and [VH-60N Nighthawk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikorsky_S-70) helicopters in the VIP transport role, most notably [Marine One](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_One), but are due to be replaced by the [VH-71 Kestrel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VH-71_Kestrel). A single Marine Corps C-130 Hercules aircraft "Fat Albert" is used to support the US Navy's flight demonstration team, the "[Blue Angels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Angels)".

**Marine bases and stations**

[AV-8B Harrier IIs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AV-8B_Harrier_II) from [VMA-231](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VMA-231) fly over [MCAS Cherry Point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Air_Station_Cherry_Point)

Main article: [List of United States Marine Corps installations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_Marine_Corps_installations)

The Marine Corps operates many major bases, 14 of which host operating forces, several support and training installations, as well as satellite facilities. Marine Corps bases are concentrated around the locations of the [Marine Expeditionary Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Expeditionary_Force), though [reserve units](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Forces_Reserve) are scattered throughout the United States. The principal bases are [Camp Pendleton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Base_Camp_Pendleton) on the West Coast, home to [I MEF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Marine_Expeditionary_Force); [Camp Lejeune](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Base_Camp_Lejeune) on the East Coast, home to [II MEF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/II_Marine_Expeditionary_Force); and [Camp Butler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Base_Camp_Smedley_D._Butler) in [Okinawa, Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okinawa_Prefecture), home to [III MEF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/III_Marine_Expeditionary_Force).

Other important bases include air stations, recruit depots, logistics bases, and training commands. [Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Air_Ground_Combat_Center_Twentynine_Palms) in [California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California) is the Marine Corps' largest base and home to the Corps' most complex, combined-arms, live-fire training. [Marine Corps Base Quantico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Base_Quantico) in [Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia) is home to [Marine Corps Combat Development Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Corps_Combat_Development_Command), and nicknamed the "Crossroads of the Marine Corps". Marines also operate [detachments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detachment) at many installations owned by other branches, to better share resources, such as specialty schools. Marines are also present at, and operate many, forward bases during expeditionary operations. Finally, Marines operate a presence in the [National Capital Region](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Capital_Region_%28United_States%29), with [Headquarters Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Headquarters_Marine_Corps) scattered amongst [the Pentagon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pentagon), [Henderson Hall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henderson_Hall_%28Arlington%2C_Virginia%29), [Washington Navy Yard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Navy_Yard), and [Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_Barracks%2C_Washington%2C_D.C.).

**See also**

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|  | [***Military of the United States portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AMilitary_of_the_United_States) |

* [Five paragraph order](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_paragraph_order)
* [General Orders for Sentries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Orders_for_Sentries)
* [Iron Mike](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Mike)
* [Marine (military)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_%28military%29)
* [United States Marine Corps Women's Reserve](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps_Women%27s_Reserve)