

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
FIELD MEDICAL TRAINING BATTALION
Camp Lejeune, NC 28542-0042

FMSO 101

Marine Corps History

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES.

1. Without the aid of references, describe common terms, sayings, and quotations used in the Marine Corps without omitting key components. (HSS-MCCS-2025)

1. Without the aid of references, identify significant events in Marine Corps history without omitting key components. (HSS-MCCS-2026)

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES.

1. Without the aid of reference and in writing, identify Marine Corps terminology within 80% accuracy, in accordance with the Marine Corps Common Skills Handbook. (HSS-MCCS-2025c)

2. Without the aid of reference and in writing, identify historical significance of different places in Marine Corps history within 80% accuracy, in accordance with the Marine Corps Common Skills Handbook. (HSS-MCCS-2026a)

3. Without the aid of reference and in writing, identify historically significant individuals in Marine Corps history within 80% accuracy, in accordance with the Marine Corps Common Skills Handbook. (HSS-MCCS-2026b)

4. Without the aid of reference and in writing, identify historically significant Battles in Marine Corps history within 80% accuracy, in accordance with the Marine Corps Common Skills Handbook. (HSS-MCCS-2026c)

5. Without the aid of reference and in writing, identify historical significance of Pathbreakers in Marine Corps history within 80% accuracy, in accordance with the Marine Corps Common Skills Handbook. (HSS-MCCS-2026d)

1. **MARINE CORPS TERMINOLOGY.**

The United States Marine Corps holds deep regard for its history, traditions, and honor. This history and tradition includes, and is to some extent defined by the heroic actions and sayings of past and present Marine Warriors. These actions and statements made by Marines or people observing Marines have become part of the Marine Corps Warrior Ethos. We use them to remember what Marines have done and how they have influenced our warrior culture in a very positive way. The terminology that Marines use depict a very specific time in our history that is drawn upon by young and old Marines alike; to instill pride in our service. Here are the terms that are used by every Marine:

a. **First to Fight.** Marines have been in the forefront of every American war since the founding of the Marine Corps. They entered the Revolution in 1775, just before the Declaration of Independence was signed. They have carried out more than 300 landings on foreign shores. They have served everywhere, from the poles to the tropics. Their record of readiness reflects pride, responsibility, and challenge.

b. **Leathernecks.** The nickname Leathernecks dates back to the leather stock, or neckpiece worn as part of the Marine uniform during the years 1775 to 1875. Back then, the leather bands around their throats ensured that Marines kept their heads erect. Descended from the stock, the standing collar is hallmark of the Marine blues, whites, and evening dress. Like its leather ancestor, the standing collar regulates stance and posture, proclaiming the wearer as a modern “leatherneck”.

c. **Devil Dogs.** The term was coined during the Battle of Belleau Wood in 1918 in which the Germans received a thorough indoctrination in the Marines’ fighting ability. Fighting through “impenetrable” woods and capturing “untakeable” terrain, their persistent attacks delivered with unbelievable courage soon had the Germans calling the Marines “Teufelhunden”, which are fierce fighting dogs of legendary origin. The term is belovedly translated “devil dogs”.

d. **Espirit de Corps.** The “spirit” of a unit is commonly reflected by all of its members. It implies devotion and loyalty to the Marine Corps, with deep regard for its history, traditions, and honor. It is the epitome of pride in the unit!

e. **Uncommon valor was a common virtue.** Refers to the victories in World War II, especially at Iwo Jima, the largest all-Marine battle in history. Admiral Nimitz spoke this not only to the Marines fighting on Iwo Jima, but to the entire Marine Corps’ contribution to the war stating, “Uncommon valor was a common virtue.”

f. **Semper Fidelis.** The Marine Corps Motto Semper Fidelis is Latin for Always Faithful.

2. **SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.** As we look back into the history of the Marine Corps we see that there are many places that Marines have gone fought. Like the Hymn says “we have fought in every clime and place, where we could take a gun.” These are some of the significant places that Marines hold as milestones in its history.

a. **Tun Tavern.** The Marine Corps was created on 10 November 1775 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at Tun Tavern by a resolution of the Continental Congress, which "raised two battalions of Marines." Captain Samuel Nicholas became the commander of these two battalions and is traditionally considered the first Commandant of the Marine Corps.

b. **Derna, Tripoli.** In 1805 Marines stormed the Barbary pirates' stronghold at Derna on the "Shores of Tripoli." Marines raised the "Stars and Stripes" for the first time in the Eastern Hemisphere.

c. **Belleau Wood.** Marines fought one of their greatest battles in history at Belleau Wood, France during World War I. Marines helped crush a German offensive at Belleau Wood which threatened Paris. In honor of the Marines who fought there, the French renamed the area "the Wood of the Brigade of Marines." German intelligence evaluated the Marines as "storm troops"—the highest rating on the enemy fighting scale. In reference to the Marine's ferocious fighting ability, German troops called their new enemy "Teufelhunden" or "Devildogs," a nickname in which Marines share pride in to this day.

d. **The Chosin Reservoir.** After pushing far into North Korea during November of 1950, Marines were cut off after the Chinese Communist Forces entered the war. Despite facing a 10-division force sent to annihilate them, Marines smashed seven enemy divisions in their march from the Chosin Reservoir. The major significance of this retrograde movement was that Marines brought out all operable equipment, properly evacuated their wounded and dead, and maintained tactical integrity.

e. **Kuwait.**

(1) 1990 - Following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces, Operation Desert Shield was launched. This joint military operation was designed to halt the advance of Iraqi forces and to position multinational forces assembled for possible offensive operations to expel the invading force. This operation validated the Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) concept and enacted the plan of tailoring units to accomplish a mission as part of a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF).

(2) 1991 - Operation Desert Storm was launched after the Iraqi government refused to comply with United Nations resolutions. Marine aviation was heavily used when the air phase commenced in January of 1991. When massive bombing failed to dislodge Iraqi forces, Marine ground forces swept into Kuwait and liberated the country, causing severe damage to the Iraqi military capability.

3. **HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINES.**

a. **Presley Neville O'Bannon.** First Lieutenant O'Bannon is remembered for heroism in the battle for the harbor fortress of Derna (Tripoli) in the Mediterranean. O'Bannon's Marines were

the first U.S. forces to hoist the flag over territory in the Old World. The "Mameluke" sword, carried by Marine officers today, was presented to O'Bannon in 1805.

b. **Archibald Henderson**. Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson became Commandant in 1820 and held his command for 39 years until his death in 1859. General Henderson led the Corps through the Indian Wars, the War with Mexico, the opening of China, and the disorders in Central America. The "Grand Old Man of the Marine Corps," as he is often called, introduced higher standards of personal appearance, training, discipline, and strived to have the Marine Corps known as a professional military force, capable of more than just sea and guard duties.

c. **Daniel Daly**. Sergeant Major Daly is recognized for earning two Medals of Honor: (1) Chinese Boxer Rebellion and (2) First Caco War in Haiti. When his unit had been pinned down and their attack was stalled during the Battle of Belleau Wood, then Gunnery Sergeant Daly yelled to his men, "Come on, you sons of a b-----, do you want to live forever?"

d. **Smedley D. Butler**. Major Butler is recognized for earning two Medals of Honor: (1) Veracruz and (2) First Caco War in Haiti. By the end of 1916, the Marine Corps was recognized as a national force in readiness and for leadership gained from continual combat and expeditionary experience.

e. **John A. Lejeune**. Major General Lejeune served as 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1920-1929. LeJeune was the first Marine officer ever to command an army division in combat in France during World War I (1918). 2nd Marine Division is now stationed aboard Camp LeJeune, N.C.

f. **Lewis B. ("CHESTY") Puller**. Lieutenant General Puller served in Nicaragua through several periods of political unrest and rebellious activity. Puller and a force of about 32 Marines became famous for their ability to engage rebel groups and bandits while scouring the jungles in a wide area of Nicaragua to the Honduran border. Puller became known as the "Tiger of the Mountains" (1930). The Marine Corps' mascot, an English bulldog named "Chesty," is named for this brave and fine Marine Corps officer. Puller is also the highest decorated Marine in history with 5 Navy Crosses.

g. **Ira H. Hayes**. The Fifth Amphibious Corps of Marines, commanded by Major General Harry Schmidt, was assigned to take Iwo Jima. Corporal Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian, was one of the Marines immortalized in the now famous photograph taken of the second flag raising incident on Mount Suribachi shortly after the Japanese stronghold was taken on 23 February 1945.

h. **Opha Mae Johnson**. Private Johnson became the Marine Corps' first enlisted woman on 13 August 1918. Her enlistment was a reflection of the dramatic changes in the status of women brought about by the entry of the United States into World War I. Marine Reserve (F) was the official title by which the Marine Corps' first enlisted women were known. They were better known as "skirt Marines" and "Marinettes."

i. **Jason Dunham**. Is the first Marine to be awarded the Medal of Honor (posthumously) since the Vietnam War. Cpl Dunham fought with 3rd Bn 7th Marines, while operating in the town of Karabilah, Iraq. While responding to his Battalion Commanders convoy that had been ambushed, Cpl Dunham's squad approached an SUV and found rifles and RPGs. When the driver attempted to run away Cpl Dunham fought him to the ground. At this point the insurgent dropped an armed grenade at his feet. Cpl Dunham called out the grenade and attempted to cover it with his helmet and body. Cpl Dunham died eight days later in Bethesda, Maryland. No other members of his squad was seriously injured that day.

j. **Dakota Meyer**. Sgt Meyer is the first living receipting of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War. While serving with Marine Embedded Training Team 2-8 in the Kunar Province, Afghanistan, Sgt Meyer was on patrol to engage in a local Shurah. While providing security, the main body came under intense direct and indirect fire from houses and fortified positions. Upon hearing that four U.S. team members were cut off, Sgt Meyer moved into the kill zone to locate them. While looking for the Marines, Sgt Meyer and his gun truck evacuated over two dozen Afghan Soldiers. During this evacuation Sgt Meyer received shrapnel wounds to his arm. After making five different trips into the kill zone during the six hour battle, Sgt Meyer and other Marines located the missing Marines and were able to remove them from the battle field.

4. **SIGNIFICANT BATTLES IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY**

a. **Battle of Chapultepec**. In 1847 during the Mexican War, Marines occupied the "Halls of Montezuma" during the Battle of Chapultepec in Mexico City. The royal palace fell to invading Marines, who were among the first United States troops to enter the capital. Today Marine NCOs wear a red stripe on their dress blue trousers known as the "blood stripe" in honor of the fighting that took place during the battle.

b. **The Battle of Wake Island**. In December 1941, following the air attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese struck Wake Island. Despite being heavily outnumbered, the Marines mounted a courageous defense before finally falling on 23 December. This small force of Marines caused an extraordinary number of Japanese casualties and damage to the invading force.

c. **Island-hopping campaign of WW II**

(1) **The Battle of Guadalcanal** – On 7 August 1942, the 1st Marine Division landed on the beaches of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and launched the first United States land offensive of World War II. This battle marked the first combat test of the new amphibious doctrine, and also provided a crucial turning point of the war in the Pacific by providing a base to launch further invasions of Japanese-held islands. Amphibious landings followed on the remaining Solomon Islands including New Georgia, Choiseul (feint), and Bougainville.

(2) **The Battle of Tarawa** - The Gilbert Islands were the first in the line of advance for the offensive in the Central Pacific. The prime objective was the Tarawa Atoll and Betio Island which had been fortified to the point that the Japanese commander proclaimed it would take a

million Americans 100 years to conquer. On 20 November 1943, Marines landed and secured the island within 76 hours, but paid a heavy price in doing so. Because of an extended reef, landing crafts could not reach land causing Marines to be offloaded hundreds of yards from the beaches. This led to heavy losses from enemy fire. Additionally, many Marines drowned while attempting to wade ashore.

(3) The Battle of the Mariana Islands - Due to the need for airfields by the Air Force and advanced bases for the Navy, the Marianas were invaded. Landings on the islands of Saipan, Guam, and Tinian accomplished this. During June and July of 1943, Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith led a combined invasion force of Marines and soldiers that totaled over 136,000. This was the greatest number of troops to operate in the field under Marine command to date.

(4) The Battle of Iwo Jima - On 19 February 1945, Marines landed on Iwo Jima in what was the largest all-Marine and bloodiest battle in Marine Corps history. The Marine Corps suffered over 23,300 casualties. The capture of Iwo Jima greatly increased the air support and bombing operations against the Japanese home islands. Of the savage battle, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz said, "Among the Americans who served on Iwo Jima Island, uncommon valor was a common virtue."

(5) The Battle of Okinawa - In April of 1945, Marines and Soldiers landed and secured the island of Okinawa. This marked the last large action of World War II. Due to the death of the Army commander, Major General Roy S. Geiger assumed command of the 10th Army.

d. **Significant Battles during Operation Iraqi Freedom**

(1) Battle of Nasiriyah - The city of Nasiriyah was home to key bridges needed to cross the Euphrates River for the advancement of Coalition Forces throughout Iraq. In March 2003 RCT-1 with elements from the United Kingdom assaulted and seized control of the bridges. Once gained, Coalition Forces started a neighborhood sweep clearing Ba'athist fighters from the area.

(2) Battle of Najaf - Najaf was a key target of Coalition Forces as it was the main hub of activity in the southern region of the country. Throughout the war Najaf was a heavily contested area that came under control after a three week period of intense fighting in August 2004. The fighting was centered around Wadi as-Salam Cemetery. The fighting ended when senior Iraqi cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani negotiated an end to the fighting, giving control to Coalition Forces and promising cooperation with security measures.

(3) 1st Battle for Fallujah - Occurred in the Spring of 2004 after a convoy protected by private security forces was hit and the contractors were killed, burnt and hung from the bridges in Fallujah. The initial assault was quick and fierce, successfully gaining a foothold in the city. During the fighting misinformation was publicized by the press about Marines purposefully killing civilians. Do to international pressure officials pulled Marines out of the city. All allegations of civilians being targeted were proven false.

(4) 2nd Battle for Fallujah - During the months following the 1st Battle for Fallujah the insurgency took a firm hold of the city and began to prepare for a head to head fight with Coalition Forces. Operation Phantom Fury started on November 8th, 2004. The fighting was the hardest since the Vietnam War. Intense house to house fighting went on for over a month and a half. December 23rd, 2004 the last of the fighters were killed in the city. Comparisons to the battle of Hue City and the Pacific Island Hopping Campaign have been drawn to the fighting in Fallujah.

(5) Battle of Ramadi - After the fall of Fallujah in 2004, the insurgency in Iraq moved to the city of Ar Ramadi. In 2006 Marines moved to push out all insurgency in the city. However, fighting was intense and frequent. Three months after the assault on Ramadi, insurgents killed a man called Abu Ali Jassim, a Sunni sheik that promoted Iraqis joining the police force. After the murder the insurgents hid the body in a field instead of returning it for a proper burial, violating Islamic law. Following this, 20 tribes from the Al Anbar province organized a movement called Anbar Awakening. The tribes soon turned against the insurgents and pushed them out of the suburbs of the city, giving them no place to hide and fight from effectively giving control to Coalition and local security forces.

e. Significant Battles of Operation Enduring Freedom. After Osama bin Laden had taken credit for the terrorist attacks against the United States on 9/11, America wanted to destroy his terrorist group. Since the group and Bin Laden were based in Afghanistan, America started an aerial and ground campaign to overthrow the Taliban controlled government and find Osama Bin Laden.

(1) Nawa - In July 2009, 1st Bn, 5th Marines occupied the district as part of Operation Strike of the Sword. The Helmand Province was considered to be one of the key centers of the Taliban movement. Over the next 2 years Marines partnered with Afghan Security Forces in order to hold elections in which no Taliban attacks occurred. Since then, the Nawa District became one of the first districts to be turned completely over to Afghan Security Forces.

(2) Marjah - In February 2010, Marines from 6th Marine Regiment and other Coalition Forces moved to occupy the District of Marjah. This was believed to be the last Taliban stronghold in the Helmand Province. The district was built by American contractors in the 1950s and Brig. Gen. Nicholson, commander of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, said "The United States built Marjah, We're going to come back and fix it."

(3) Sangin - A town in the northern area of Helmand Province, was taken over by elements of 1st and 3rd Bn, 7th Marines. After months of fighting and turning over the AO to 3rd Bn, 5th Marines, the town was cleared of Taliban fighters. Due to heavy numbers of casualties, Echo Co. 2nd Bn, 9th Marines and Echo Co. 2nd Bn, 8th Marines came to aid 3/5's operations.

5. **PATHBREAKERS IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY.**

a. **Montford Point Marines.** From 1942 to 1949, after President Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 8802 establishing the fair employment practice that began to erase discrimination in the Armed Forces. This Order created the opportunity for African Americans to be recruited into the Marine Corps. During the first 7 years these Marines were segregated from normal recruit training sites. They were sent to Montford Point (renamed to Camp Johnson) which is aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C. Approximately 20,000 Marines were trained during those years.

b. **Navajo Code Talkers.** Code Talkers were young Navajo men who transmitted secret communications on the battlefields of WWII. At a time when America's best cryptographers were falling short, these modest shepherders and farmers were able to fashion the most ingenious and successful code in military history. They drew upon their proud warrior tradition to brave the dense jungles of Guadalcanal and the exposed beachheads of Iwo Jima. Serving with distinction in every major engagement of the Pacific theater from 1942-1945, their unbreakable code played a pivotal role in saving countless lives and hastening the war's end.

c. **Women Marines.** In 1918, the Secretary of Navy allowed women to enroll for clerical duty in the Marine Corps. Officially, Opha Mae Johnson is credited as the first woman Marine. Johnson enrolled for service on August 13, 1918; during that year some 300 women first entered the Marine Corps to take over stateside clerical duties from battle-ready Marines who were needed overseas. The Marine Corps Women's Reserve was established in February 1943. June 12th, 1948, Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act and made women a permanent part of the regular Marine Corps.

REFERENCES:

Marine Corps Common Skill

Marine Corps History Review

1. Identify the significance of the Belleau Wood.
2. When and where was the Marine Corps founded?
3. Who is the “Grand Old Man of the Marine Corps”?
4. What was the significance of the battle of Nasiriyah?
5. Who was the the Marine Corps' first enlisted woman?
6. In which battle were Marines immortalized from the now famous photograph taken of the second flag raising incident on Mount Suribachi?