

# WHY A MARINE CORPS?

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# WHY



# A MARINE CORPS?

By Lt Col John A. Crown

THE YEAR 1958 IS A YEAR OF tremendous power. In the 19 years that have elapsed since Adolf Hitler touched off WWII, weapons development has progressed to a degree that would have defied the imagination of a military man in 1939. Scientific discoveries have placed such awesome destructive power in the hands of the major nations of the world that the entire human race could be brought to the brink of extinction in an all-out conflict.

In view of the spectacular power in the hands of the US, as well as

that in the possession of both her friends and her enemies, is there any requirement for a relatively small elite military organization such as the Marine Corps? As the range and destructive power of weapons have increased, so have the costs. Thus, the US is devoting astronomical sums to defense, and as a result is looking for every possible source of military economy. At this time the Marine Corps requires 2 per cent of the national budget, no small sum. Is there a real justification for it?

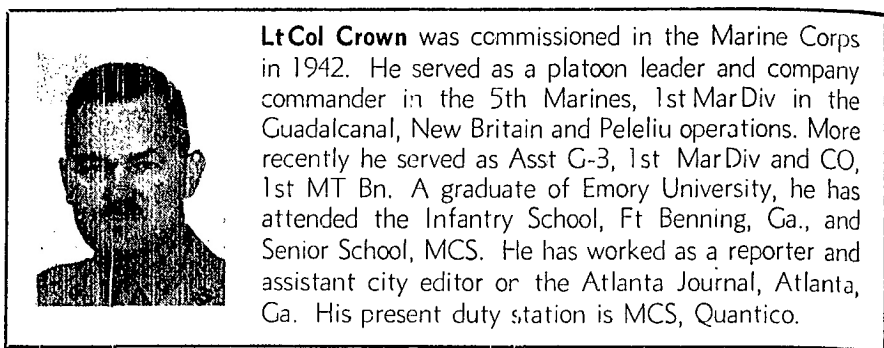


*J. A. Crown*

Sentiment and tradition may be very well, under certain circumstances, but when it comes to spending millions of tax dollars to maintain the Marine Corps, the justification for such expenditures must be based upon a great deal more than sentimental reasons or for the sake of tradition. The battleship, once the proud backbone of the Navy's battle fleets, has been relegated to mothballs despite her proud traditions. But the fact is, we *have* a Marine Corps and the questions thus appear to be: Why *do* we have one, and, is it justified?

In order to properly consider these questions, let us first look at the present.

Both the US and Soviet Russia have intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBM) and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). These weapons give vent to the ultimate in pushbutton warfare. Satellites bearing American and Russian markings encircle the globe, indicating that we are on the threshold of a space age. Men are rising to unexplored heights in the stratosphere by means of balloons and planes, in the quest of scientific data which can help them rise even higher. Dogs and mice are shot into space in order to test their reactions and apply them toward plans for shooting



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human beings into space. Both the US and Russia are endeavoring to either hit or circle the moon this year in order to add to the increasing amount of scientific data.

The US Air Force has its powerful Strategic Air Command (SAC), capable of delivering "massive retaliation" at any spot on earth. The Army, equipped with the latest weapons science can devise, provides a strong mobilization base such as would be required in the event of a long war. The Navy, already possessing the latest aircraft carriers, missile ships and nuclear-powered submarines which can range the world's oceans, is now constructing undersea craft capable of launching guided missiles with nuclear warheads (Polaris) from the depths of the sea. And to dramatically demonstrate its capabilities, only recently

the Navy sent 2 nuclear-powered submarines under the North Pole. All of this is certainly a formidable and costly array of power, but it is definitely necessary for the proper defense of the US.

In relation to the rest of the world, the US is, in effect, an island. Canada and Mexico, neither of them considered a potential enemy, may be reached by means of land transport. But for the remainder of the entire world the US is dependent upon sea transport, and based on a quantitative comparison, to a limited degree upon air transport. This is applicable, of course, to both commercial and defensive operations. Because of this relative isolation, as well as other historical factors, the US adhered strongly to the Monroe Doctrine until she was forced into WWII. True, from a national point of view, she broke briefly with the Doctrine upon her entry into WWI. But as soon as her military operations in Europe were ended the reaction set in and she hastily returned to her position of hemispheric isolation.

With the termination of WWII in 1945, however, the world had grown too small and the US had grown too large to limit herself to a primary interest in hemispheric affairs alone. The island power that is the US, reluctantly emerged as the acknowledged leader of the Free World, and in the 13 years that have elapsed since the end of WWII her world-wide responsibilities have grown tremendously. They encompass political, economic and military problems.

In the execution of this leadership the US is required to depend primarily upon sea transport, and to a lesser extent upon aviation. Because of our geographical location the sea can only be regarded as our



*Marines in Cuba—1898*

military highway, and amphibious warfare is an essential element of our arsenal. One qualification for leadership is to have the necessary striking force capable of carrying out assigned functions. And in today's world, time is a vital element. That striking force must be either already on the scene or capable of getting there on extremely short notice. Thus, what is required is a force trained in amphibious warfare and at the same time in a constant state of readiness to face any threat hurled at the US or any other portion of the Free World. It is a fair assumption that while an all-out war engulfing the entire world is possible, what is more probable within the foreseeable future is limited war. Every time a limited war arises, or the threat of a limited war is apparent, accelerated action is absolutely necessary in order to prevent its spreading to a general conflagration. And, at the same time, such action is necessary to prove conclusively that the US is both ready and capable of exerting its leadership. Thus, in the face of the demands of today there is a great need—greater than ever—for the things the Marine Corps has to offer.

But why Marines? What have they that others do not have? For this we must look—momentarily—into the past.

Beginning with the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and continuing through WWII (1941-1945), the US has engaged in 7 more or less major military conflicts. (By "major" is meant that the efforts of all military services were required, as well as the recruitment of volunteers.) In addition to the 2 already identified, there is the War of 1812 (1812-1815), the Mexican War (1846-1848), the Civil War (1861-1865), the Spanish-American War (1898) and WWI (1917-1918). Thus, since the founding of the Republic through WWII, our major war efforts have accounted for 24 years out of the 170 years covered here.

Yet, in this same period of time, the Marines have participated in combat operations, a show of military force or emergency combat alerts beyond the borders of the US, during 124 of these years. In other



*Marines in Haiti—1932*

words, between 1775 and 1945 there were only 46 years in which the Marines were not actively engaged in military operations in the furtherance of our national interests. It is worth noting that the Marines were engaged in military operations during 100 of these years while the US was ostensibly at peace.

The major wars of the past have conclusively proven that when called upon, the Marines have not been, and will not be, found wanting. But the principal function of the Marines is not, and never has been, that of a combat force designed *only* for large wars. Although functioning as an elite group in such wars, the Marines are designed as an effective mobile force, operating with the Navy, always combat ready for any requirements that may arise. In fact, over the years the world-wide mobility enjoyed by the Marines has given them a certain distinction. The Marines, alone of all our Armed Forces, can be landed for warlike purposes without their actions being accounted acts of war. Through long experience and the affinity built through such a mutual bond, the Navy-Marine Corps team is unique. The capability to project

an effective amphibious force ashore anywhere in the world is a mighty weapon in the arsenal of the US. And there is ample evidence that this fact is recognized by the American people. It is the people, through their elected representatives, who have striven—often in the face of strong opposition—to preserve and nourish the Marines vigor and readiness to fight.

Amphibious operations of various scope had been undertaken with varying success throughout the world ever since the first crude boat was developed. But when the 1915 British amphibious attempt at Gallipoli ended in dismal failure, it sounded the death knell for the ship-to-shore assault—or so a great many people thought. Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, conceived the Gallipoli operation as a threat to the Central Powers' southern flank, to ease pressure on Russia, and quite possibly to open the door to an early end of the war. (The possibilities of altered history *IF* this operation had been successful—no Russian Revolution, no entry of the US into the war—stagger the imagination.) But planning and preparation for the landing were

lacking and when the operation ended, the bulk of world-wide professional military opinion was that the amphibious assault could not prevail against modern firepower.

Although the Marines had participated in WWI in a non-amphibious capacity, they did not share this gloomy view. Based on their own experience, Marine leaders knew that the doctrine of amphibious warfare must be nurtured and developed if the US was to maintain its position as a major naval power. In the 20 years that followed the end of WWI, the Marines alone—and in the face of indifference, and even hostility—worked unceasingly on the doctrine of amphibious warfare. WWII justified the sweat and effort which had been expended in this undertaking.

No less an authority than the Army's Fort Leavenworth supports this view. A recent Fort Leavenworth text says in part:

"The British effort at Gallipoli during WWI had a profound effect on amphibious warfare. The lack of success of this operation convinced many that the opposed amphibious assault was no longer possible. As a result, amphibious warfare was placed on the shelf. In the US, little or nothing was done toward developing tactics and techniques for this type of warfare except by the Marine Corps.

"Then came WWII. The US and her Allies were *forced* to engage in amphibious warfare in order to de-

feat Italy, Germany and Japan. There was no other way by which decisive force could be applied against the Axis. As mentioned earlier, the Marine Corps had spent the years between the two world wars studying amphibious operations and developing techniques which would be feasible under then current conditions. Using the Marine Corps experience as a foundation, the Allies refined the techniques, developed doctrines and perfected equipment to the extent that the landings such as Normandy, Southern France, Leyte and Okinawa were possible."

It would appear that the Marine Corps' position on amphibious warfare would now be secure, but this was not the case. Some military leaders were so overawed by the potency of nuclear weapons that they regarded them as the ultimate weapon, and gave short shrift to other forms of combat. Amphibious warfare, having been a major factor in the Allied victory of WWII, was now placed on the shelf again—or at least an effort was made in that direction.

Testifying before a Congressional committee, Gen Omar Bradley wrote off amphibious warfare as a thing of the past. Appearing before the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee on 19 October 1949, Gen Bradley said in part: ". . . I also believe that after the initial phases are over there will be little need for any campaign similar

to the Pacific 'island hopping' that took place during the last war. I also predict that large scale amphibious operations will never occur again."

Less than a year after this prediction was made, the 1st MarDiv landed at Inchon, and thereby altered the course of the fighting in Korea. And although this was the only combat landing during the Korean hostilities, the presence there of the 1st MarDiv with its well-known amphibious capability, caused the enemy to tie up thousands of his troops in coastal defense.

It has been illustrated that the Marine Corps has functioned in the past as a force in readiness and as an amphibious force participating in operations beyond the immediate borders of the continental US. In order to be properly effective it has had to be a force-in-being. Training in amphibious warfare has had to be constant throughout all echelons. The Fleet Marine Force has had to be capable of embarking—if not already embarked—in terms of hours rather than days and weeks. This has been the measure of the Marine Corps in the past, and it continues to be in the present.

Perhaps Gen Bradley's prediction would be closer to reality if the next conflict were to be one of unlimited effort between the two strongest powers on the planet, and both nations had huge stockpiles of ICBMs. But in assuming what the next conflict—if and when—will be like, we must study the characteris-



*Marines in Nicaragua—1926*



**Marines in Korea — 1951**

tics of our potential enemy. Essentially, is he the type who would prefer to bring on an all-out holocaust, or would he prefer to stir up trouble, foment discontent and riots, and possibly set off small or limited wars in other lands?

Inasmuch as world domination is the aim of the enemy, there is little doubt that he would have no qualms about touching off an all-out war if there were little chance that he would be injured. But as long as the US possesses its present strength, the chances of an attacker getting off lightly is remote. Therefore, it appears that his current aim is to attempt to keep the West off balance by creating dissension, hatred and trouble in every conceivable spot on earth.

The communist view toward peace and war is aptly described by Harold H. Fisher in his Hoover Institute Study (Stanford University Press, 1955), "The Communist Revolution."

"The Communists have never thought of 'peaceful coexistence' as a condition of harmony and good feeling without tension or conflict. The history of human society, according to them, is the history of the class struggle, which is, so to say, automatic. So long as there are classes they will struggle against each other. Science and technology

have made the class struggle international and world-wide. This struggle takes many forms—illegal and legal, violent and non-violent—and it may be expressed in various ways—power politics, economic warfare, psychological warfare, guerrilla war, civil war, and total war. Peaceful coexistence to the communist means only that for an indefinite length of time, but not forever, the communist camp and the capitalist camp can coexist *without engaging in to-*

*tal war but not without those other forms of struggle that are endemic in human society. . .*" (italics mine).

The US in its position as a major world power, and as the acknowledged leader of the Free World, has world-wide political, economic and military commitments. Total war could engulf the entire world and the US would of necessity throw into its efforts all possible weapons. She would utilize SAC and its "massive retaliation." In all probability ICBMs and IRBMs would be launched to the maximum extent possible. Polaris-armed submarines would wreak havoc and destruction on the enemy. A fully mobilized Army would engage its opponents. And the Marine Corps, as it has done in every major war in the past, would fulfill its assigned missions. That is recognized in the event of total war.

But what of the other possible means of action which the communists may utilize during a period of "peaceful coexistence"? In the day-to-day struggle between the Communist World and the Free World, in all the myriad forms the struggle may take, the world-wide commitments of the US are affected. But in any action short of total war the massive power of SAC, Polaris, ICBMs, and a fully mobilized Army constitutes passive (deterrent strength, if you will) rather than active military strength. Thus, with



**Marines in Lebanon — 1958**

our national and international responsibilities, we must have a force that is both mobile and strong which can be ever ready to move into a dangerous spot—or by its recognized ability to move into such a spot, to preclude the danger arising.

It is currently fashionable to use the relatively new term, "limited war," when referring to one of these danger spots. But what we now call "limited war" is not at all new to the Marine Corps. It has been the Marine Corps which, based on the better part of two centuries of experience, early recognized the nature of the military problem posed by the Soviet post-WWII conquest of nations. Only recently has open recognition been accorded to the long held views of the Marine Corps, i.e., what is now called "limited war." Generations of Marines have participated in "small wars" and the "Small Wars Manual" was the handbook of the Marine not so long ago. Only the ability of the present-day Marine to move quickly to the danger spot has changed, the change being one of marked improvement.

When the Suez crisis broke in 1956, the US had a ready answer. Marines were embarked in ships of the Atlantic Fleet and sent to sea, prepared to fight if it became necessary. Another Marine unit, already based in the Mediterranean, was rushed to Alexandria, Egypt, where it set up a center for evacuating Americans in the area. On the other side of the world, the 3d MarDiv was prepared to move some of its forces

into the Persian Gulf if that became necessary.

At Port Lyautey, Morocco, in late 1956, trouble between the French and Moroccans posed a question of safety for the US base there. Within hours, elements of the 2d MarDiv and 2d Marine Aircraft Wing were moving across the Atlantic and assembled on the ground there, ready to fight should the need arise.

When President Eisenhower answered the plea of Lebanon's President, and decided to land troops to protect that government from external subversion, it was elements of the 2d MarDiv which moved in without delay. Inasmuch as the landing was requested by the legally constituted government, it was unopposed, but it carried with it a deep significance. It clearly showed that the US would honor her world-wide commitments and, furthermore, she has the ready strength to do so.

Writing about the Marine landings in Lebanon, a national news magazine (25 July 1958) made this observation: "Neil H. McElroy, US Defense Secretary, noted that, in the latest military operations of the US, the weapons involved were not newfangled atomic weapons, but old-fashioned rifles and machine guns in the hands of ground troops."

The recent instances cited above have not been the only alerts and/or military operations involving Marines. In the past 18 months Marine air and ground forces have executed over 45 short notice embarkations in ships of the Fleet. Most

have been for training, but a great many have been even more pertinent.

Having reviewed the past, considered the present and conjectured on the future, we should reach the following conclusions:

1) Application of measures short of general war have been employed by the Navy-Marine Corps team for the better part of two centuries.

2) The capability to apply varying degrees of military force, short of general war, is a greater requirement now than ever before; and it appears to be the long term requirement if the holocaust of general war is to be avoided, and the international contest to be won.

3) The Marines, with the Navy, have this capability—acquired over many years of intimate association.

4) And, therefore, "Why A Marine Corps?" is aptly and accurately answered by the practical statement—"Because the United States has never needed a Marine Corps so much!"

Today, as it has for the past 183 years, the Navy-Marine Corps team has a role to fill. A mobile, amphibious force, a force comprising ships, troops and integrated aviation to support the surface and land operations, is essential to the US in the fulfillment of her world-wide leadership and the responsibilities that go with it. Obviously, any professional military group could be trained to fill this role, but why should this be necessary when the force already exists? USMC



### *Stars in Your Eyes*

☛ THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT'S AIR OF CONFIDENCE belied his pink cheeks and generally youthful appearance. Peremptorily, he ordered the blonde behind the counter to show him the entire stock of General's rank insignia. After some rather cutting observations on the range and quality offered, he selected a set of BGen's stars and ordered them wrapped. He had not revealed that they were for his father, recently selected for BGen.

Clutching his purchase, the young man strode away. The buxom blonde had her last word. In a voice that carried clearly through the PX she broke up his composure with, "Happy dreams, sonny!"

Col A. M. Fraser

### *"Just One of Those Days"*

☛ IT WAS ONE OF "THOSE" Monday mornings with a half dozen men up to "see the Man" for various minor offenses. The culprits were waiting their turns in the hall outside the Skipper's office. One man had just been marched out and another marched in and stood at attention before the harried Commanding Officer who proceeded to read off the misdeeds listed before him, dress down the young Marine and finally pausing for breath, said, "Well, what do you have to say for yourself?"

"S-S-Sir," stammered the flustered Marine, "I-I-I didn't do anything, I was just standing in the hallway talking to a buddy and the SgtMaj called us to attention, pointed at me, said, 'you're next,' and marched me in."

SgtMaj A. R. Graham