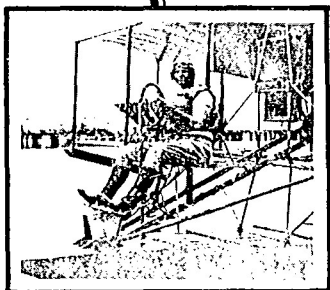


A Message From The Commandant of the Marine Corps



On 22 May 1912, First Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham reported to the Naval Aviation Camp at Annapolis, Maryland, where he was to become the Marine Corps' first Naval Aviator. Lieutenant Cunningham's assignment was the beginning of a partnership between Marines and Naval Aviation, and between air and ground components of the Marine Corps that has flourished over the past seventy years.

Marine pilots flew with the Northern Bombing Group in support of the French during World War I. During the decades between the World Wars, Marines in the air perfected the art of supporting Marines on the ground in places like Santo Domingo, Haiti, and Nicaragua. By the end of World War II, Marine Corps aviation had grown to five air wings and Marine aviators had distinguished themselves in combat against enemy forces from Wake Island, Midway and the Coral Sea, to Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

The Korean conflict brought new challenges and new innovations to Marine Corps aviation. Marine pilots fought MIGs over the Yalu and, for the first time in history, put ground forces into the attack by helicopter. By the time the first Marine Corps helicopters touched down in Vietnam in 1962, Marine aviators had had nearly fifty years of experience in supporting Marines on the ground. The Marine air/ground team was prepared to meet the demands of the conflict in Southeast Asia, just as it had been in earlier years.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of Marine Corps aviation, we again face the challenges of an uncertain future. That partnership, which has developed over the past seventy years, of Marines on the ground, supported by Marines in the air, again stands ready to serve.

R.H. Barrow
General, U.S. Marine Corps