

10 NOVEMBER 2018



As we celebrate our 243rd birthday, Marines remain in combat, forward-deployed throughout the world confronting every challenge with courage, loyalty, and faithfulness. Each year on this day, we renew our resolve to be the most ready when the Nation is least ready; we pay tribute to all who forged our proud legacy; we recommit ourselves to defending freedom anytime and anywhere; we stand ready to aid those devastated by natural disasters; and we honor the families and loved ones who faithfully stand beside us.

This year marks a number of significant milestones. One hundred years ago this June, a determined brigade of Marines fought ferociously over the hallowed grounds of Belleau Wood. Those Marines solidified our Corps' global reputation for being a tenacious and highly-skilled fighting force that forever etched the phrase "Teufelshunde" into our lexicon. The same year Marines secured control of Belleau Wood, more than 300 women answered our Nation's call, becoming the first females to enlist in our Corps. The legacy of the first Women Marine Reservists, and all trailblazing Marines, serves as a reminder that the title Marine is not restricted by gender, color, or creed—it is a warrior spirit and distinguished role earned by an elite group.

This year also marks 50 years since Marines fought ferocious battles against a worthy foe in some of the most austere locations of Vietnam. The indomitable spirit and unyielding resourcefulness of Marines cutting through the mountainous triple canopy jungles and overcoming the challenges of urban combat during the Tet Offensive honed the warfighting prowess of our Corps. Hard lessons learned at Khe Sanh and Hue proved crucial to our successes during Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*—allowing us to secure victory in the fields of Sangin and on the urban battlefields of Fallujah. It was also at Hue that now retired Sergeant Major John Canley charged enemy machine gun positions and put his own life on the line to ensure no Marine was left behind, epitomizing the true meaning of *Semper Fidelis*. Today, we proudly honor his faithfulness with our Nation's highest award for valor.

For 243 years, Marines have fought and won whenever and wherever the Nation calls. In the harshest conditions, over the most brutal terrain, and against the most formidable enemies, Marines defend the ideals of freedom with grit and tenacity. Though battlefields change and capabilities evolve, history proves that true victory comes from the individual Marine with steeled resolve, the drive to overcome any obstacle, and the warrior spirit to fight on against all odds. It takes that steadfast faithfulness—*Semper Fidelis*—to Corps, country, and each other that abounds throughout our storied legacy.

Happy Birthday, Marines!

Robert B. Neller
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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