

OPENING MOVES: MARINES GEAR UP FOR WAR

MARINES IN
WORLD WAR II
COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

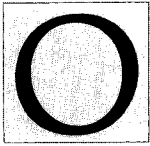
BY HENRY I. SHAW, JR.





The Eve of War

by Henry I. Shaw, Jr.



On 1 September 1939, German armored columns and attack aircraft crossed the

Polish border on a broad front and World War II began. Within days, most of Europe was deeply involved in the conflict as nations took sides for and against Germany and its leader, Adolph Hitler, according to their history, alliances, and self-interest. Soviet Russia, a natural enemy of Germany's eastward expansion, became a wary partner in Poland's quick defeat and subsequent partition in order to maintain a buffer zone against the German advance. Inevitably, however, after German successes in the west and the fall of France, Holland, and Belgium, in 1940, Hitler attacked Russia, in 1941.

In the United States, a week after the fighting in Poland started, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a limited national emergency, a move which, among other measures, authorized the recall to active duty of retired Armed Forces regulars. Even before this declaration, in keeping with the temper of the times, the President also stated that the country would remain neutral in the new European war. During the next two years, however, the United States increasingly shifted from a stance of public neutrality to one of preparation for possible war and quite open support of the beleaguered nations allied against Germany.

America could not concentrate its attention on Europe alone in those eventful years, for another potential

enemy dominated the Far East. In September 1940, Japan became the third member, with Germany and Italy, of the Axis powers. Japan had pursued its own program of expansion in China and elsewhere in the 1930s which directly challenged America's interests. Here too, in the Pacific arena, the neutral United States was moving toward actions, political and economic, that could lead to a clash with Japan.

In this hectic world atmosphere, America began to build its military strength. Shortly before Germany attacked Poland, at mid-year 1939, the number of active duty servicemen stood at 333,473: 188,839 in the Army, 125,202 in the Navy, and 19,432 in the Marine Corps. A year later, the overall strength was 458,365 and the number of Marines was 28,345. By early summer of 1941, the Army had 1,801,101 soldiers on active duty, many of them National Guardsmen and Reservists, but most of them men enlisted after Congress authorized a peacetime draft. The Navy, also augmented by the recall of Reservists, had 269,023 men on its active rolls. There were 54,359 Marines serving on 1 July 1941, all the Reservists available and a steadily increasing number of volunteers. Neither the Navy nor the Marine Corps had need for the draft to fill their ranks.

The Marine Corps that grew in strength during 1939-41 was a Service oriented toward amphibious operations and expeditionary duty. It also had a strong commitment to the Navy beyond its amphibious/expeditionary role as it provided Marine detachments to guard naval bases and on board capital



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 308342
MajGen John A. Lejeune, 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, led the Corps in the 1920s, steadfastly emphasizing the expeditionary role of Marines.

ships throughout the world. Marine aviation squadrons—all Marine pilots were naval aviators and many were carrier qualified—reinforced the Navy's air arm.

Two decades of air and ground campaigns in the Caribbean and Central America, the era of the "banana wars," had ended in 1934 when the last Marines withdrew from Nicaragua, having policed the election of a new government. With their departure, enough men became available to have meaningful fleet landing exercises (FLEXs) which tested doctrine, troops, and equipment in partnership with the Navy. And the doctrine tested was both new and important.

Throughout the 1920s, when Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune led the Corps, the doughty World War I commander of, briefly, the renowned 4th Marine Brigade, and then its parent 2d Infantry Division, had steadfastly emphasized the expeditionary role of Marines. Speaking to the students and faculty of the Naval War College in 1923, Lejeune said: "The maintenance, equipping, and training of its expeditionary force so it will be in instant readiness to support the Fleet in the event of War, I deem to be the most important Marine Corps

Department of Defense Photo (USN) 58920
U.S. Marines go ashore from Navy motor-sailers in the prewar era before the advent of Andrew Higgins' landing craft.





Marine Corps Historical Collection

Marines bring ashore a disassembled 75mm pack howitzer. The pack howitzer replaced the French 75, which had served Marine artillery from World War I.

duty in time of peace." But the demands of that same expeditionary duty, with Marines deployed in the Caribbean, in Central America, in the Philippines, and in China stretched the Corps thin.

Existing doctrine for amphibious operations, both in assault and defense, the focal point of wartime service by Marines, was recognized

MajGen Wendell C. Neville, 14th Commandant of the Marine Corps, died after serving little more than a year in office. Neville shared Lejeune's determination that the Marine Corps have a meaningful role as an amphibious force trained for expeditionary use by the Navy.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 303062



as inadequate. All sorts of deficiencies existed, in amphibious purpose, in shipping, in landing craft, in the areas of air and naval gunfire support, and particularly in the methodology and logistics of the highly complicated ship-to-shore movement of troops and their supplies once ashore. The men who succeeded Lejeune as Major General Commandant upon his retirement after two terms in office (eight years) at the Corps' helm, Wendell C. "Buck" Neville, also a wartime commander of the 4th Marine Brigade, Ben M. Fuller, who commanded a brigade in Santo Domingo during the war, and John H. Russell, Jr., a brigade commander in Haiti who then became America's High Commissioner in that country for eight years, all shared Lejeune's determination that the Marine Corps would have a meaningful role as an amphibious force trained for expeditionary use by the Navy. Each man left his own mark upon the Corps in an era of reduced appropriations and manpower as a result of the Depression that plagued the United States during their tenure.

Neville, who had been awarded the Medal of Honor for his part in the fighting at Vera Cruz in 1914, un-

fortunately died after serving little more than a year (1929-1930) as Commandant, but his successors, Fuller (1930-1934) and Russell (1934-1936), both served to age 64, then the mandatory retirement age for senior officers. All of these Commandants, as Lejeune, were graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and had served two years as naval cadets on board warships after graduation and before accepting commissions as Marine second lieutenants. As a consequence, their understanding of the Navy was pervasive as was their conviction that the Marine Corps and the Navy were inseparable partners in amphibious operations. In this instance, the Annapolis tie of the Navy and Marine Corps senior leaders, for virtually all admirals of the time were Naval Academy classmates, was beneficial to the Corps.

As his term as Commandant came to a close Ben Fuller was able to effect a far-reaching change that John Russell was to carry further into execution. In December 1933, with the approval of the Secretary of the Navy, Fuller redesignated the existing Marine expeditionary forces on both coasts as the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) to be a type command of the U.S. Fleet. Building on the infantry-

MajGen Ben C. Fuller, Neville's successor in 1930, found new roles and missions for the Corps as 15th Commandant.

Marine Corps Historical Collection





Marine Corps Historical Collection

The 16th Commandant of the Marine Corps, MajGen John H. Russell, was a graduate of the Naval Academy, as Lejeune, Neville, and Fuller before him, and close to Navy leaders because of their mutual Academy experiences.

men of the 5th Marines at Quantico and those of the 6th Marines at San Diego, two brigades came into being which were the precursors of the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions of World War II. In keeping with the times, Commandant Russell could point out the next year that he had only 3,000 Marines available to man the FMF, but the situation would improve as Marines returned from overseas stations.

The slowly building brigades and their attendant squadrons of Marine aircraft, the only American troops with combat and expeditionary experience beyond the trenches and battlefields of France, came into being in a climate of change from the "old ways" of performing their mission. At the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia, also the home of advanced officer training for the Corps, a profound event had taken place in November 1933 that would alter the course of the war to come.

That month, all classes of the Marine Corps Schools were suspended

and the students and faculty, including a sprinkling of Navy officers, were directed to concentrate their efforts on developing a detailed manual which would provide the guidance for the conduct of amphibious operations. The decision was not purely a Marine Corps one, since Quantico and the staff of the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, had been exchanging ideas on the subject for more than a decade. All naval planners knew that the execution of the contingency operations they envisioned worldwide would be flawed if the United States did not have adequate transport and cargo shipping, appropriate and sufficient landing craft, or trained amphibious assault troops. But the Quantico working group, headed by Colonel Ellis B. Miller, proceeded on the assumption that all these would be forthcoming. They developed operating theories based on their experience and their hopes which could be refined by practice. They formulated answers to thorny questions of command relationships, they looked at naval gunfire and air support problems and provided solutions, they addressed the ship-to-shore movement of troops and developed unloading, boat control, and landing procedures, and they decided on beach party and shore party methods to control the unloading of supplies on the beaches. In January 1934, a truly seminal document in the history of amphibious warfare was completed and the "Tentative Manual for Landing Operations" was published by the Marine Corps. In the years that followed, as fleet landing exercises refined procedures, as the hoped-for improved shipping and landing craft gradually appeared, and as increasing numbers of seamen and assault troops were trained in amphibious landing techniques, the Quantico manual was reworked and expanded, but its core of innovative thinking remained. In 1938 the Navy promulgated the evolved manual as *Fleet Training Publication (FTP) 167*;



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 528648
MajGen Holland M. Smith, Commanding General, Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet observes landing operations with his aide, Capt Victor H. Krulak, at Fort Story, Virginia, in the winter of 1941.

it became the bible for the conduct of American amphibious operations in World War II. In 1941 the Army published *FTP167* as *Field Manual 31-5* to guide its growing force of soldiers, most of whom would train for and take part in amphibious operations completely unaware of the Marine Corps influence on their activities. Truly, the handful of Marine and Navy officers at Quantico in 1933-34 had revolutionized the conduct of amphibious warfare.

Despite the fiscal constraints of the Depression, the number and variety of naval ships devoted to amphibious purposes gradually increased in the 1930s. As the threat of American involvement in the war also grew stronger, vastly increased funds were made available for the Navy, the country's "first line of defense," and specialized transport and cargo ships appeared. These were tested and modified and became an increasing factor in the FLEXs which took place every year from 1935 on, usually with practice landings at Culebra and Vieques Islands off Puerto Rico in the Atlantic Ocean, at San Clemente Is-



Department of Defense Photo (USN) 73812

The design of this Higgins landing craft, loaded with a military truck, shown here in May 1941, served as the basis for the landing craft, vehicle and personnel (LCVP).

land off the southern California coast, and in the Hawaiian Islands.

While the number of "big" amphibious ships, transports and cargo vessels, slowly grew in number, the small boat Navy of amphibious landing craft similarly evolved and increased. They were vital to the success of landing operations, a means to get assault troops ashore swiftly and surely. For most Marines of the era, there are memories of ships' launches, lighters, and experimental boats of all sorts that brought them to the beach, or at least to the first sandbar or reef offshore. Rolling over the side of a boat and wading through the surf was a common experience. One future Commandant, then a lieutenant, recalled making a practice landing on Maui in the Hawaiian Islands as his unit returned from expeditionary duty in China in 1938. He described the landing as "one of those old timers" made in "these damned motor launches, you know, with a row and everything—never made for a landing." The result, he said in color-

ful memory, was "you grounded out somewhere 50 yards from the beach and jumped in. Sometimes your hat floated and sometimes you made it."

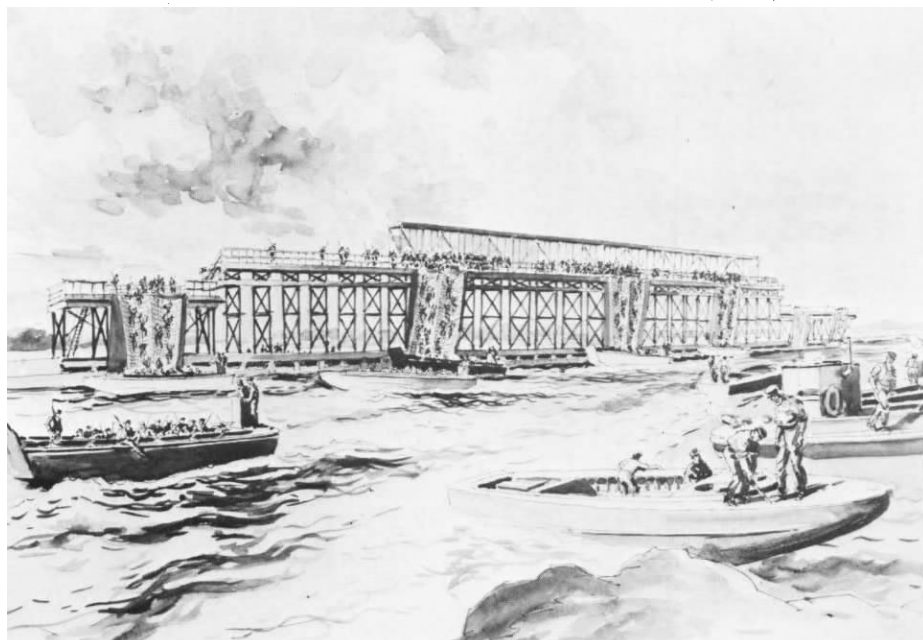
The landing craft that changed this picture was the Higgins boat, named

"Wet" landing net training was conducted for 1st Division Marines off the Intra-coastal Waterway at Marine Barracks, New River. Note different landing craft used in the exercise. These Marines soon would be descending the nets at Guadalcanal.

after its inventor, Andrew Higgins, who developed a boat of shallow draft that could reach the beach in three to four feet of water, land an infantry platoon, and then retract to return for another load. First used on an experimental basis in FLEX 5 (1938) at Culebra, it won its way over rivals and was adopted as the standard personnel landing craft by 1940. In its initial hundreds the Higgins boat had a sloping bow that required of its passengers an over-the-side agility after it grounded. In 1941, a version, most familiar to World War II veterans, was introduced which had a bow ramp which allowed men and vehicles to exit onto a beach or at least into knee-high, not neck-high water. This was the 36-foot Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP) which was fitted to the boat davits on every amphibious transport and cargo vessel. Its companion boat, the 50-foot, ramped Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM), also a development of Andrew Higgins, provided the means for landing tanks, artillery, and heavy vehicles.

The variety of landing craft that eventually evolved, and the tasks to which they were put, was limited

Sketch by Vernon H. Bailey, Navy Art Collection



Roebling Alligator Amphibian Tractor

Developed and, in part, financed by its inventor, Donald Roebling, the Alligator amphibian tractor is the predecessor of every Landing Vehicle, Tracked (LVT) in the world. The story of the Roebling amphibian tractor starts with the devastating hurricanes which struck southern Florida in 1926, 1928, and 1932. Donald Roebling's father, financier John A. Roebling, had witnessed the loss of life brought about by these storms in the swampy areas of the Okeechobee region. Spurred by a challenge from his father to use his engineering talents to design and develop a vehicle "that would bridge the gap between where a boat is grounded and a car is flooded out," Donald Roebling, the grandson of the designer and builder of the Brooklyn Bridge, started work on his Alligator amphibian tractor in early 1933.

Roebling and his staff completed their first model Alligator in early 1935. It used aluminum, a comparatively new and unproven material, in the construction of the hull to reduce weight and increase buoyancy. It was propelled on land and water by paddle-tread tracks and was then powered by a Chrysler 92-horsepower industrial engine. This first model was then modified and upgraded so extensively that it is generally referred to as the second model Alligator. This second Alligator had improved tracks with built-in roller bearings which rode in specially designed steel channels which eliminated the need for idler and bogie wheels to support the tracks, as were used on most tractor and tank designs.

In 1937, U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Edward C. Kalbfus, Commander, Battleships, U.S. Pacific Fleet, showed Major General Louis McCarty Little, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, an article on Roebling's amphibian tractor in the October 4th issue of *Life* magazine. In turn, General Little forwarded the article to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. In March 1938, Major John Kaluf of the Equipment Board at Quantico was dispatched to Clearwater, Florida, with orders to investigate the military potential of the Roebling Alligator. Major Kaluf returned a favorable report and in May 1938 the Commandant of the Marine Corps requested that a "pilot model" be purchased for "fur-

ther tests under service conditions." This request was turned down by the Navy's Bureau of Construction and Repair due to limited funding.

In the fall of that year, the new President of the Marine Corps Equipment Board, Brigadier General Emile P. Moses, and Kaluf's replacement as Secretary, Major Ernest E. Linsert, made a visit to Clearwater which would become a turning point in the development of the amphibian tractor. It was during this visit that General Moses persuaded Roebling to design a new Alligator which would incorporate a number of improvements. The fact that the Marine Corps did not have any available funds at this time forced Roebling to come up with most of the \$18,000 required to fabricate this vehicle from his own pocket. Construction on this new Alligator was completed in May 1940.

The development of the amphibian tractor, or LVT, which began in the middle 1930s provided the solution and was one of the most important modern technical contributions to ship-to-shore operations. Without these landing vehicles our amphibious offensive in the Pacific would have been impossible.

Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, USMC

With the political and military situation in Europe and Asia worsening, military appropriations from Congress improved and the Navy's Bureau of Ships was able to fund a \$20,000 contract with Roebling for the construction of a new test vehicle. It was almost identical to "Alligator 3," but was powered by a 120-horsepower Lincoln-Zephyr engine. This Alligator was completed in October 1940, and was tested at Quantico, Virginia, and later in the Caribbean. While the testing of this fourth Alligator revealed some deficiencies, the general design was deemed a success. The tractor was redesigned using a welded steel hull and incorporating many of the recommendations of the test team. A contract was then let by the Navy for 100 LVT-1s. The first of these production LVTs would roll off the Ford Machinery Corporation's (FMC) assembly line in July 1941.

—Anthony Wayne Tommell



only by the ingenuity of those who planned their uses and the seamanship of the sailors who manned them. But for most prewar Marines, the memories of practice landings featured the rampless Higgins boat, various tank lighters which made each beach approach an adventure, and all sorts of "make do" craft of earlier years which were ill suited for surf or heavy seas.

One amphibious craft development of the prewar years, equal in its impact on amphibious landings to the LCV and the LCM, was the tracked landing vehicle, the LVT. Developed in the late 1930s by Donald Roebling for use as a rescue vehicle in the Florida everglades, the LVT, or the Alligator as it was soon popularly named, could travel over land or water using its cupped treads for propulsion. The stories of the "discovery" of Roebling's invention and of its subsequent testing and development are legion. It proved to have an invaluable capability, not considered in its initial concept; it could cross coral reefs, and coral reefs fringed the beaches of most Pacific islands. The amphibian tractor, or amtrac to its users, was a natural weapon for Marines and there was hardly a whisper of opposition to its adoption. When the first production LVTs rolled off Roebling's assembly line at his plant at Clearwater, Florida, in July 1941, there was already a detachment of Marines at nearby Dunedin learning to drive and maintain the new tractors and to develop tactics for their effective use.

In the new Marine divisions then forming on each coast there would be a place for an amtrac battalion. The LVTs were conceived at first as a logistics vehicle, a means to carry troops and supplies onto and inshore of difficult beaches. But no sooner did the LVTs make their appearance in significant numbers than the thought occurred that the tractors could be armed and that they could have a role as an assault vehicle, leading assault waves.

Innovations in amphibious shipping and landing craft in the late 30s and early 40s were not solely based on American concepts. With the exception of the LVT, most amphibious craft developments and certainly amphibious shipping developments were influenced by British concepts, requirements, and experience. Although officially neutral in the fighting at sea in the Atlantic and



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 12444-B
Gen Thomas Holcomb, 17th Commandant of the Marine Corps, was a decorated World War I combat leader. From 1936, when he became Commandant, to December 1943, when he retired, he guided the Corps and led it into war.

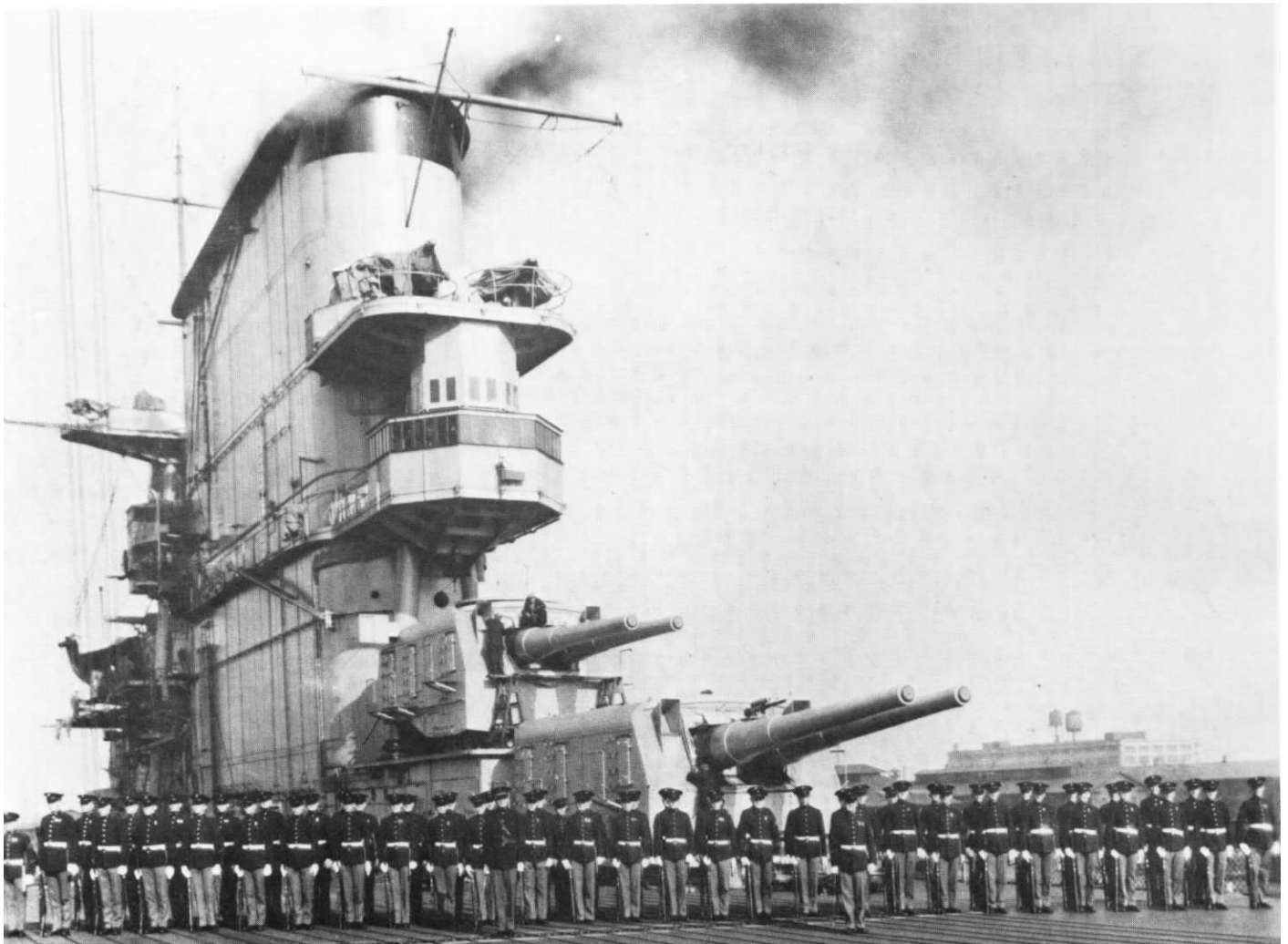
ashore in Europe, the United States was in fact deeply involved in supporting the embattled British. For a long period in 1940-41, the Marine Corps was concerned in this effort, and to the troops in training, particularly those on the east coast, there was a real question whether they might leave their bases for Europe or the Pacific. Marine pilots had a definite fascination with the exploits of the Royal Air Force in its battles with the German Luftwaffe.

Atlantic Theater

Because the British had fought the Germans since 1939, their combat know-how and experience in air, land, and sea battles were invaluable to the American military. A

steady stream of American observers, largely unheralded to the public, visited Britain and British and Allied forces in the field during 1940-41 to learn what they could of such new warfare innovations as radar, pioneered by the British; to see how anti-aircraft defenses were operating; to learn what constant air raids and battles could teach; and to see how Britain's land forces were preparing for their eventual return to Europe. The Marine Corps Commandant, Major General Thomas Holcomb, made sure that his officers played a strong part in this learning process from the British.

Holcomb, who had ably commanded a battalion of the 6th Marines in the fighting in France in 1918, had initially been appointed Commandant by President Roosevelt on 1 December 1936. After serving with distinction through the European outbreak of World War II and the Corps' initial war-related buildup, he was reappointed Major General Commandant by the President for a second four-year term on 1 December 1940. The Commandant, besides being a dedicated Marine who championed the Corps during trying times, was also an astute player of the Washington game. A respected colleague and friend of the admirals who commanded the Navy, Holcomb was equally at ease and a friend to the politicians who controlled the military budget. He understood the President's determination to see Great Britain survive, as well as his admiration of the British peoples' struggle. Always well aware of the value of the public image of the Marine Corps as a force "first to fight," Holcomb at times yielded to pressures to experiment with new concepts and authorize new types of organizations which would enhance that image. The Marines whom he sent to Great Britain were imbued with the desire to gain knowledge and experience that would help the Corps get ready for the war they felt sure was coming.



Department of Defense Photo (USN) 51363

Marines in ships' detachments, such as this one on board the carrier Lexington, served in major combatant ships of the pre-war Navy. Many seagoing Marines were either commissioned or became senior staff noncommissioned officers in the war.

The British, who shared the view that the Americans would eventually enter the war on their side, were open and forthcoming in their cooperation.

In 1941 particularly, the Marine observers, ranging in rank from captains to colonels, visited British air stations and air control centers, anti-aircraft command complexes and firing battery sites, and all kinds of troop formations. The weapons and equipment being used and the tactics and techniques being practiced were all of interest. Much of what was seen and reported on was of immediate value to the Americans and saw enhanced development in the States. On the air side, briefings on radar developments were invaluable, as were demonstrations of ground control intercept practices for night fighters and the use of night fighters themselves.

Anything the British had learned on air defense control and anti-aircraft usage was eagerly absorbed. The Marine air observers would note on their return that they had dealt with numbers of aircraft and concepts of command and control that were not remotely like Marine Corps reality, but all knew that these numbers of aircraft and their control equipment were authorized, funded, and building.

The fascination of the time, although focused on the Battle of Britain's aerial defenses, was not only with the air war but also with the "elite" troops, the sea-raiding commandos, as well as the glider and parachute forces so ably exploited by the Germans in combat and now a prominent part of Britain's army. The role of the commandos, who were then Army troops but who eventu-

ally would be drawn exclusively from Royal Marines ranks, raised a natural favorable response in the American Marines. Most of the observers were enthusiastic about the commando potential, but at least one U.S. Marine senior colonel, Julian C. Smith, who watched commando exercises at Inverary, Scotland, was not overly impressed. Smith, who later commanded the 2d Marine Division at the epic battle for Tarawa, told General Holcomb that the commandos "weren't any better than we; that any battalion of Marines could do the job they do."

For the moment at least, Smith's view was a minority evaluation, one not shared, for instance, by commando enthusiast President Roosevelt, and the Marine Corps would see the raising of raider battalions to perform commando-like missions. In

similar fashion, and for much the same reasons, Service enthusiasm for being at the cutting edge and popular acclaim of elite formations, the Marine Corps raised parachute battalions, glider squadrons, and barrage balloon squadrons, all of which were disbanded eventually in the face of the realities of the island-dominated Pacific theater. They might have served their purpose well in Europe or North Africa but the Marine Corps' destiny was in the Pacific.

Marines of the pre-Pearl Harbor Corps, filled with memories of their later battles with the Japanese, are sometimes prone to forget that Germany was as much their potential enemy in 1940-41 as Japan. At the time, many must have felt as did one artillery lieutenant and later raider

officer who took part in fleet exercises of early 1941 that "we all cut our teeth on amphibious operations, actually not knowing whether we were going to leave Guantanamo for Europe or the Pacific." What the Marines at Guantanamo Bay did know was that their Cuban base was bustling with men as mobilized Reservists and new recruits joined. And as the necessary men came in, the brigade grew in size and abounded with changes of organizations and activations.

The 1st Marine Brigade, at first essentially one infantry regiment, the 5th Marines, one artillery battalion, the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, and supporting troops, had moved to Guantanamo from Quantico in the late fall of 1940 as its FMF units had outgrown the Virginia base. At "Git-

mo," as it was known to all, the brigade's units became the source of all new organizations. Essentially, existing outfits, from battalions through platoons, were split in half. To insure an equal distribution of talent as well as numbers, the brigade commander, Brigadier General Holland M. "Howling Mad" Smith, shrewdly had each unit commander turn in two equal lists, leaving off the commanding officer (CO) and his executive officer. As a later combat battalion commander of the 5th recalled the process, when redesignation took place, "the CO would command one unit, one former exec would become CO of the other But until the split was made and the redesignation announced, no CO could know which half he would command. In this manner, the 5th Marines gave

Marines train for war with the Browning .30-caliber, water-cooled, heavy machine gun at Camp Matthews in California.

Painting by Peter Hurd, U.S. Army Center of Military History



birth to the 7th Marines and the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines to the 2d Battalion. Not too long after, all the units of the 5th, 7th, and 11th Marines and their supporting elements were again split, this time into three equal lists, leaving out the three senior men. A new regiment, the 1st Marines with its necessary support, was formed equitably from the 5th and 7th, because the COs of the older units did not know whether they would stay behind (two lists) or take over the new outfits.

On 1 February 1941, the 1st Marine Brigade was redesignated the 1st Marine Division while its troops were on board ship heading for the Puerto Rican island of Culebra for maneuvers. At the same time on the west coast, the 2d Brigade, at San Diego, which had grown in a similar fashion from its original infantry regiment, the 6th Marines, was redesignated the 2d Marine Division. Most of its troops, however, were located at a new FMF base, Camp Elliott, in the low, hilly country 12 miles northeast of San Diego.

At Marine Corps headquarters, it was readily apparent that the planned expansion of the Corps to an FMF strength of at least two infantry divisions and two supporting aircraft wings would require a vastly increased supporting establishment. Not least among the new requirements for manpower and equipment were those for a new species of units, defense battalions, which were projected to garrison forward bases, including Guantanamo and key American holdings in the Pacific. Also a drawdown on Marine resources was the need to provide guard detachments for many new naval bases and Navy capital ships which were being rushed to completion. The surging demand for men was matched by equal demand for training facilities.

What occurred then in late 1940 and early 1941 was a thorough search by Marines of the east and west coasts of the United States for



Sketch by Vernon H. Bailey, Navy Art Collection
Maneuvering at the Marine Barracks, New River, North Carolina in 1942 is an armored half-tracked mounting a 75mm gun, M1897A4, as well as a ¾-ton truck carrying a 37mm antitank gun. Later in the war a jeep would pull this weapon.

base sites suitable for training one or more divisions whose main mission was amphibious warfare. Extensive combat exercise areas with direct access to the ocean were required. At the same time, there was a parallel need for suitable airfield locations near the proposed amphibious training sites which would house the planned for but not yet existing squadrons and groups of one or more air wings, each with hundreds of fighter, scout-bomber, torpedo-bomber, and utility aircraft. When the first divisions and wings moved out to combat, the new bases were projected to be training bases for reinforcing and replacement organizations.

Camp Elliott and a group of smaller supporting camps which grew up in its shadow in 1941 were barely adequate to house the growing FMF ground establishment on the west coast. The naval air stations in the San Diego area could still handle the limited number of aircraft available. The same situation was not true of the three major Marine bases in the east. While Quantico's air station could accommodate the planes of Marine Aircraft Group 1, the main

base itself was keyed to support specialist and officer training and was not suitable for extensive FMF operations. Swamp-bound Parris Island teemed with recruits and had no room for the FMF. The newly developed outlying camp at nearby Hilton Head Island was reserved for essential defense battalion training. The treaty-restricted area of the naval base at Guantanamo had no room for a reinforced division's 20,000 men.

Congress authorized the construction of a vast, new Marine base in coastal North Carolina on 15 February 1941. It was, in a sense, a remote area that had been picked, certainly not one near any center of population. The Commandant, writing to a fellow general, commented "those who want to be near big cities will be disappointed because it is certainly out in the sticks," noting however, that it was a great place for maneuvers and amphibious landings. The chosen spot located in the New River area of Onslow County, was described by the 1st Division's World War II historian as "111,170 acres of water, coastal swamp, and plain,

theretofore inhabited largely by sand flies, ticks, chiggers, and snakes." And he might have added covered by pine forest and scrub growth. One of the Marine veterans of the Nicaraguan jungle campaigns said: "Actually, Nicaragua was a much pleasanter place to live than the New River area at the time. They had mosquitoes there with snow on the ground." Despite its perceived faults, the die was cast for New River and construction of a huge tent camp was begun there in April with a projected readiness date of early summer. The famed brick barracks that were a feature of what would become Camp Lejeune were on the architect's drawing boards when Marine Barracks, New River, North Carolina, was activated on the 1st of May.

The 1st Division soon became acquainted with the place that one regimental commander noted was "the only place between Biloxi, Mississippi, and the New Jersey capes where you could make a landing with two divisions abreast." Coming from Guantanamo, the division spent the summer of 1941 landing across Onslow Beach and moving inland through the swamps and pine barrens. By that time, Tent Camp or "Tent City" was ready to receive its

new tenants. Strange as it might seem, these 1st Division Marines reveled in their austere setting amidst the stifling heat. They were already contrasting themselves to those on the west coast, derisively labelled "Hollywood Marines," because some units had appeared briefly in movies being shot at the time. There was a feeling, obviously not shared by those in the west, that Parris Island and New River somehow were the most rugged places to endure, in contrast to those who were close to "civilization."

The new Marine airfield, which was to become an integral part of the North Carolina training complex, was formally established on 18 August 1941 when the administrative office for the new "Air Facilities under Development" was established at New Bern, about 40 miles north of New River. Construction there proceeded at the same frenetic pace that marked the development of the ground training center. In September, the administrators moved to the actual airfield site nearby, Cherry Point, and on 1 December Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, was activated. Most of the planes on the east coast were still at Quantico, but a great start had been made on what

became in short order the center of a network of training fields which would house enough squadrons and air groups to feed most of the augmentation and replacement demands of four aircraft wings overseas. The actual establishment of the initial wing commands took place at Quantico (1st Marine Aircraft Wing [MAW]) on 7 July 1941 and San Diego (2d MAW) on 10 July. Initially, each wing could count on only one air group as its main strength, Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 11 in the east and MAG-21 in the west. The vast increase of aircraft and aviation personnel that marked the growth of Marine aviation in World War II was in the works. The pilots, aircrewmembers, and mechanics were training at Navy air facilities and the planes were coming off assembly lines in steadily increasing numbers. It was August 1942, however, before the impact of the air buildup would be fully felt at Guadalcanal.

As an all-volunteer force, the Marine Corps was fully deployable during this training and preparedness period. In a sense, the Army was hampered in its readiness by the fact that its draftees, which soon composed the bulk of its strength, could not be sent outside the U.S. without a declaration of war. As a result, when the seizure of the French island of Martinique was contemplated in 1940, the planned assault force was the 1st Marine Brigade. When the perceived threat of a garrison in the Caribbean loyal to Vichy France lessened, other overseas expeditions were also contemplated. In the spring of 1941, the Portuguese Azores became the projected target for an amphibious seizure because it was believed that the Germans might take the strategic islands and thereby seriously threaten the sea lanes of commerce and replenishment for British and Allied bases in the home islands, Africa, and the Mediterranean. Again, Marines were to be in the forefront of the landing force and, again, when the perceived threat less-

Troops of the 1st Marine Division conduct landing exercises from the Intracoastal Waterway along Onslow Beach at Marine Barracks, New River, North Carolina.

Sketch by Vernon H. Bailey, Navy Art Collection





Springfield '03 Rifle

his rifle was the standard issue to all Marines from the early days of the 20th century into the first year of World War II. As a result of intensive marksmanship training, an inseparable bond formed between the individual Marine and this rifle which paid dividends on the target range and, later, in combat.

The Model 1903 "Springfield" rifle traces its development from the experiences of the U.S. Army in combat against the Spanish Army during the Spanish-American War. The clip-fed Spanish 7mm Mauser rifle, Model 1893, had a flatter trajectory and a higher sustained rate of fire than the .30-.40 caliber Krag-Jorgensen rifles used by the U.S. Army. Beginning in 1900, the U.S. Armory in Springfield, Massachusetts, started work on a new service rifle to replace the Krag.

The new rifle, officially adopted on 19 June 1903, was based on the M1898 German Mauser and originally had a ramrod bayonet. The rifle was redesigned to accept a knife-type bayonet in 1905. This change was at least partially due to the concern of President Theodore Roosevelt who commented to the Secretary of War that: "I must say

that I think the ramrod bayonet is about as poor an invention as I ever saw."

The Model 1903 "Springfield" rifle was first issued to Marines in 1908 and saw its first combat during the Nicaraguan Campaign of 1912. The obsolescent Krags were almost entirely supplanted by the new '03 Springfields before the Vera Cruz campaign of 1914. After service in Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, the '03 Springfield was exclusively used by Marines serving in France with the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. Following the war, an improved version was used by Marines in China and in the jungles of the Caribbean Islands and Central America.

The accuracy of the '03 Springfield was without peer, and the Marine Corps based its developing marksmanship program on this rifle. The Marine Corps designed an improved set of front and rear sights and soon led the other services in prowess with the rifle. Indeed, by the outbreak of World War II, the Marine Corps had formed a cult around the rifle.—*Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas*