



On this 240th birthday of the United States Marine Corps, Marines serving at home and abroad will once again pause to celebrate our cherished legacy of honor, courage, and commitment. On many occasions, they will be joined by former Marines who have gone before and on whose broad shoulders our proud heritage has been sustained. As General Lejeune said in his birthday message, it is their "eternal spirit which has animated our corps from generation to generation."

This past August, Camp Lejeune was privileged to host 77 heroes from the Fourth Marine Division Association as they conducted their final muster. As young men 70 years ago, they too answered our nation's call and courageously endured some of the most violent combat of WWII to help secure the islands of Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. While the years had taken their inevitable toll on these men physically, their warrior spirit did not diminish. We draw inspiration from them and so many others who gave their "last full measure of devotion."

This year, Marines are once more distinguishing themselves in any clime and place, and will one day assume their rightful place in the annals of history among a pantheon of places like Tripoli, Iwo Jima, Tarawa, Chosin, Khe Sanh, and Fallujah. Like the symbolic battle streamers that fly over our Marine Corps flag, these hard-fought conflicts serve to bind us across the ages and forge our proud heritage that continues today.

Today, I charge all Marines, Sailors, and Civilian Marines of Marine Corps Installations East to renew your collective commitment, camaraderie and esprit-de-corps. Honor those who are in harm's way defending our freedoms, pay respect to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice for this country and its ideals, and finally, thank the countless families who daily endure the absence of loved ones far away. They are all in our thoughts and prayers. Happy Birthday Marines and Semper Fidelis!

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