

10 NOVEMBER 2008



A BIRTHDAY MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS



During the summer of 1982, in the wake of a presidential directive, Marines went ashore at Beirut, Lebanon. Fifteen months later, on 23 October 1983, extremists struck the first major blow against American forces—starting this long war on terrorism. On that Sunday morning, a suicide bomber drove an explosive-laden truck into the headquarters of Battalion Landing Team 1/8, destroying the building and killing 241 Marines and corpsmen.

Extremists have attacked our Nation, at home and abroad, numerous times since that fateful day in Beirut. Their aim has always been the same—to kill as many innocent Americans as possible. The attacks of 11 September 2001 changed our Nation forever, and our President has resolved that this Nation will not stand idle while murderous terrorists plan their next strike. Marines will continue to take the fight to the enemy—hitting them on their own turf, crushing them when they show themselves, and finding them where they hide.

Only a few Americans choose the dangerous, but necessary, work of fighting our Nation's enemies. When our chapter of history is written, it will be a saga of a selfless generation of Marines who were willing to stand up and fight for our Nation; to defend those who could not defend themselves; to thrive on the hardship and sacrifice expected of an elite warrior class; to march to the sound of the guns; and to ably shoulder the legacy of those Marines who have gone before.

On our 233rd birthday, first remember those who have served and those “angels” who have fallen—our reputation was built on their sacrifices. Remember our families; they are the unsung heroes whose support and dedication allow us to answer our Nation's call. Finally, to all Marines and Sailors, know that I am proud of you and what you do. Your successes on the battlefield have only added to our illustrious history. Lieutenant General Victor H. “Brute” Krulak said it best when he wrote, “... the United States does not *need* a Marine Corps ... the United States *wants* a Marine Corps.” Your actions, in Iraq and Afghanistan and across the globe, are at the core of why America loves her Marines.

Happy Birthday, Marines!

Semper Fidelis,

James T. Conway
General, U.S. Marine Corps