

Battle Color of the Marine Corps

Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., holds the official Battle Colors of the Marine Corps. A duplicate is maintained in the office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps in the Pentagon. The Battle Colors bear the same fifty streamers authorized for the Marine Corps as a whole. These streamers represent U.S. and foreign unit awards as well as those periods of service, expeditions, and campaigns in which the Marine Corps has participated from the American Revolution to today. During the Marine Corps' first 150 years, Marines in the field carried a variety of flags. It was not until 18 April 1925 that Marine Corps Order Number 4 designated gold and scarlet as the official colors of the U.S. Marine Corps. These colors, however, were not reflected in the official Marine Corps flag until 18 January 1939 when a new design incorporating the new colors was approved. This design was essentially that of today's Marine Corps standard, and was the result of a two-year study concerning the design of a standard Marine Corps flag, and the units to which such a flag should be issued.



History of the Marine Corps Flag

Very little information is available regarding the flags carried by early American Marines, although indications are that the Grand Union flag was carried ashore by the battalion led by Captain Samuel Nicholas on New Providence Island, 3 March 1776. It is quite possible that the Rattlesnake flag was also carried on this expedition.

The standard carried by the Marines during the 1830s and 1840s consisted of a white field with gold fringe, and bore an elaborate design of an anchor and eagle in the center. Prior to the Mexican War, this flag bore the legend "To the Shores of Tripoli" across the top. Shortly after the war, the legend was revised to read: "From Tripoli to the Halls of the Montezumas." During the Mexican and Civil Wars, Marines in the field apparently carried a flag similar to the national flag, comprised of red and white stripes and a union. The union, however, contained an eagle perched on a shield of the United States and a half-wreath beneath the shield, with 29 stars encircling the entire design.

Beginning in 1876, Marines carried the national colors (the Stars and Stripes) with "U.S. Marine Corps" embroidered in yellow on the middle red stripe. At the time of the Vera Cruz landing in 1914, a more distinctive standard was carried by Marines. The design consisted of a blue field with a laurel wreath encircling the Marine Corps emblem in the center. A scarlet ribbon above the emblem carried the words "U.S. Marine Corps," while another scarlet ribbon below the emblem carried the motto "Semper Fidelis."

Orders were issued on 2 April 1921 which directed all national colors be manufactured without the yellow fringe and without the words "U.S. Marine Corps" embroidered on the red stripe. This was followed by an order dated 14 March 1922, retiring from use all national colors still in use with yellow fringe or wording on the flag. Following World War I, the Army practice of attaching silver bands carrying inscriptions enumerating specific decorations and battles was adopted. This practice was discontinued on 23 January 1961.

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For a brief time following World War I, the inscribing of battle honors directly on the colors of a unit was in practice, but realization that a multiplicity of honors and the limited space on the colors made the system impractical, and the procedure was discontinued. On 29 July 1936, a Marine Corps Board recommended that the Army system of attaching streamers to the staff of the organizational colors be adopted. Such a system was finally authorized by Marine Corps Order No. 157, dated 3 November 1939, and is currently in practice.

The MCO P10520.3B - *Marine Corps Flag Manual* may be obtained online -- Please note that the official source for authentic and current digital publications issued by Headquarters Marine Corps staff agencies, major commands, and other DOD and Federal agencies that issue publications used by the Marine Corps is "[Publications](#)" on the Marine Corps homepage at <http://www.usmc.mil>.

Current Award, Campaign, Service, and Expeditionary Streamer Entitlement, to the Battle Colors of the Marine Corps

1. Presidential Unit Citation (Navy) Streamer with six silver and three bronze stars



2. Presidential Unit Citation (Army) Streamer with one silver oak leaf cluster



3. Joint Meritorious Unit Award Streamer



4. Navy Unit Commendation Streamer



5. Valorous Unit Award (Army) Streamer



6. Meritorious Unit Commendation (Navy-Marine Corps) Streamer



7. Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) Streamer



8. Revolutionary War Streamer



9. Quasi-War with France Streamer



10. Barbary Wars Streamer



11. War of 1812 Streamer



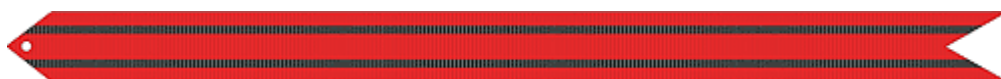
12. African Slave Trade Streamer



13. Operations Against West Indian Pirates Streamer



14. Indian Wars Streamer



15. Mexican War Streamer



16. Civil War Streamer



17. Marine Corps Expeditionary Streamer with twelve silver stars, four bronze stars and one silver "W"



18. Spanish Campaign Streamer



19. Philippine Campaign Streamer



20. China Relief Expedition Streamer



21. Cuban Pacification Streamer



22. Nicaraguan Campaign Streamer



23. Mexican Service Streamer



24. Haitian Campaign Streamer with one bronze star



25. Dominican Campaign Streamer



26. World War I Victory Streamer with one silver and one bronze star, one Maltese Cross, and Siberia and West Indies clasps



27. Army of Occupation of Germany Streamer



28. Second Nicaraguan Campaign Streamer



29. Yangtze Service Streamer



30. China Service Streamer with one bronze star



31. American Defense Service Streamer with one bronze star



32. American Campaign Streamer



33. European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Streamer with one silver and four bronze stars



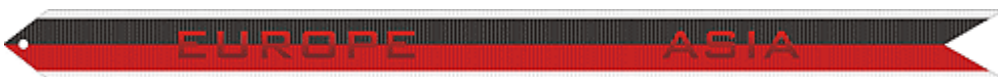
34. Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Streamer with eight silver and two bronze stars



35. World War II Victory Streamer



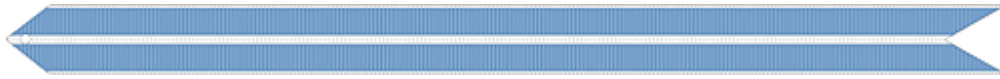
36. Navy Occupation Service Streamer with Europe and Asia Clasps



37. National Defense Service Streamer with two bronze stars



38. Korean Service Streamer with two silver stars



39. Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamer with five silver stars



40. Vietnam Service Streamer with three silver and two bronze stars



41. Southwest Asia Service Streamer with three bronze stars



42. Kosovo Campaign Streamer with two bronze stars



43. Afghanistan Campaign Streamer



44. Iraq Campaign Streamer



45. Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Streamer



46. Global War on Terrorism Service Streamer



47. Philippine Defense Streamer with one bronze star



48. Philippine Liberation Streamer with two bronze stars



49. Philippine Independence Streamer



50. French Croix De Guerre Streamer with two palms and one gilt star



51. Philippine Presidential Unit Citation Streamer with two bronze stars



52. Korean Presidential Unit Citation Streamer



53. Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation of the Gallantry Cross with Palm



54. Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation Civil Actions Streamer with Palm

