LEATHERNECK LINGO

Learn the language of the Marine Corps!
Here are some words you will encounter in the Museum or you could hear Marines using.
You might be surprised where, when, and why these terms originated.

First of all, what does “lingo” mean? You might call it slang.

AWOL: absent without leave; leaving a post or position without official permission; also UA
BLT: It’s not a sandwich. It’s a Battalion Landing Team, the main body of infantrymen that make up a MEU
Barracks: building where unmarried Marines live or a duty station where they serve
Berm: perimeter line of a fortification, usually raised above surrounding area (notice the outside of the NMMC)
Boo-coo: near-pronunciation of beaucoup, French for "much" or "many"
Boondoggle: any military operation that hasn't been completely thought out; an operation that is absurd or useless
Boonie Hat: soft hat worn by a boonierat in the boonies
Boonierat: a combat infantryman
Boonies: infantry term for the field; jungles or swampy areas far from the comforts of civilization
Boot: new recruit or young Marine just out of boot camp; inexperienced, untested
Bouncing Betty: antipersonnel mine with two charges: the first propels the explosive charge upward, and the other is set to explode at about waist level
Brig: military jail
Building parts: Bulkhead: wall; Deck: floor; Hatch: door; Head: bathroom; Ladderwell: stairway; Overhead: ceiling; Passageway: corridor; Rack: bed; Topside: upstairs
CMC: Commandant of the Marine Corps
Civilian: anyone not in the military
Cover: (noun) hat; (verb) to find shelter or protection in combat
DI: Drill Instructor
DMZ: demilitarized zone; dividing line between North and South Vietnam established in 1954 at the Geneva Convention
Deployment: when a Marine's unit departs its home base for an extended period of time
Deuce Gear: see 782 gear
Doc: medic or corpsman; Navy corpsmen were assigned to Marine units a medical personnel
Dust-Off: medical evacuation by helicopter
Elephant Grass: tall, razor-edged tropical plant indigenous to certain parts of Vietnam
Field Day: day set aside for cleaning the office and barracks
**Float**: to be deployed at sea, usually on a MEU, as in "six month float"

**Grunt**: Originally slang for a Marine fighting in Vietnam but later applied to any soldier fighting there; a boonierat

**Gung Ho**: ready, fired up, enthusiastic; the phrase is Chinese for "working together"

**Hashmark**: stripes worn on forearm of dress and service uniforms by enlisted Marines, each denotes 4 yrs of service

**JOB**: "junk on the bunk" or field gear and uniforms displayed on bed for inspection

**MEU**: Marine Expeditionary Unit, a group of Marines organized for a float

**Military Brat**: a term of endearment given to children born and reared in the service

**Ninety-six**: four-day weekend pass, 96 hours--usually given for holidays

**Ooh-Rah**: Marine Corps motivational term when exclaimed loudly; an affirmative reply or term of concurrence (like "Right On")

**PT**: Physical Training; **PT Gear** then would be shorts, tee shirt, etc.

**Recon**: reconnaissance; going out to observe for the purpose of identifying enemy activity

**Recruit**: (noun) an individual attending boot camp; (verb) encourage someone to join the USMC

**782 Gear**: "Deuce" gear; includes pack, canteen, poncho, ammo pouch, etc. used when in the field; "782" refers to the official form signed when gear is issued

**SOP**: Standard Operating Procedure

**Scuttlebutt**: rumor or gossip

**Secure**: (verb) lock up, close, take care of, finish for the day

**Semper Fi**: short for *Semper Fidelis*, "Always Faithful" in Latin (most mottoes are in Latin)

**Seventy-Two**: three day pass (72 hours)

**Sick Bay**: hospital, clinic, or office of medical personnel

**Sick Call**: assigned time for ill Marines to go to Sick Bay (usually first thing in the morning)

**Skivvies**: underwear

**Squared Away**: prepared, taken care of, sharp looking ("That’s one squared away Marine!")

**TAD**: Temporary Additional Duty and **TDY**: Temporary Duty

**WM**: Woman Marine

**XO**: Executive Officer (2nd in command of a unit)
A few good men: Capt Wm. Jones was quoted in the Providence Gazette on March 20, 1779: "The Continental ship Providence, now lying at Boston, is bound on a short cruise, immediately; a few good men are wanted to make up her complement."

Blood Stripe: Many legends persist about the Marine Corps uniform and the origin of certain traditional aspects, such as the red stripes on the blue uniform trousers of Marine officers and NCOs. This may commemorate the courage and tenacious fighting of the men who battled before Chapultapec in the Mexican War and whose exploits added the phrase "From the Halls of Montezuma..." to The Marines’ Hymn. Thus the red stripe is said to symbolize the blood shed by these Marines of another century.

Come on, you S*O*B*s, do you want to live forever? Marine Corps legend has it that this saying originated during World War I in France. During the violent fighting in Belleau Wood, Sergeant Dan Daly's platoon, part of the 6th Marines, was pinned down by intense enemy fire. The gallant Daly, already possessor of two Congressional Medals of Honor (one for heroism during the China Relief Expedition in 1900 and the other received during the Haitian Campaign of 1915), raged up and down the line trying to get his troops moving. Finally, the story goes, he yelled "Come on, you S*O*B*s, do you want to live forever?" as he leaped out of the trench, and led his men in the attack.

Devil Dogs
In the Belleau Wood fighting in 1918, the Germans received a thorough indoctrination in the ability of the Marines. Fighting through supposedly impenetrable woods and capturing supposedly untakeable terrain, the persistent attacks, delivered with unbelievable courage, soon had the Germans calling Marines teufelhunden, referring to the fierce fighting dogs of legendary origin.

Esprit de Corps
A French term for the spirit of a unit, commonly reflected by all members. It implies devotion and loyalty to the Marine Corps, with deep regard for history, traditions, and honor.

First to Fight
Marines have been in the forefront of every American war since the founding of the Corps. They have carried out over 300 landings on foreign shores. They have served everywhere, from the poles to the tropics. Their record of readiness reflects pride, responsibility, and challenge.

Gyrenes
The term gyrene is a joking reference to Marines first used in England as early as 1894, and in the United States around the time of WW I. Its exact origin is unknown, but it did appear to have a derogatory meaning in its early usage. It has been suggested that the term may embody a reference to pollywog, a naval slang term for a person who has not yet crossed the equator, hence, a landlubber.

Have gone to Florida to fight Indians
In 1836 the Creek and Seminole Indian tribes in Georgia and Florida were waging war against the United States. The U. S. Army had its hands full. The Fifth Commandant of the Marine Corps offered the services of a regiment of Marines for duty with the Army. Archibald Henderson placed himself in
command and, taking virtually the entire available strength of the Corps, left for the extended campaign after tacking a terse message on his office door which read: "Have gone to Florida to fight Indians. Will be back when war is over, A. Henderson, Col. Commandant"

**Jarhead**

A slang term used by sailors as early as WW II to refer to members of the Marine Corps, drawing the term from the resemblance of the Marine dress blue uniform, with its high collar, to a Mason jar. (Mason jars were used for home canning.)

**Leathernecks**

The Marines’ long-standing nickname goes back to the leather stock or neckpiece, a part of the uniform intended to ensure that Marines kept their heads erect. Beginning in 1798, "one stock of black leather and clasp" was issued to each U. S. Marine annually. This stiff leather collar, fastened by two buckles at the back, measured nearly three and a half inches high, and was practical only for full-dress wear. It could hardly be worn in battle as it prevented the neck movement necessary for sighting along a barrel. The stock was dropped as an article of Marine uniform in 1872, after surviving through the uniform changes of 1833, 1839, and 1859. But by then it was a part of American vocabulary, a word preserved, like so many words, beyond its original meaning.

**Once a Marine, Always a Marine**

Having earned the title of “Marine” it becomes an integral part of who and what we will become in later life. The motto of the Marine Corps League.

**Retreat Hell! We just got here.**

The occasion was the third great German breakthrough of 1918, when the 4th Marine Brigade and its parent 2d Infantry Division were thrown in to help stem the tide in the Belleau Wood sector. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, had just arrived at its position when an automobile skidded to a stop and a French officer dashed out and approached the commanding officer. He explained that a general retreat was in progress and that orders were for the Marines to withdraw. The Marine officer exclaimed in amazement, "Retreat Hell! We just got here." The battalion deployed and took up firing positions. As the Germans approached, they came under rifle fire which was accurate at ranges beyond their comprehension. Not in vain had the Marine Corps long stressed in its training the sound principles of marksmanship. The deadly fire took the heart out of the German troops and the attack was stopped.

**Semper Fidelis**

"Always Faithful" is the motto of the Corps. That Marines have lived up to this motto is proved by the fact that there has never been a mutiny, or even the thought of one, among U.S. Marines.

**Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue**

Admiral Nimitz's ringing tribute to Marine fighting on Iwo Jima, the largest all-Marine battle in history, was applied to the entire Marine Corps in WW II. Inscribed on the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial.