

# THE COLD WAR PERIOD

The Cold War began at the end of World War II as a result of the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States and Britain over the fate of the Eastern European nations. The Soviet Union had been invaded by Germany through these eastern nations in 1941 and sought to place "friendly" regimes, i.e., Communist governments, in those countries to provide a buffer against the West. The U.S. and Britain sought to stop the spread of Communism. Because both the U.S. and the Soviet Union held nuclear weapons, a "cold" war of words was preferable to a "hot" war of weapons. Each side attempted to influence political and economic developments throughout the world, often in direct response to an action by the opposing side. For example, the Soviet Union provided assistance to several Communist governments in Asia, while the U.S., beginning in the mid-1950s, began sending military advisers to South Vietnam to assist in the struggle against the Communist North Vietnamese. The U.S. advisory role would expand into a military presence in the next decade.

Following the Korean Armistice, the Marine Corps found itself with its largest peacetime strength in history. The actuality of Soviet-supported aggression in Korea had proven the necessity of a more flexible response capability; the Truman administration's last budget, for the fiscal year 1954, proposed \$1.4 billion for a Marine Corps of 248,000 personnel. This was an almost inconceivable turnaround from just three years before, when a Corps almost one-quarter that size with a FMF of only six infantry battalions had been anticipated.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower's subsequent administration, in office to the end of the decade, also found that it had to face the menace of an openly hostile Soviet Union. Eisenhower accepted the necessity of general-purpose forces; however, faced with a sluggish economy troubled by inflation and the increasing cost of modern weapons, his prescription for a healthy economy was to hold defense spending while enlarging the Air Force and its nuclear weapons delivery capability at the expense of the other armed services. Thus, Marine Corps strength fell from 223,858 in 1954 to 170,621 in 1960, with a corresponding budget reduction from \$1.097 billion to a proposed \$902 million for the fiscal year 1961. Such cuts made it difficult to maintain the FMF at peak operational capability while also modernizing and training troops, and left the Supporting Establishment with fewer resources.

To meet its growing worldwide commitments while economizing, when the 1st MarDiv redeployed from Korea to Camp Pendleton, the Corps relocated the 3rd MarDiv to Camp Smedley D. Butler on Okinawa with one of its regiments, the 4th Marines, which had been dispatched to Kaneohe Bay in Hawaii to serve as the ground combat element of the 1st Marine Brigade. In addition, the Corps, having pioneered the concept of vertical envelopment and the use of helicopters to insert assault forces, began studies to tailor its divisions into more flexible, mobile, and air-transportable formations, further transferring heavier combat and logistical support units to Force Troops as part of the reorganization. From these studies came the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and the T/O, which remained virtually unchanged over the next several decades and introduced the infantry battalion of four rifle companies. The



2nd MarDiv underwent its change to the new T/O during the period 1 April to 30 September 1958.

With the election of President John F. Kennedy in 1960, a new policy of strengthening the country's general-purpose forces resulted in an increase in the defense budget. A vigorous foreign policy, relying on modernized weapons, enhanced strategic mobility, and a large ground force gave the President more flexibility in countering Soviet aggression. The active-duty strength of the Marine Corps reflected this policy, growing from its 1961 personnel strength of 176,909 (including 1,610 Women Marines) to 190,962 in 1962. By the end of 1965 Corps strength totaled 214,500.

President Kennedy became the second U.S. president to visit Camp Lejeune (President Roosevelt visited the base in December 1944) when, on 14 April 1962, accompanied by Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, he watched a demonstration of the amphibious force-in-readiness from Riseley Pier,

recently rebuilt after having been truncated by Hurricane Donna in 1960. Units of the 2nd MarDiv, 2nd MAF, and Force Troops assaulted across Onslow Beach, employing the vertical envelopment concept that had been perfected by a series of brigade landing exercises following the first major test of the concept during LANPHIBEX-58 at Onslow Beach. Fittingly, that same year the Marine Corps documentary film, *Force in Readiness*, produced by William L. Hendricks, won an Oscar at the annual awards ceremony of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



In April 1962, President John F. Kennedy and the Shah of Iran visited Camp Lejeune to observe an amphibious landing exercise.

From 16 October to 28 October 1962, during what became known as the Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. experienced its first direct confrontation of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. U.S. intelligence discovered via satellite photographs the presence of Soviet missiles located in Cuba, just 90 miles south of Florida. As a response to the perceived military threat, the entire II MEF (Marine Expeditionary Force) deployed for a possible invasion, and MAG-26, stationed at MCAF New River, was deployed aboard two aircraft carriers in support of the 2nd MarDiv. After several days the crisis was resolved when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev removed the missiles.

As Cold War tensions intensified, and as weapons and tactics grew more technologically advanced, the Marine Corps developed techniques and equipment that would keep pace with these advancements. New assault techniques



were developed, using helicopters that could go around or over shoreline defenses and high speed air-cushioned landing craft that could operate on the sea and, to a limited extent, on land. Marine aviation was a pivotal part of the multi-faceted sea to shore amphibious assault. During the 1960s and 1970s the complexity and sophistication of the Marines' aviation units were well represented by the tenant helicopter units at MCAF New River.

## Aviation at MCAF New River

The 2nd MAW provided the air combat elements for FMFLant MAGTFs, usually in the form of helicopter support from MAG-26. By 1960 the group, which has a history of being a multi-missioned unit in support of Marine efforts around the globe, had come to consist of Headquarters & Maintenance Squadron 26 (H&MS-26), similar to a headquarters company in ground units; Marine Air Base Squadron-26 (MABS-26), similar to a ground unit's service company; HMR(L)-261, -262, -263, and -264, light transport helicopter squadrons; and VMO-1, a squadron used for air-to-ground observation from light, fixed-wing aircraft and observation helicopters. Beginning in 1958, HMR(M)-461, a medium transport helicopter squadron participated in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Project Mercury by locating and retrieving the space capsules from their ocean landings. Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM)-262 and Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH)-461 assisted in the recovery of America's first astronaut, Navy Commander Alan Shepard, in May 1961, and Virgil Grissom in July, following their sub-orbital flights. On 20 February 1962 helicopters from HMM-262 recovered Marine Lieutenant Colonel John Glenn, who had just won renown for himself and glory for the Corps as the first American to orbit the earth in space.

In addition to the long-term commitments in the Mediterranean, Vieques, Puerto Rico, and the Far East, Marine aircraft were also involved in a series of humanitarian and emergency evacuation situations during the late 1950s and 1960s. In 1958 one squadron aboard the USS Wasp was sent to revolt-torn Lebanon and operated from the Beirut International Airport alongside United Nations ground troops. In 1954 MAG(H)-26's Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM)-261 achieved the novel distinction of being immortalized on a stamp issued by a grateful Haitian government for assistance provided to the hurricane-stricken people of Port-au-Prince. In April 1965 MAG-26 helicopters from HMM-264 were sent to the Dominican Republic capital of Santo Domingo in response to a Communist-inspired coup. Approximately 8,000 Marines, including the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), rescued American citizens from the Dominican Republic as revolt spread throughout Santo Domingo. Once loyalist forces had regained the government, the Marines returned home on 6 June 1965.

Although known for its globe-hopping, one of the primary missions of MAG-26 was, and continues to be, support of the 2nd MarDiv training at Camp Lejeune. The group provides helicopter support to division units in the field by transporting troops for a vertical assault, transporting equipment and supplies, or providing aerial reconnaissance of the "enemy."

During the 1960s Marine Air Control Squadron-7 (MACS-7) also became a tenant at MCAF New River. The mission of this unit, under direct

control of Cherry Point, was to install, maintain, and operate ground facilities for the detection and interception of hostile aircraft and missiles. In addition, the squadron provided "air traffic control" for friendly aircraft. These squadrons were considered tenant commands aboard the air facility, which served as the host command. Like any other FMF unit, MAG-26 could deploy quickly, while the host command, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron (H&HS), remained in place.

## Housing for Aviators

In 1959, 435 Capehart housing units were constructed east of the runways for Marines and their families stationed at New River. The housing consisted of 325 enlisted quarters and 110 officer quarters. The houses were ranch-style, built of wood and brick, and were allotted by waiting list, which in 1960 was 256 days.

## Mainside Facilities

Although some Marines remember Camp Lejeune in the early days as a desolate place devoid of entertainment, in just a short time the base developed one of the largest recreational programs of any Armed Forces installation in the country. Because of its location the base could offer outdoor recreation such as fresh and salt water fishing, hunting, and, of course, 14 miles of beach along the Atlantic Ocean. Ski boats, rowboats, sailing boats, and canoes were also available for rent. "Special services" encompassed a wide range of activities at the base, including two golf courses, bowling alleys, movie theaters, swimming pools, horse stables, skeet ranges, libraries, and other community activities.

As a result of the increase in the number of teenaged children aboard the base in the early 1960s, the former NCO Club at Marston Pavilion was converted to a youth center. A new NCO club was constructed at Hadnot Point. Camp Lejeune also improved its school system, which by 1962 consisted of five grade schools and a combined junior and senior high school. Within five years two more elementary schools were constructed, a separate senior high was constructed, and a school bus system was in place. Two kindergartens were available, as well as a nursery school and a sitter service.

As the number of training personnel increased at Camp Lejeune during the 1950s and 1960s, new residential areas were also developed. Even so, the demand was greater than the resources, and married Marines were urged not to bring their families with them until housing was secured, since there was a waiting list of at least 250 days for most units.

In 1953 immediate housing was provided through the acquisition of 1,150 new trailers that were placed in the Camp Knox trailer park and the newly established trailer park at Camp Geiger. At that time the Piney Green or "FHA" trailer park was closed. This brought the total number of family units available to 6,302. In 1959, under the auspices of the Capehart Housing Act, Berkeley Manor at Hadnot Point was begun. When completed in 1962, the development provided 677 units for enlisted men. These units were used to phase out the 464 units at Midway Park, built in 1944.



Because of Camp Lejeune's distance from major cities, and since there was no public transportation from the base into Jacksonville, the base was declared an "isolated area," which gave commanders the authority under revised Navy Regulations to grant 96-hour liberty. Marines were often given extended passes so that they could travel to more distant cities, such as Washington, D.C. Marines who had cars and were willing to ferry others with them were called "swoopers." The ritual that evolved on base consisted of a swooper driving into "Swooper's Circle," adjacent to the Protestant chapel, announcing to the MP on duty his destination, and the MP announcing the information via public address system to Marines waiting in the circle.

Camp Lejeune's presence had quickly changed the face of Jacksonville and Onslow County. During the 1950s the population in Jacksonville grew 340 percent from 3,960 to 13,491 in 1960. Marines and their dependents made up 60 to 70 percent of the inhabitants. The area's agricultural economy had given way to an economy based on providing services to the new residents. In the 1950s Jacksonville's business growth exceeded 100 percent, the highest rate of growth for any city in the state. Onslow County was second only to Cumberland County, home of Fort Bragg, with a business growth rate of 73.4 percent.





Marines practice amphibious landings on Onslow Beach.