



**Dec  
2023**

# **The Bursting Bomb**

**MARINE GUNNER ASSOCIATION  
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE**

**ISSUE  
4-23**





**Editor: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian P. Wade USMC (Ret.)**

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*On the Cover: A US Marine from Company E, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment moves inland under enemy fire during the Battle of Iwo Jima in February 1944. He is armed with a flame thrower, a Colt M1911A1, and [what appears to be] a Mk2 fighting knife. Photo: USMC.*

## SITREP...from the Editor:

Greetings, Leathernecks and Happy Birthday!

It seems as I get older, my sentimental reaction to the Marine Corps Birthday becomes more and more profound. Works for me. This year we celebrate the 248th year of our Corps' service to our beloved nation. It's important to note that the Continental Marines were disbanded in 1783, but the Corps of Marines was raised again in 1798, as the fledgling version of the organization we know today. Imagine a Marine Corps where the Commanding Officer was a Major, then a Lieutenant Colonel (commandant), and so on. It wasn't until March of 1945 when the office of the Commandant was legally raised to the rank of [4-star] General and officially named "Commandant of the Marine Corps." Astonishingly, that was within the lifetime of my father. This is just a small snapshot of how much work was done over so many years to build the US Marine Corps into the revered fighting organization she is today.

Congratulations to the Marines who have been selected to serve as Marine Gunners. You will soon be empowered to be servant leaders as never before. I look forward to meeting you all on the battlefield at Little Bighorn.

We have a rather robust edition of The Bursting Bomb for you this quarter. I sincerely hope you enjoy it. Given some of the topics, I anticipate some spirited debate. Have a great Holidays! Don't forget to reach out to friends and family who might otherwise become isolated during this time of year. Often, our brothers and sisters who might be suffering will not volunteer that information.

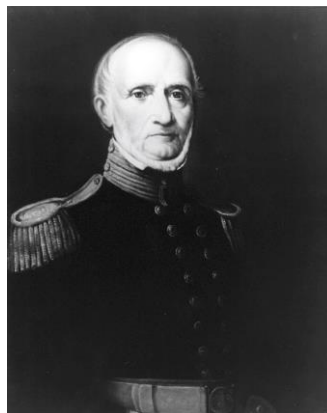
**The Main Effort of the US Marine Corps is the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad.**

Christian Wade  
The Editor



*(Above): (L): Major Samuel Nicholas USMC, the Commanding Officer of the Continental Marines, later retroactively designated as the first [de facto] Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC). He commanded from 28 Nov 1775 until 27 Aug 1783, when the Continental Marines was disbanded by the US Congress. Photos: USMC.*

*(Above): (R): Lieutenant Colonel William Ward Burrows I, USMC (Ret.), the first de jure Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), though that title was not formally established in US Law until 1942. He served as Commandant from 12 July 1798 (when the US Marine Corps was recreated by Congress) until 6 Mar 1804.*



*(Above): (L): Colonel Archibald Henderson, USMC, the "Grand Old Man of the Marine Corps", served as the Commandant of the Marine Corps from 17 Oct 1820 until his death on 6 Jan 1859. He is responsible for a great many traditions which are still in effect.*

*(Above): (R): Brigadier General Jacob Zeilen, USMC (Ret.) served as the Commandant of the Marine Corps from 10 Jun 1864 until 31 Oct 1876. He was the first General Officer to serve as CMC.*



## SITREP...from the Editor:



*(Top row & below left): The Marine Gunner Association, through the Jesse Schertz Memorial Scholarship, continues to provide scholarships for higher education to Infantry Marines and their families. Photos: Vince Kyzer.*




*(Right): The graduation notice for the final US Marine Corps Scout-Sniper School class (3-23), School of Infantry East, Camp Lejeune, NC. The author predicts US Marine Scout-Snipers will be back...and soon. War will demand their return. A great many Marine Gunners are alumni of the USMC Scout-Sniper Schools. Photo: Used with permission of Timothy Parkhurst, President of the USMC Scout Sniper Association.*

Scout Sniper Course East 3-23

### FINAL SCOUT SNIPER GRADUATION

All Scout Snipers past and present are welcome to attend.

**HOGS CALL**  
 Date: DEC 14, 2023  
 Time: 1900 EST  
 Location: Camp Geiger, NC  
 Host: USMC Scout Sniper Association  
 Bonfire and Pig Roast



**GRADUATION**  
 Date: DEC 15, 2023  
 Time: 1200 EST  
 Location: Ivy Hall aboard Camp Geiger, NC  
 Guest Speaker: Cody Alford  
 USMC Scout Sniper, Marine Raider, Motivational Speaker  
 Attire: Service Bravos for participants. Duty uniform for military. Business casual for guests.

Sponsored by USMC Scout Sniper Association.

*(Right): September 2023—The graduating class of 18 Marine Gunners with Gunner Mark Erhardt, The Basic School Gunner and the Director of the Infantry Weapons Officer Course aboard Quantico, Virginia. Photo: Mark Erhardt.*



## WARNO...

### 2024 MGA West Coast Gathering

**When:** 5 April 2024, 1800 PST

**Who:** MGA, Family, and Friends

**What:** West Coast Gathering

**Where:** 1617 Mission Ave. Oceanside, CA 92058

**Why:** To bring West Coast Gunners together, strengthen our community, and establish a dialogue between generations of Gunners.



*(Above): 1617 Mission Ave. Oceanside, CA. Veterans Association of North County. Photo: Google Maps.*

## Save the Date

### 2024 MGA Annual Dinner

**When:** 15 August 2024, time TBD

**Who:** MGA, Family, and Friends

**What:** MGA Annual Dinner

**Where:** TBD in the Quantico, VA area

**Why:** The annual national gathering of the Marine Gunner Association.





## MGA Executive Staff



*President*  
*CWO-4/Marine Gunner*  
*Matthew Carpenter*  
*USMC (Ret.)*



*Vice President*  
*Matthew Anderson*  
*CWO-5/Marine Gunner*  
*USMC, DC, PP&O, HQMC*



*Treasurer*  
*CWO-4/Marine Gunner*  
*Kevin Gonzalez*  
*USMC (Ret.)*

## MGA Membership

Application for annual membership is currently open by way of the MGA website (<https://www.marinegunnerassociation.net>).

The link for membership is located on the top center portion of the MGA website homepage.

### Membership requirements:

(Full membership)-

\*0306 Marine Gunners Active and Retired (Honorable Discharge)

\* Annual renewable memberships are \$50 per year

\*Note: All editions of The Bursting Bomb will be placed, for public access and sharing, on the Marine Gunner Association website (hyperlink in blue on left of this page).

(Associate membership)-

\*\$100 per year. Applications will be reviewed by the Executive Staff

\* Note: All editions of The Bursting Bomb will be placed, for public access and sharing, on the Marine Gunner Association website (hyperlink in blue on left of this page).

## Messages From the Executive Staff MGA President

Brothers and Friends of the Marine Gunner Association,

I trust this letter finds you well and thriving. As we come together to celebrate significant milestones and express gratitude, it is crucial that we also extend our thoughts and appreciation to our deployed Brothers, Marines, and Sailors who stand steadfast, stationed throughout the globe.

Firstly, heartfelt congratulations to each one of you on the 248th Marine Corps Birthday. This occasion not only marks the birth of our beloved Corps but stands as a testament to the dedication, honor, and courage exhibited by Marines worldwide. Regardless of where duty takes us, the Marine Corps spirit unites us in a common bond that transcends time and space.

As we reflect on Veterans Day, let us express our deepest gratitude to those who have served, and continue to serve, in defense of our nation. Our deployed brothers carry the torch of service in far-flung corners of the world, and their sacrifices uphold the values we hold dear.

With the upcoming Holiday Season, our thoughts turn to family, friendship, and the bonds that sustain us. To our brothers deployed, know that you are not forgotten. Your service and sacrifice are appreciated, and our thoughts and prayers are with you, your Marines, and your loved ones during these special times.

I am delighted to share the news of the selection of the Marine Gunner class of 2024, individuals who, like our deployed brothers, embody the ethos of our esteemed association. Their leadership and commitment to excellence will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success of our organization.

Congratulations to the newest members of our Board, who have stepped forward to serve in vital roles. Your dedication ensures the continued

growth and success of the Marine Gunner Association. A special note of appreciation goes to former Chairman Mike Brooks for his outstanding leadership and tireless dedication. Mike, your contributions have made a lasting impact, and we extend our deepest thanks.

It is with great pleasure that I announce the election of Jeff Eby as the new Chairman of the Board. Jeff's passion and commitment to our association make him a natural fit for this role. Under Jeff's guidance, I am confident that the Marine Gunner Association will continue to thrive.

As we celebrate our accomplishments and look forward to the future, let us not forget our brothers and sisters deployed worldwide. Your dedication and sacrifice inspire us all, and we stand united in solidarity, knowing that the bonds of the Marine Corps and our Association are strong.

Semper Fidelis,

**Matt Carpenter**  
President  
Marine Gunner Association



*(Above): US Marines conduct live fire training with the M3A1 MAAWS (a.k.a. "Carl Gustav") system. The M3A1 MAAWS was procured out of an effort largely supported by Marine Gunners.  
Photo: USMC.*

## Messages From the Executive Staff MGA Vice President and Treasurer

Season’s Greetings to all!

Since the last MGA magazine, the Gunner Community has continued to stay busy supporting the nation’s response to crises and contingency operations across the globe, as well as being at the forefront of the service’s modernization efforts.

We recently wrapped up the FY24 Combat Marksmanship Symposium. This year marks the thirteenth anniversary of the merger with the Range Officer MOS—the Gunner Community assuming responsibility for institutional marksmanship. Through hard work and dedication, the Gunners have continued to transform the service’s marksmanship program, tailored towards lethality under realistic battlefield conditions.

**MARADMIN 568/23 Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24)  
Enlisted to Chief Warrant Officer 2 (Marine Gunner) Selection Board Results:**

I am proud to welcome the newly selected Marines to the Gunner community. These Marines will attend the Warrant Officers Basic Course in the upcoming months, followed by the Infantry Weapons Officers Course. Once trained, they will hit the FMF and the supporting establishment as Battalion Gunners.

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| GySgt Hunter Bernius   | GySgt Luke Hudson      |
| GySgt Stephen Bilbo    | GySgt Royce Hughie     |
| GySgt Kyle Boksha      | GySgt Jeremy McVay     |
| MGySgt Marc Chaplin    | GySgt Alexander Miller |
| GySgt Theodore Cothran | MSgt Preston Mills     |
| MSgt Cory Erdie        | GySgt Robert Selapack  |
| GySgt James Fowler     | GySgt Chad Skaggs      |
| GySgt Anthony Gaar     | GySgt Brian Willett    |

As we wind up 2023 and look forward to what is in

store for 2024, my family and I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year! I hope that everyone is safe, and I look forward to getting a chance to see everyone again in the next year.

Happy Birthday Marines!

Semper Fidelis,  
**Matt Anderson (HQMC, PP&O Gunner)  
Marine Gunner Association Vice President**



### Message from the MGA Treasurer

Members of the MGA,

As 2023 comes to a close, I would like to thank everyone for their continued support and contributions to the MGA. Over the past 12 months the MGA was able to collect over \$50k in donations. These funds allowed the MGA to host the annual banquet dinner in Manassas, VA., award multiple scholarships, and we were able to provide support to Marine Corps families going through financial hardship. We are committed to the mission and will continue to make strides every day to support the warfighter. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone for their continued support, enthusiasm, dedication, and passion.

Semper Fidelis,  
**Kevin Gonzalez (CWO-4/Gunner Ret.)  
Marine Gunner Association Treasurer**





The MGA would like to thank the following sponsors for their continuing support



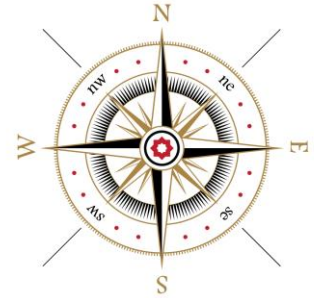
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**GUARD UNIT**





## TBS and IWOC Updates

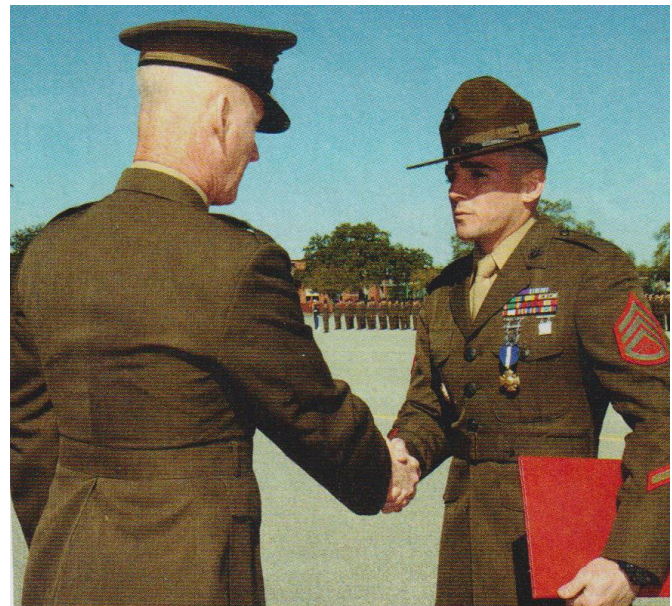
The Marine Gunner Association takes great pride in the announcement of the Fiscal Year 24 Marine Gunner selection list. We are grateful for the Service of the following Marines:

Bernius, Hunter G.	0306	1R3	13004
Billbo, Stephen D.	0306	V24	13220
Boksha, Kyle S.	0306	R00	54050
Chaplin, Marc J.	0306	092	20230
Cothran, Theodore M.	0306	130	13101
Erdie, Cory R.	0306	V32	12130
Fowler, James T.	0306	V13	13110
Gaar, Anthony D.	0306	SJR	85295
Hudson, Luke T.	0306	V14	11120
Hughie, Royce R.	0306	V11	11110
McVay, Jeremy M.	0306	078	30370
Miller, Alexander L.	0306	V28	12170
Mills, Preston D.	0306	1MR	20903
Selapack, Robert S.	0306	1K4	20371
Skaggs, Chad C.	0306	UKT	35010
Willett, Brian E.	0306	KA2	31350

In February 2024, these Marines will report for duty as students at The Basic School (TBS) aboard Quantico, Virginia. They will attend the Warrant Officer Basic Course (WOBC) for approximately three months. Upon graduation, they will then attend the Infantry Weapons Officer Course, a demanding five month course where they will be trained on the diverse knowledge-base required for Marine Gunners. The course includes detailed technical weapons training, conceptual employment training, education on how to train other Marines, and general education to enhance their abilities to serve as Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Officers. Each Gunner will be prepared to assume duties in the operating forces (infantry battalions, regiments, and divisions) and the supporting establishment (i.e. live fire range complexes, schools, and Headquarters Marine Corps agencies). Headquarters Marine Corps

agencies include assignments to Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC), range control agencies around the world, Training and Education Command (TECOM), Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), USMC Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration (CD&I), and the Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations (PP&O).

There are currently approximately 100 Marine Gunner billets across the USMC. Marine Gunner (selects), we congratulate you and look forward to meeting you on the battlefields of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and at Little Bighorn, Montana. Good luck, Marines.



*(Above): Marine Gunner Anthony "Tony" Viggiani, USMC (Ret.), recipient of the Navy Cross. When Commissioned as a Marine Gunner, the weight of the legacy of those Marine Gunners who blazed the trail becomes all too evident, much like our experience of earning the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor as newly created US Marines. Good luck, Marine Gunner (Selects). You are soon to fully appreciate the magnitude of what is expected of you. Keep your Honor clean. We will vicariously follow your experiences in the upcoming editions of The Bursting Bomb. Photo: USMC.*

## Mental Health Concepts

### Intro to US Govt-Approved Psychedelic Therapy Studies

By: Christian Wade

The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have been working with the Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) to determine the efficacy of MDMA for the treatment of moderate to severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in veterans. MAPS is currently conducting a second Phase 3 study with US veterans and the results are profound. In fact, there are numerous legitimate and promising studies of psychedelics for clinical therapy happening now—at Stanford University, Johns Hopkins Medicine, and others. This is happening.



*(Above): Dr. Rick Doblin PhD, founder and former executive director of MAPS. He has advocated for the use of psychedelics in psychotherapy for decades. Photo: Open source.*

In this article, we will introduce several of the most well-known psychedelic substances and discuss ways in which they have proven effective in the healing of traumas; both psychological and from physical injuries to the brain. While there are many substances with psychoactive properties, we will focus on the following medicines:

- MDMA (3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine)
- Psilocybin
- Ibogaine
- 5-MeO-DMT

All the substances listed above are classified as Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act of 1970. The US Government considers Schedule 1 substances to be very likely to be abused, with no accepted clinical/medical value (whether scientifically factual or not).

#### MDMA

MDMA, also known as “molly” or “ecstasy” (among other street names) is a psychoactive substance that has mild psychedelic properties. Common effects include altered states of consciousness, increased energy, empathy, and pleasure. MDMA was created in 1912 by chemists from the Merck corporation. MDMA is well-known for being used recreationally at “raves”—dance parties with electronic music. MDMA, after becoming a focus of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), was placed on Schedule 1 in 1985. Before its Schedule 1 classification, there was limited, but promising, research into the use of MDMA in psychotherapy, but this ceased in 1985.

With support and advocacy from MAPS, the FDA approved limited testing of MDMA in psychotherapy. While MAPS has maintained strict adherence to the legal protocols outlined by the US Government, MAPS has also upheld scientific disciplines sufficient to achieve a second Phase 3 testing status at present.

In a clinical setting and with disciplined intent, MDMA has proven to alter a patient’s consciousness so that they are better able to access traumatic memories, accept therapeutic techniques,

## Mental Health Concepts

### US Government-Approved Psychedelic Therapy Studies

and initiate healing. Without the psychedelic effect, patients are often incapable of accessing trauma due to anxiety and apprehension. Many veterans, even those who work for years with a professional counselor, become “stuck” and are simply unable to make further progress. Psychedelics can cause the necessary chemical and neural changes in their brain to move them to a place where they can begin to access traumas and resolve them. The following link will take the reader to a report from the MAPS study.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-021-01336-3>

The following quote was taken from the findings of the study—

“At the primary study endpoint (18 weeks after baseline), 28 of 42 (67%) of the participants in the MDMA group no longer met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, compared with 12 of 37 (32%) of those in the placebo group after three sessions. Additionally, 14 of 42 participants in the MDMA group (33%) and 2 of 37 participants in the placebo group (5%) met the criteria for remission after three sessions.”

These results are encouraging for veterans who suffer from PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Representatives from MAPS have indicated that they believe MDMA-assisted therapy will be approved in late 2023 and available in a clinical setting as early as 2024.

#### Psilocybin

Psilocybin (also known as “Magic Mushrooms” among other names) has long demonstrated healing properties when used for that

purpose. Psilocybin is a classic psychedelic substance that is contained in many species of fungi. After being ingested, the body converts psilocybin to psilocin which alters perception akin to LSD and DMT. Users commonly experience hallucinations, altered perception of time, euphoria, and spiritual experiences. Some historians believe that humans have been consuming psychedelic mushrooms since well before recorded history. Some theorize that the evolution of the human brain was significantly influenced by thousands of years of frequent ingestion of psychedelic substances by nomadic hunter-gatherers...at least until the US Government, declared that psychedelics were verboten.

Current [early Phase 3] Research has shown that psilocybin is not only useful in psychotherapy for PTSD, depression, and anxiety, but that it can provide relief from chronic headaches, remove the fear of dying in terminally ill patients, and provide spiritual comfort and meaning. As psychedelics become approved for clinical use by the US Government, some in the industry predict that psilocybin will be approved soon after MDMA.

#### Ibogaine

While some describe the psychedelic medicine ayahuasca as “the mother”, others describe Ibogaine as “the father.” Ibogaine is a psychedelic substance obtained from the Iboga plant which is found in central Africa. Limited clinical test data exists for Ibogaine because it was classified as Schedule 1 in the US in 1970. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that Ibogaine is very effective at not only mitigating the effects of opioid addiction withdrawal, but it can also significantly ameliorate addictions, themselves. Users have reported relief from addictions...including heroin, alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine and everything in between. Evidence



## Mental Health Concepts

### US Government-Approved Psychedelic Therapy Studies

also suggests that Ibogaine rewires the brain's neural network, repairing damage from Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and psychological trauma. This phenomenon is often referred to as "neuroplasticity." For veterans who have taken Ibogaine in a psychotherapeutic context, many have reported that they felt a literal "change of mind"—theretofore unimaginable during any other VA-provided efforts. They also reported that the effects from Ibogaine treatment were profound, lasting, and life-altering. Ibogaine can produce a sort of dream state while awake that allows the psychedelic traveler to process traumas, spiritual aspects of themselves, and perspectives they have been unable to access by any other means. We will discuss Ibogaine again in a later article in this issue.

#### 5-MeO-DMT (5-methoxy-*N,N*-dimethyltryptamine)

5-MeO-DMT (also known as "Toad", "Dmitri", and "the God molecule") is a psychedelic substance which can produce relatively short-duration but very powerful experiences of altered consciousness. Many describe their experience as a turbulent "cosmological" journey where they experience the presence of a divine entity (God). 5-MeO-DMT can also allow a user to confront feelings of guilt, shame, sorrow, and loss, and allow them to process it and purge it. Some have described 5-MeO-DMT as being a "finishing touch" to therapeutic progress that had been made through use of Ibogaine (or other longer duration psychedelics). Naturally, 5-MeO-DMT is classified as Schedule 1 in the US, but it is not regulated in, for example, Mexico. In fact, hundreds of US veterans have traveled to Mexico to participate in psychedelic assisted therapy using Ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT, among other peripheral techniques. Reports from countless veterans overwhelmingly

indicate that use of Ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT has provided much needed healing, peace of mind, and forgiveness. Many veterans have stated that they felt that they believed psychedelic assisted therapy to be their last chance and that after they had experienced it, they had been saved from self destruction and suicide.

Make no mistake—The psychedelic medicines listed in this article are currently illegal for possession and consumption in the United States (unless one is participating in one of the FDA/DEA approved studies). Neither the VA nor TRICARE support these therapies. Until MDMA-assisted therapy is available, veterans who have decided that they wish to participate in psychedelic assisted therapy must do so on their own.

Active Duty personnel are strictly forbidden from taking any of these substances. For those active personnel who are suffering, I strongly urge them to immediately seek help from the legal mechanisms that are available—the concussion recovery centers on select Marine Corps bases, their local Naval medical facilities (including mental health professionals). As someone who has used those services as both an active and retired Marine, I highly recommend them. There is simply no reason to wait.

The estimates of the number of veterans who have taken their own lives since September 11, 2001, are staggeringly high. We have lost **far more** veterans to suicide than to enemy contact since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began. This has got to stop.

Stay frosty—MDMA-assisted therapy is likely to be approved soon. Eyes, ears, and mind open and take care of yourself.

Dr. Rick Doblin on Joe Rogan #1964



## Man, Train, and Equip: Service Handguns

### The Marine Rifleman—An MCDP-1 Doctrinal/Philosophical Discussion

By: Marine Gunner Christian Wade (CWO-5/USMC Ret.)



*(Above): The .44 caliber Colt 1860 Army revolver is considered by many to be the first widely-fielded and standard United States service handgun—due to the demands of the US Civil War. The previous model, the .36 caliber Colt 1851 Navy revolver, was also employed by US troops, but in limited numbers.*

There is little else that gets Marines and Sailors (and Soldiers and Airmen) more fired up than the subject of service handguns. Well, maybe the matter of the service rifle is right up there with it. For the purposes of this discussion, we will focus on the handguns of the US Army and Marine Corps (the principal ground close combat services) over the many decades of service history. I will also briefly discuss US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) service handguns and rationale.

**Admin note:** I will refer to cylinder fed handguns as “revolvers” and semi-automatic magazine-fed handguns as “pistols.” Unless otherwise noted, all photos are from open sources.

By the end of this article, I hope to achieve the following objectives:

- List the service handguns used by the USMC, other services, and MARSOC back to the mid 19th Century, for the services which existed back to that time.
- Discuss some of the reasons for adoption of select handguns.
- Perhaps most importantly, define the service

revolver or pistol’s doctrinal reason for existence.

We have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on handguns, ammunition, and training since the mid 19th century. What do we have to show for our efforts? Are we getting our money’s worth?

I will consider the following [somewhat philosophical] questions:

- Why do we continue to field a handgun?
- Should we continue to field a handgun?
- If we should continue to field a handgun, who should be issued a handgun and to what degree should we train and sustain them?
- For those we determine should no longer be assigned a handgun, what should we do with the already purchased and fielded handgun?
- Is the current USMC combat pistol training course sufficient to the requirement (assuming we have a valid requirement)?

So, let us begin our journey. I refer to my opening sentence. Before I continue, allow me to paint a

## Man, Train, and Equip: Service Handguns

### The Marine Rifleman—An MCDP-1 Doctrinal/Philosophical Discussion

picture... Readers should think back to their time traipsing around the Combat OutPosts (COPs) and Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) of Iraq and Afghanistan. Picture the Officers and Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) standing in the line at the pizza truck with their sidearms stuffed into their fancy PX-bought leather shoulder holsters. You can close your eyes for this part, if you'd like, and enter a meditative state. The Officer or SNCO turns to place his/her pizza order, and you get a clear and sharp image straight down the barrel of the pistol. You notice that there is some rust on the barrel. You also note that there is no magazine inserted, and as well as you can tell, the Marine has no ammunition on his/her person. As you enter a deeper meditative state, imagine the shock as the enemy has decided to conduct an "insider attack", which for as far as you can tell, is directed at the pizza truck. You, the vigilant and disciplined Lance Corporal (LCpl) have followed your Platoon Sergeant's instructions, and you have your trusty M4 Carbine, slung on your shoulder. While the FOB leadership has directed all personnel to "download" their weapons to Condition 4, you have at least one filled magazine of ammunition. You, the armed and ready Marine (with ammunition), quickly break for available cover and place your weapon into fighting status...and you take the fight to the enemy as well as you can. The Marine with his/her shoulder holster, unloaded sidearm, and no ammunition is NO value added and best case, runs away.

**The purpose of the Service Pistol is not to "check the box" of a requirement to be "armed" and ready on a COP or FOB while one's rifle or carbine is hanging on a nail on a wall.**

For that one person reading this who may find themselves in a position of leadership (Camp Commandant), please remember this. Do not allow your Marines and Sailors to "check the box". And-

**\*\*Do not bring [only] a pistol to a rifle fight.\*\***

And while I am on this subject (this is an OpEd after all), resist the temptation to install clearing barrels all over the place. Leaders should carefully consider whether to insist their Marines and Sailors (all personnel for that matter) be armed with a Service Rifle, Carbine, or Automatic Rifle with abundant ammunition (on their body), and a Condition One weapon. For those who were not in Iraq or Afghanistan, it was not at all uncommon to find numerous 9mm size bullet holes in and around the ridiculously unnecessary clearing barrels placed all around the FOBs. That is the universe communicating with us...

**-Place one's weapon to Condition One and leave it alone until one needs to maintain one's weapon, conduct a chamber check to ensure it is loaded, or kill the enemy.**

Now that we have all of that out of the way, let's get to work. The US Army and Marine Corps have employed the following handguns since the mid 19th century, officially or unofficially, depending on the nature of federal acquisitions of the time. Readers should note that the USMC did not come into its own as the organization like we recognize today until, at the earliest, the Battle of Belleau Wood during World War I. Before that, the Marine Corps was a small organization of, for the most part, small US Navy shipboard detachments. In the author's opinion, World War



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I “put the Marine Corps on the map” and began its rise to the respected and separate service it is today. Naturally, that is debatable and not the subject of this piece. I highlight this since it relates to the nature of federal acquisitions over the last two centuries. In the 19th century, the USMC acquired its service weapons and ammunition largely through the advocacy of the US Navy. After the turn of the 19th to 20th century, the US Army became the dominant force in the requirements development and acquisitions of ground weapons. Readers should be advised that Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) often purchases USMC infantry weapons through a US Army contract vehicle. We purchase at the Army price and the Army adds a “processing fee”. This saves the USMC a great deal of money and for the most part, we get an 80% solution towards our naval infantry-esque requirements.

If you are still with me, here are the service handguns of the US Armed Forces:



*(Above): The .44 caliber black powder, percussion cap Colt M1847 Walker revolver saw limited US Army service in the Mexican-American War.*

The Colt Walker proved to be quite powerful as a handgun but was large and heavy. Anecdotes suggest that the cylinders also suffered ruptures when fired due to the metallurgical qualities of the time and loading methods. The Colt Walker is revered today, sufficient to have

been formally designated by Governor Greg Abbott as the Official Handgun of Texas.



*(Above): The .44 caliber black powder, percussion cap Colt M1860 Army revolver saw extensive use during and after the American Civil War.*

The Colt M1860 Army revolver, based on the author’s research, could be considered the US Army’s first official service handgun. The US Army ordered 129,730 revolvers which were issued and well used during and after the Civil War. The Colt Walker and 1860 Army models are loaded, one cylinder at a time, with a black powder charge and a .44 caliber lead ball. The steel rod below the barrel is used to ram each ball tightly into each cylinder chamber during the time-consuming loading process. A percussion cap is then inserted onto each nipple (on the rear portion of the cylinder) and for safe carry, the revolver can be carried on an empty cylinder (5 shots loaded) or the hammer can be rested on a portion of the cylinder between the percussion caps (6 shots loaded). For readers who have not operated one of these revolvers, reloading during combat is not an option. Also, with these original models, quickly removing the empty cylinder with a loaded cylinder (like a speed loader) was not possible. Clint Eastwood made popular this reloading technique in *High Plains Drifter*, but this was not possible until conversion models were produced in

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later years. To mitigate the reloading issue, one could simply carry more loaded revolvers. Readers should also consider that the only timely and practical method for unloading the percussion cap black powder revolvers of the time is by firing all the cylinders.



*(Above): Clint Eastwood, in the Outlaw Josey Wales, was armed with two Colt Walkers and a Colt 1860 Army revolver. This technique mitigates the inability to quickly reload. Simply carry more revolvers.*

Model Army revolvers were converted to fire metallic cartridge cases.



*(Above): A.J. Blue, a Union Cavalry Officer, poses with three Remington New Model Army revolvers and a cavalry saber. Photo: Library of Congress.*



*(Above): The Remington New Model Army was procured when a fire at the Colt factory halted production of the Colt 1860 Army revolver.*

The US Army purchased the Remington New Model Army (in .36 and .44 caliber) to supplement its stock of Colt 1860 Army service revolvers during the Civil War. This handgun was popular due to its “top strap” design, lending to greater strength of the frame. The top strap also caused the frame to resist stretching due to firing stresses. In later years, many Remington New



*(Above): The legendary Colt 1873 Single Action Army 6-shot revolver in .45 Colt. This is the first US service handgun to feature the use of individual metallic cartridge cases. The “Peacemaker” could be purchased in numerous chamberings, allowing shooters to match their handgun with their rifle/carbine ammunition.*

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While the invention of the bored-through revolver cylinder came to market in the mid 1860s, Colt did not wish to pay a royalty to Smith and Wesson, causing a delay in Colt's production of a revolver with this capability. And make no mistake, the advent of the revolver cylinder which could employ a self-contained metallic cartridge case is a major technological advancement. Because of this, Colt was not able to produce a handgun with the bored-through cylinder feature until 1869. When the US Army went looking for a new service handgun in the early 1870s, Colt created the Single Action Army model. Not surprisingly, the Colt model was accepted as the US Army service revolver in 1872 and production began in 1873. The US Army also procured a number of Smith and Wesson 1870 and 1875 revolvers however, the Colt became the overwhelmingly preferred service revolver. Due to ammunition compatibility issues, the Smith and Wesson models were retired, and the Colt was retained in a standardized .45 Colt caliber (often called ".45 Long Colt" today). The Colt "Peacemaker", as it was often called, remained in US military service until the early 1890s.



*(Above): This Colt 1873 belonged to General George Patton, US Army, and sold at auction in 2015 for \$75,000.00.*



*(Above): The Colt M1892 New Army and Navy, 6-shot double action revolver in .38 Long Colt.*

The US Army formally replaced the Colt 1873 Single Action Army with the Colt M1892 in 1892. The revolver was not initially well received and until it was replaced, it went through a series of revisions (including a Marine Corps specific model, the M1905). Anecdotes from the close combat in the jungles of the Philippines during the Philippine-American War, suggested that the .38 Long Colt was underpowered and in need of replacement. The US Army did, in fact, replace the M1892 revolver with stocks of Colt 1873 Single Action Army revolvers in .45 Colt, leading us to the adoption of the M1911 chambered in .45 Automatic Colt Pistol (ACP).



*(Above): The stop-gap Colt M1909...a New Army and Navy in a .45 caliber chambering.*



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The Colt M1909 was developed and procured about a decade before the US involvement in World War I. The M1909 is chambered in a more powerful .45 caliber offering to improve the ballistic performance of the original Colt New Army and Navy after complaints were received from troops fighting in the Philippines campaign. World War I would drastically speed up advancements in handgun technology, forever changing the industry but not necessarily improving our understanding, as professional soldiers of the sea, of the complex nature of the handgun's place in close combat.



*(Above): No caption needed (but just in case, it's a Colt M1911).*

#### World War I

The next service pistol of the United States Armed Forces is the Automatic Pistol, Caliber .45, M1911 which was officially adopted in March 1911. In 1926, after several engineering changes, the Pistol, Caliber .45, M1911A1 was adopted. The US procured over 2.5 million M1911 and M1911A1 pistols during the years of its contracted production. This much revered pistol was designed by John M. Browning and was produced by government contractors such as Colt, Remington Rand, Singer, Ithaca, and Union Switch & Signal. It serves as the model by which all other handguns are measured and has been copied greatly over the past 100+ years. The M1911 Service Pistol [series] is a semi-automatic, single action only, hammer-fired pistol which feeds ammunition by way of a 7-round magazine (there are larger capacity after-market magazines). The pistol operates using the recoil operation method. When a round is fired, the energy drives the slide and barrel rearward. The barrel and slide, locked together in machined lugs, separate when the barrel link swings the barrel downward, allowing the slide to continue all the way to the rear, causing extraction, ejection,

*(Above and below): This Colt M1909 is a USMC-marked specimen. There would not be another service handgun marked "USMC" for another hundred years. Photos: NRA.*





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and feeding in preparation for the next shot. This cycle continues, in theory, if there is ammunition in the magazine and the shooter continues to operate the trigger. Once the magazine is empty, the magazine follower is designed to operate the inside of the slide stop lever, locking the slide to the rear. The shooter can then reload or place the pistol into a Condition Four status. The pistol has external controls including the trigger, grip safety, mechanical safety lever, magazine release button, slide stop lever, and knurled hammer. The M1911 series remained in USMC service from World War I until well into the early 1990s when it was replaced [over several years] by the Beretta M9 and M9A1 9x19mm Service Pistols in the regular forces of the USMC. Within the Special Operations Forces of the Marine Corps (before creation of the Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOB), I refer to Force Reconnaissance units) the USMC produced the “MEUSOC .45” in the Rifle Team Equipment (RTE) shop (later renamed the Precision Weapons Section (PWS) and then procured, through a unique requirements document, the Colt M45A1 Close Quarters Battle Pistol (CQBP). Suffice it to say that the USMC has long revered John Browning’s M1911 series handgun (the main road aboard Weapons Training Battalion, Quantico is named “Browning” while the inner road is named “Garand”).



(Above): Colt M1911A1.



(Above): A USMC MEU(SOC) .45 ACP pistol, manufactured from select M1911A1 frames with after market parts. These pistols were employed, for a time, by the Force Reconnaissance detachment assigned to USMC MEUs. Photo: USMC.

The USMC continued to procure (or produce in the PWS) M1911 series pistols until relatively recently. When the USMC created its own contribution to US SOCOM (in the form of what has become [once again] the Marine Raiders), the days of USMC service of the Colt Government Model were coming to an end. There had been a decades-long cabal within the Marine Corps ordnance and Reconnaissance communities which refused to accept the “plastic gun” or anything to do with the 9x19mm NATO cartridge. This community also insisted that the USMC continue to employ a single action only pistol which fired the .45 ACP. Over exposure to fumes from Quantico bore solvents may have caused this phenomenon.

As the USMC continued to create their SOCOM contribution, yet another requirements document was created for a “single action only” pistol, which all but guaranteed the winner of the 2012 source selection would be a M1911A1 series

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*(Above): A well-used USMC Colt M45A1 CQBP. Photo: USMC.*

pistol. Marine Corps Systems Command selected and purchased ~12,000 Colt M45A1 CQBP which were fielded to Force Reconnaissance companies (which went back under the non-deployed status command of the Division Reconnaissance Battalion), MARSOC, and Special Reaction Teams (SRT) of Marine Corps Base Provost Marshal's Office (PMO). There continues to be a belief that "special operations" forces (and USMC base PMO SRTs) must employ a Colt 1911 series handgun chambered in .45 ACP and nothing else will meet the requirement...not even the standard service pistol of the US Armed Forces—or the handgun selections of the NYPD, the LAPD, the FBI, the CBP, and USSS, and countless other agencies who actually fight with handguns. Note: The agencies listed above, which employ a sidearm as a primary weapon, employ a modern high-capacity striker-fired polymer framed handgun in 9x19mm (which typically costs about a third the cost of a Colt M45A1 CQBP).

**Nostalgia is not a valid consideration in defense acquisitions.**



*(Above): (Top) The Colt M1917 .45 ACP double action revolver. (Bottom): The Smith and Wesson M1917 .45 ACP double action revolver.*

As the US Army and Marine Corps prepared for service in World War I, the US found that there were not nearly enough M1911 Service Pistols. Naturally, this "requirement" was based, somewhat subjectively, on the rationale of the time for the assignment of sidearms. Officers, for example, were still assigned sidearms because Officers were simply not assigned rifles like their soldiers and Marines. As readers can see through research, this practice falls apart when Officers must command troops in contact. In Vietnam, for example, Platoon Commanders were issued a rifle or carbine because pistols are not very useful in a rifle fight. Imagine serving as a commander with an infantry company

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having nothing more than a revolver attached to a lanyard, a helmet, and a two-toned trench whistle to blow when you wanted your troops “over the top!” I propose that most sidearms were useless in World War I, but “that’s the way it’s always been done.” We continue some of these concepts today. Marine Officers, for example, must qualify with the USMC service pistol during the first few weeks of the official Program of Instruction of The Basic School in Quantico, Virginia.

#### Why? And should they?

I am still not finished showing you all the service revolvers and pistols the US Army and Marine Corps have issued over the centuries, so we will come back to this.

In the 1970s and 80s, the US Department of Defense (DOD) sought a replacement service pistol for the M1911A1. M1911A1 pistols ceased production in 1944 and most of them were at the end of their useful life (or well past it). To standardize the service pistol of all the services, the DOD ordered requirements development, tests, and a source selection to procure a 9x19mm NATO semi-automatic pistol. For the purposes of brevity, the Air Force and Army conducted a series of three tests of numerous pistols. At the end of the tests, the Beretta 92FS was selected as the M9 Service Pistol. This decision was highly controversial and remains so to this day.

The M9 Service Pistol is a semi-automatic, 9x19mm, magazine-fed (15 rounds), pistol with a unique open slide design, allowing shooters to more easily clear obstructions from the breach area. The magazine catch/release button is reversible, but the slide stop lever is not. The M9 features an ambidextrous safety lever on the rear of the slide

which also serves as a de-cocking lever. This mechanism has been described by some as a “fatal flaw” in that under stress, shooters can accidentally place the pistol on safe while clearing a stoppage (without knowing it), causing the weapon to be useless when the shooter attempts to reengage a threat. In 2014, the USMC Infantry Weapons Requirements Officer researched an engineering change proposal which would replace the M9 slide assembly with an M9G slide assembly, eliminating the “fatal flaw” in that the M9G only has a de-cocking lever (and cannot be placed on safe). These efforts were eventually ceased when the CMC ordered the adoption of the Joint Modular Handgun System. Note: The M9A1 is simply an M9 with an accessory rail on the frame for mounting of weapon lights and aiming modules.



*(Above): The 9x19mm (NATO) Beretta M9 (top) and M9A1 (bottom) Service Pistols.*

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The USMC currently fields the SIG M18 Modular Handgun System (MHS), a 9x19mm semi-automatic handgun. This pistol features a unique trigger module which can be removed from the polymer frame, allowing armorers to change grips. Will unit armorers put forth the effort to fit an M18 frame to an individual shooter? I will leave that up to the reader's imagination (no). The M18 has also been engineered to readily accept a red dot sight. Within the USMC, the M18 is intended to replace the M9, M9A1, M45 CQBP, and the GLOCK 19M (M007) pistols. The GLOCK 19M has been employed, in limited numbers, by investigators with the Provost Marshals Office and by elements of Marines deployed to Afghanistan as an appropriate concealed carry handgun.



*(Above): The replacement to the M9 and the current USMC Service Pistol, the 9x19mm M18 Modular Handgun System (MHS) manufactured by SIG. The Primary Inventory Control Agency (PICA) for the MHS (M17 and M18) is the US Army.*

MARSOC has employed the 9x19mm GLOCK 19 Gen3 for many years and continues to do so. Their contract also allows for purchasing Gen4 and Gen5 GLOCK 19 pistols. Some supporting establishment elements under the command of Marine Corps Installations employ other GLOCK handguns (i.e. Marine Corps Base

game wardens are issued GLOCK handguns). GLOCK series pistols in 9x19mm and .40 S&W chamberings are common among SOCOM Tier One units.



*(Above): The 9x19mm GLOCK 19M. This model serves as an FBI duty handgun. The GLOCK 19 Gen5 pistol is based on this model. USMC nomenclature is the "M007". Photo: GLOCK.*



*(Above): The 9x19mm GLOCK 19 Gen3. MARSOC continues to issue this pistol for use by Marine Raiders. Several other Tier One SOCOM units employ the GLOCK 19 (and other GLOCK models). Photo: GLOCK.*



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Now that we are up to date on the service handguns over the last 170 years. I am impressed that you are still here. Here are the questions from the first page. We are ready to discuss these.

#### -Why do we continue to field a handgun?

The “USMC Weapons: Infantry Battalion Table of Organization from 1943 (approved 1 July 1942)” states that, “This weapon [the pistol] is used for individual and emergency defense at close quarters (ranges up to 50 yards) for personnel not armed with a rifle or other weapon.”

There are occasions when a handgun is the best weapon (i.e. a meeting with local leadership in a theater of operations where a rifle is neither practical nor appropriate). A handgun is concealable, and it is the smallest weapon the USMC fields with which a Marine can quickly and efficiently engage multiple enemies and then repeat as required. An M67 fragmentation grenade, while concealable, is a one-and-done proposition. For personnel who are very likely to encounter the enemy at close quarters, the handgun can serve as a practical back-up for the primary carbine/rifle. Rifles can malfunction, can be battle damaged, or can run out of ammunition at the most inopportune time. If the Marine has a back-up sidearm, and is well trained and drilled with it, the sidearm may well save their life. And frankly, Marines can be sentimental creatures...and there is nothing quite like a pistol kill. But let's be honest—when I say well trained and drilled, I am not referring to Marines who have completed an ad hoc “fam fire”, as it were. My estimation of what right looks like is at the very least, successful recent completion of the USMC Advanced [pistol] Marksmanship Training Program (AMTP). Even better—recent completion of a MEU work-up shooting package which is required for Force Reconnaissance Marines and Marine Raiders.

There are too many pistols in the USMC and the service pistol, in untrained hands, will likely continue to wound and kill more of our own personnel than the enemy (or put 9mm holes in clearing barrels).

#### -Should we continue to field a handgun?

Yes, but only to well trained Marines and Sailors...and not simply to arm our Officers of the Day. For any who believe an Officer of the Day commands respect simply by being armed with a sidearm, I would say they have never been to Camp Horno. I offer that if the leadership of the Corps requires personnel to be armed so that they might act more professionally, the USMC may have other systemic cultural problems. Are we missing a chapter in MCDP-1? I think not.

#### -If we should continue to field a handgun, who should be issued a handgun and to what degree should we train and sustain them?

There has been a belief among many for decades that a machine gunner, for example, should also be armed with a sidearm. There are others who believe a machine gunner should also be armed with a carbine (or personal defense weapon...like a sub machine gun). Carrying a machine gun, an M4, and ammunition with body armor can be grueling. There is a place for a sidearm as an emergency close-in defensive weapon for a machine gunner, but leaders must make absolutely sure any Marine or Sailor armed with a pistol for any purpose at any time is properly trained and educated on its use. **Or they do not receive the pistol.** And issuing a “Grenadier” an M320 and a sidearm (and nothing else)? I will say this again:

**Do not bring [only] a pistol (or a grenade launcher) to a rifle fight.** Range 400 is not the real world.

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**-For those we determine should no longer be assigned a service pistol, what should we do with the already purchased and fielded weapons?**

Marine Gunners, after obtaining approval from their commander, should facilitate local unit removal of the subject pistols for temporary holding in the unit armory. They should then initiate a Table of Organization and Equipment Change Request (TOECR) and work that through the appropriate action officers at the Capability Development & Integration (CD&I) command. Marine Corps Systems Command, when directed by CD&I, will then properly take control of these weapons. While the systemic problems caused by the presence of the service pistol in the hands of insufficiently trained or untrained personnel may seem like trivial concerns, the consequences of allowing this to continue (for starters, the loss of a Marine or Sailor to a negligent discharge) are unacceptable. Proper training really solves this problem.

**-Is the current USMC Combat Pistol Program (CPP) sufficient to the requirement (assuming we have a valid requirement)?**

In the author's opinion, the Combat Pistol Program is sufficient only for the basic safe operation of the pistol. 200 rounds per year is generally not enough to become ready to fight with a handgun. Unit leaders should go looking for 9mm training ammunition (there is a surprising amount of A363 9x19mm NATO ammunition sitting in unit training allocations that is often not used), create tough and realistic pistol training, and then make it safe. Do this whenever possible. Marines love it!

**\*What is the service pistol's doctrinal reason for existence?**

The USMC service pistol exists to be issued to

Marines who require a lightweight, highly portable, and concealable firearm for use during occasions when the Marine is not issued or cannot employ a shoulder fired rifle, carbine, or submachine gun. The service pistol is generally limited to a practical defensive fighting range of approximately 25 meters. Naturally, Marines who receive frequent and intensive quality combat pistol training may employ the weapon to a greater extent of its physical capabilities. For most Marines, however, service pistols should only be issued to carefully selected personnel who have successfully conducted the Combat Pistol Program and who would only employ the service pistol under an emergency defensive close combat situation. Leaders should endeavor to always employ shoulder-fired weapons. When this is not possible or when counter productive, the service should consider further employing a Short Barrel Rifle (SBR) upper receiver assembly as a [true] carbine (i.e. the Mk18 or the Recon Weapon Kit for the M27 IAR).

The USMC has historically chronically over-issued service pistols to personnel who are untrained or who do not need one. An example of this is the Marine Corps Equipment Review Group (MCERG) which decided to issue the M4 (as a traditional carbine) to Marines and Sailors who had previously been issued only a pistol...**and then the MCERG left those pistols in place.** Nothing was done, in fact, to reduce the numbers of service pistols in the USMC until the PP&O Gunner, with the help of the Infantry Weapons Requirements Officer, significantly reduced the number of service pistols the USMC purchased on the new MHS contract. The M9s were then removed from the inventory, greatly helping mitigate this problem. But Marines get emotional about pistols and the service still has too many pistols in the hands of Marines and Sailors

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who should not have one. Good news. The Weapons Training Battalion Quantico (WTBN) Marksmanship Programs Management Section (MPMS) is working diligently to improve not only the basic tables of the Combat Pistol Program, but they are also working on additional combat pistol training tables to further improve Marines' competence with the service pistol. The author applauds and supports this effort. This is the way. This new program is a component within the greater construct of the Advanced Marksmanship Training Program (AMTP) and is likely to be integrated into the Infantry Marine Training Program (IMTP) at the Schools of Infantry (SOIs).

What about student Marine Officers at TBS? Should they continue to be trained and qualified on the Service Pistol?

In the author's opinion, **yes**—for [at least] the following reasons (and not simply because we've always done it this way):

-Marine Officers, with the counsel of their Senior Enlisted Advisors, are responsible for the training of their Marines and Sailors. All Marine Officers should be trained and qualified with the Service Rifle and Pistol—and then go forth and ensure the training and qualification of the personnel under their future charge.

-Observational data suggests that proper training of traditional [analog] marksmanship fundamentals is greatly aided by a thorough understanding of their application with a handgun. In other words, handgun proficiency and conceptual understanding has direct correlation to improved rifle skills and knowledge.

-The ever-changing leadership of TBS has asked this question repeatedly and come to the same conclusion: training and qualification with the Service Pistol is (and must be) a requirement for graduation of TBS and further service as a Marine Officer.

Nostalgia has nothing to do with it.



*(Above): A US Marine engages a threat with a GLOCK 17 pistol after having transitioned from his M4A1.*

*(Below): The M4/M4A1 can easily be converted to a true carbine by installing the Mk18 Upper Receiver Group (URG), greatly increasing lethality and capability over a service pistol. Photo: Author.*



*(Above): An example of a much needed sidearm. SgMaj Brad Kasal USMC (Ret.), then the Company 1stSgt of Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, is helped from the "House of Hell" in Fallujah, Iraq during Operation AL FAJR. He had entered the building and had killed enemy fighters with his M16A4 before being severely wounded by enemy rifle fire and grenade shrapnel. While awaiting help from the Marines in the photo, he was forced to defend himself and another wounded Marine with his M9 Service Pistol. For his actions, he was awarded the Navy Cross. Photo: Lucian Read.*



## Man, Train, and Equip: Marine Scout-Snipers

### The Marine Rifleman—An MCDP-1 Doctrinal/Philosophical Discussion

By: Marine Gunner Christian Wade (CWO-5/USMC Ret.)



*Marines conduct “pre-sniper” training in preparation for attending the Scout-Sniper School aboard Camp Lejeune, NC in 2016. Photo: USMC.*

The word on the street is that the US Marine Corps recently eliminated Scout-Snipers and closed the Scout-Sniper Schools. But what really happened...and why?

For the last several decades, the USMC maintained her ground sniping and scouting capabilities within rifle battalions by manning, training, and equipping Marines with the [secondary] Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of 8541 (and more recently 0317) Scout-Sniper. A USMC rifle battalion typically maintained a Scout-Sniper Platoon (previously called the “Surveillance and Target Acquisition (STA) Platoon”) which, according to the Table of Equipment and Organization (TO&E), was assigned within the command and tasking domain of the Headquarters and Service (H&S) Company, S-2 Intelligence Section. Later, Scout-Sniper Platoons were moved to the administrative command of the Weapons Company and the tactical command of the S-3 Operations Section of the rifle battalion. While all that sounds complicated, it is actually quite simple. When

preparing for combat operations, a Scout-Sniper Platoon was manned, trained, and equipped by the command and staff of the Weapons Company (or H&S in some cases). When deployed to combat operations, the Operations Officer (OpsO), on behalf of the Commanding Officer (CO) and his Intelligence Officer (S-2), tasked the Scout-Sniper Platoon. Often, four or six-man teams from within the Scout-Sniper Platoon were attached to rifle companies, sometimes for entire deployment cycles to foster a well-developed working relationship between Scout-Snipers and supported commanders. With four Scout-Sniper Teams, assuming they were fully manned, a team could be attached to each rifle company while one was held for direct tasking by the S-3 or for surging to one of the rifle companies when required. Commanders once thought so highly of the economy of force aspect brought to the fight by Scout-Snipers, they sometimes went to other units to acquire *their* Scout-Snipers. An example of this phenomenon is Operation UNITED SHIELD—the United States (UN) operation, supported by the USMC, to



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withdraw all UN forces from Somalia in 1995. The 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), with the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, requested and was granted all the Scout-Snipers of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines who were assigned to the Unit Deployment Program (UDP) aboard Camp Hansen, Okinawa. Essentially, the MEU Commander wanted every Scout-Sniper he could get, and the 3rd Marine Division happily obliged (and even threw in another rifle company). As the 13th MEU sailed past Okinawa, the 3/7 Marines, embarked on their own ship, simply joined with the MEU ships and continued transit to Somalia.



*A Scout-Sniper Team from the 3rd Bn, 7th Marines, attached to the 13th MEU (BLT 3/1) prepares to depart Mogadishu, Somalia during Operation UNITED SHIELD in 1995. The author is second from the left. Photo: Author.*

Some context: The 3/7 Scout-Sniper Platoon, at the time of the above photo, had 8 school-trained Scout-Snipers in the platoon (50% certified). Given all the factors seemingly working against the Platoon Sergeant (Scout-Sniper School attrition, command climate with the battalion regarding the Scout-Sniper Platoon, “deploy-ability” of the Marines

within the platoon, etc.), a Scout-Sniper Platoon with 50% school-trained Scout-Snipers was relatively well manned and trained, indeed. What is my point? The Scout-Sniper capability has come and gone throughout the history of the USMC, proving that it is subjectively tied to the proclivities of the senior leadership of the USMC (as are other aspects...like Main Battle Tanks). In another time, the Marine Raiders suffered this fate due to a professional resentment by the Corps’ leadership in the later days of World War II. Many leaders within the Corps believed the Marine Raiders were “bad for morale” in that the USMC maintained an “elite force within an elite force”, sapping the strength and talent of the regular forces. I am not claiming that the current situation with USMC Scout-Snipers is the same as what happened to Marine Raiders in early 1944. Naturally, the world is more complex than that.

#### What happened?

The Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) ordered that all Scout-Snipers be removed from the infantry battalions, reforming the platoons into “Scout” platoons which, instead of 18 Marines, now will have 26 Marines. Scout-Sniper School will be transformed into a scouting school which, by design, will NOT have the historic rates of attrition. The Scout-Sniper specialty will be entirely moved to the Reconnaissance Battalion within the Marine Divisions and the Marine Raider Regiment. Sniper Schools will be maintained at the Reconnaissance Training Center at the School of Infantry (SOI). Reconnaissance Marines, once graduated from BRC, are designated as 0321s. Once 0321s graduate from the Sniper School, they will be designated as 0322s—Reconnaissance Snipers.

## Man, Train, and Equip: Marine Scout-Snipers

### The Marine Rifleman—An MCDP-1 Doctrinal/Philosophical Discussion

So, what changed?

For starters, there will be no more Scout-Snipers manned, trained, and equipped within infantry battalions. But all is not as it seems. Within the last several years, infantry battalions were seldom able to man more than 4-6 Scout-Sniper billets with school-trained Scout-Snipers. This manning shortfall often found its way all the way to the attention (and action) of Division Commanding Generals and their G-1s. In 2016, for example, the 2nd Marine Division Commanding General had a policy that each deploying battalion must have at least four school-trained Scout-Snipers, to serve as the core of the four-team construct. Credentialed Scout-Snipers became so rare within the Marine Division that the Division staff was often forced to transfer other Scout-Snipers from platoons which had just returned from deployment, just to fill the base requirement for four. And there was little incentive, if any, for recently returned Scout-Snipers to cross-deck over to another battalion to squeeze out one more deployment before the end of their service contract (sometimes they were lured across by the different nature of the other unit's deployment). But because 8541/0317 was not a primary MOS, little could be done to stop the bleeding, so to speak. No extension bonus, no reenlistment bonus, and administrative "leadership" within infantry units were not required in any way to recognize a Scout-Sniper's unique skills, given that this was a secondary MOS.

The reality of all the previous history is that Marine Divisions were only able to retain Scout-Snipers (of operational rank up to E-5, in general) within the Reconnaissance Battalion. For what it's worth (and its worth a great deal) many of the finest infantry Marines gravitate toward the Reconnaissance Battalion, anyway. Curious that

General Vandegrift disbanded the Marine Raiders in 1944 because of this very phenomenon. And now they are back...and we man, train, and equip the Marine Raiders again. While analogous to what is happening here, that is another matter for another time.

**No wonder there are no Scout-Snipers in the Marine Divisions.**

Now that we know the existential reality in the Marine Divisions for Scout-Snipers (there wasn't one), it seems that the Commandant of the Marine Corps simply codified what was already happening. We have not even discussed the general competency and capability of the occasional school-trained Scout-Sniper who was in a deployable status within a rifle battalion. He graduated from Recruit Training and his respective School of Infantry MOS training. He did a little time in a Rifle or Weapons Company, and at some point, was accepted into the Scout-Sniper Platoon, likely after his first (of two) deployments was finished. During the work-up for his second (and final) deployment, he attended and graduated the Scout-Sniper School, just in time for his second deployment. He did not have time to attend US Army Ranger School, one of the finest infantry leadership schools in the US Department of Defense. Jump School? Not a requirement. The Basic Reconnaissance Course? Negative...not required (nor is there enough time).

So, how skilled were our Scout-Snipers who were operating during their first enlistment? And what did they do once they returned from their second (and only) deployment as a Scout-Sniper? It went something like this:

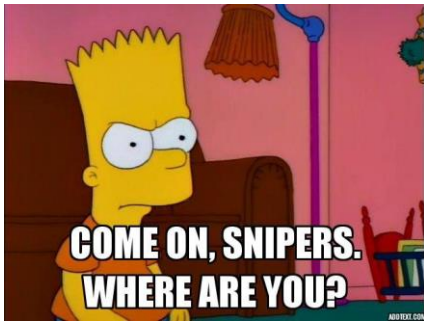
-They got out of the Marine Corps. When you find these former Scout-Snipers, ask them why they got out. It's often heartbreaking. They often

## Man, Train, and Equip: Marine Scout-Snipers

### The Marine Rifleman—An MCDP-1 Doctrinal/Philosophical Discussion

become Police Officers.

- They cross-decked to Division (Force) Reconnaissance and never looked back.
- They were accepted to the Marine Raiders...and we never saw them again.
- They conducted an interservice transfer and worked their way to a Special Operations Force (Rangers, SEALs, Green Berets, etc.)...and we never saw them again.
- They joined the US Army and became a Chief Warrant Officer helicopter pilot...and we never saw them again.



*The Simpsons—Season 3, Ep. 14 “Lisa the Greek.” Bart Simpson laments the absence of snipers. Photo: Open source.*

The bottom line is this—the current CMC simply reinforced success...not failure. For numerous reasons, the Marine Divisions (except for Reconnaissance Battalions) were unable to man, train, and equip their Scout-Snipers—no matter how much we do not like it and wish it were not so. Establishment of a primary MOS might have helped slow the bleeding, so to speak, but the very existence of Marine Reconnaissance and the Marine Raiders is simply too powerful a force to allow Scout-Snipers to exist, let alone flourish, within conventional-forces Marine Corps.

#### What now?

The Scout-Sniper Schools, as we have known them for decades at the Schools of Infantry (East and West) and at Quantico, are closed. Rifle

battalions will man, train, and equip Scout Platoons for all-weather scouting operations. The sniper rifles have been moved to the rifle companies and Training Command intends to create a precision shooting course. *Good luck with that.* The Reconnaissance Training Center, at the School of Infantry-West will assume full control of the SOI-W Sniper School and begin training Marines from the Reconnaissance units exclusively. The Marine Raider Regiment will maintain a sniper school within their already existing Marine Raider Training Center.

I estimate this is simply a trough between the waves in the history of the USMC and her turbulent relationship with her Scout-Snipers. I believe our seemingly anachronistic Marine Scout-Snipers will be back in the infantry units before too long. War will insist upon it. And when the next war is finished, they will go away once again—break glass in case of war.

I will leave the reader to ponder the fact that in the entire history of the US Marine Corps, “Scout-Sniper” has never been treated as a primary MOS. Perhaps there is a leader out there who could change that someday. I doubt it. For now, it’s out of the USMC Infantry’s hands and firmly under the care of the Reconnaissance and Marine Raider communities—and for as painful as this is for me to write, both have proven worthy of it.



*1996: The author teaches 1st Marine Division Scout-Sniper students how to employ the M40A1 Sniper Rifle and Unertl scope, canted left to 90-degrees, to fire through a short loophole, using right windage for elevation and depression for right windage. Photo: Author.*



## Mental Health Concepts Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

Article and Interview by Marine Gunner Christian Wade (CWO-5/USMC Ret.)

In this article, I will discuss “psychedelics”—what they are, how they are used, why they are used, the US Government’s relationship with them, and their potential for use by veterans and therapists for healing of trauma. I will also include an interview of one of our brothers-in-arms who recently underwent Psychedelic Assisted Therapy. His experience profoundly changed his life.

Many of us struggle with depression, anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, and a host of other emotions which we carry around in our daily lives. These traumas are likely caused by experiences in combat or childhood (or both), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and/or moral injuries. The darkness and pain weighs us down and corrupts everything we do and every one of our relationships. This path leads to suffering and pain and ultimately, self destruction. We have lost a staggering 30,000+ veterans to suicide since 9/11. How many more suffer a slow and painful death from self destruction due to drug and alcohol abuse or from risky and dangerous behavior?

I understand their pain all too horribly well...and many of you do, too.

I will be so bold as to make the following claim: we veterans, having returned from our Service to our beloved country, should not only survive, but thrive. We should be able to enjoy the rest of our lives in peace, happiness, connection, and love. Assuming the Veterans Affairs (VA), despite all its flaws, is sincere in its efforts to support and treat us, there is only so much it can do. And considering the matter of psychedelic medicines, the VA is currently not an option given the restrictions of the United States Controlled Substances Act. Thanks to Dr. Rick Doblin, however, founder and President of the Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies

(MAPS), the US Government has allowed very promising Phase 3 research into the application of MDMA for psychotherapy treatment of severe trauma, including treatment resistant PTSD in test subjects. Readers should be advised that Rick Doblin has spent decades and millions of dollars to make these trials possible...and he just might succeed.

I will place links to everything I reference in this article at the end, and I encourage readers to do the research for themselves. Live a rich and long life,



*(Above): Dr. Rick Doblin, founder and President of MAPS discusses the MDMA Phase 3 testing on the Joe Rogan Experience. Photo: Open source.*

full of love and connection instead of wallowing in shame, guilt, resentment, and pain.

So, what are “psychedelic” substances and why has the US Government prohibited our access to them? Here is a very quick introduction to



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psychedelic medicines and a very brief history. I encourage readers to use the links at the end of the article to expand upon the information I offer here.

The following are some of the most recognizable psychedelic substances:

- Ibogaine
- Psilocybin
- LSD
- Mescaline (Peyote, etc.)
- MDMA
- 5-MeO-DMT
- Ayahuasca

There are a great many more substances classified as psychedelics, but I will focus on a few of these as they relate to treatment options for TBI, PTSD, anxiety, depression, and the years of trauma that many veterans carry with them (and have been unable to purge or repair).

**What are psychedelics?** Psychedelics are a class of psychoactive substances that produce changes in perception, mood, and cognitive processes. They can also affect all the senses, sometimes causing hallucinations.

**Why has the US Government classified most psychedelics as illegal (Schedule 1)?** The US Government has classified the substances listed above under Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act. The US Government states that none of these substances have any medicinal value, that potential for abuse is high, and that the drug is not safe to use, even under medical supervision.

**Author's note (opinion):** Readers who have been treated with Ibogaine, for example, likely realize that Ibogaine's status as a Schedule 1 substance is absurd for many reasons. And what of the US Food and Drug Administration's recent interest in MDMA for psychotherapy? The legitimacy of Schedule 1

classifications of some psychedelics is starting to collapse. [End author's note].

When did the US Government declare these medicines illegal, having no medicinal value to her citizens? President Richard Nixon signed the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, and it became effective on May 1, 1971. Again, readers should conduct their own study of the reasons the administration, at that time, put this law into effect. Until the law went into effect, there had been years of promising research being conducted on the therapeutic effects of LSD, for example, that suddenly came to a halt. After 1971, and with several updates during the decades to come (i.e. MDMA was added to Schedule 1 in 1985), any benefits for psychotherapy would remain undiscovered or underground and in fact, suppressed by the law. Ironic that, for example, Ibogaine, a medicine which has proven extremely effective at suppressing the effects of opioid withdrawal and addiction, is listed as Schedule 1, whereas Oxycodone, the very opioid which causes severe withdrawal symptoms from addiction can be obtained from unscrupulous or careless prescribers (Schedule 2). Perhaps there is more to this phenomenon that meets the eye.

What does this mean to the veteran suffering from TBI, PTSD, depression, anxiety, and who suffers thoughts of suicide? To answer this, I present the following interview with one of our brothers. To protect his identity, I will refer to him as Thomas (that is not his actual name).

Thomas spent three decades in the Marine Corps, serving primarily in infantry billets around the world. He was an enlisted Marine for approximately 18 years, becoming a Marine Officer and serving twelve more years before retiring. He has numerous combat tours, fighting in Kuwait, Somalia, and during several deployments to Iraq.

## Mental Health Concepts Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

Thomas grew up in a home with an alcoholic and abusive father—suffering both physical and psychological abuse until leaving home to enter the Marine Corps. He became an alcoholic early in his career and he sought help. He was treated at an alcoholic rehabilitation program at a Naval Hospital. He has been sober for many years before his retirement from active service. He has been married for over 20 years and has no children. About halfway through his career, and after having repeatedly experienced brutal close combat, his Christian faith collapsed. **Author's note:** In my discussions with Thomas, the loss of his faith in God has caused him the greatest suffering over the years.

Upon retirement from the Marine Corps, Thomas and his wife returned to their hometown. It is important to note that during the last several years of active duty, Thomas had been placed on several medications, including SSRI's, to treat the symptoms of his PTSD, anxiety, and other physical issues. Thomas began working consulting jobs with military contractor companies, but his state of mind caused him to cease working completely within months of his return home. Thomas has been diagnosed with multiple TBIs, PTSD, depression, and anxiety disorder among the various combat and training injuries he has sustained over the years. Within weeks of returning home, Thomas's state of mind began to unravel, and he became suicidal. He and his wife turned to the VA for help and Thomas was quickly assigned a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC). With the help of his counselor, Thomas was able to work his way out of the depths of his depression and within a couple years, the VA was able to discontinue most of his medications. After several years, both he and his VA counselor realized that Thomas was unable to get to the roots of his traumas and he reached a plateau in his mental health progress. He became "stuck" and

was unable to release his anxiety, anger, and depression, and this simply caused him greater anxiety and frustration.

Then one day he heard about Psychedelic Assisted Therapy. He does not remember where he first heard of the concept. While it sounded like it had some potential to help him, he was initially concerned about the illegality of these substances. After all, [he thought] were these not simply illegal drugs that were abused by "hippies" and addicts? He commented, ironically, that the Church's position on such matters was less than enthusiastic, as well.

After much research and consideration, Thomas committed to move forward with Psychedelic Assisted Therapy. He was further assured of his decision when he received a timely call from a trusted friend, with whom he had served in combat, who had just completed Psychedelic Assisted Therapy. During the call, Thomas received the direct connection to the organization which would soon guide him on his journey of healing.

### Enter Ambio

What is Ambio? Ambio is an organization that utilizes Ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT in conjunction with other psychotherapy techniques to effect addiction recovery, treat TBI and PTSD, neurodegenerative conditions, pain, and many other concerns. Ambio was founded by Trevor Millar, Jonathan Dickenson, and Jose Inzunza—all of whom have over 40 years of combined experience in treating these conditions. Ambio is licensed and conducts operations in Canada and Mexico given that Ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT are listed as Schedule 1 substances in the USA.

As we discuss Thomas's experiences, I will ensure to include details of the treatment program Thomas underwent, including the schedule and

## Mental Health Concepts Psychedelic Assisted Therapy



*(Above): Co-founder and Ambio spokesman, Trevor Millar.  
Photo: Used with permission from Ambio.*

explanation of events, and the effects during and after treatment.

With the information provided by his friend, Thomas immediately contacted Ambio to apply for treatment. He filled out some forms and submitted the required medical documents (for example, Ambio requires a current EKG/ECG to check for heart health to ensure one's heart is ready for Ibogaine treatment). Once his application was reviewed by the staff doctor and other staff members, Thomas was accepted for treatment and selected a report date that was approximately a month away. In the meantime, he was assigned a counselor/coach (PhD) from the Ambio staff. Ambio ensures that all clients receive pre-treatment counseling to ensure they set conditions for success, including their intent and what they wish to accomplish during their stay at the facility. Ambio ensures all participants have done the "prep work" prior to arrival since they wish everyone to receive the maximum benefit from their journey. Thomas began maintaining a journal, as well, to organize his thoughts and define his intent. Thomas explained

that he believed that Psychedelic Assisted Therapy was his last chance. If it did not work, he did not know if anything ever would. During the interview, Thomas showed me his journal. As I scanned through the initial pages, I could clearly see that his intent was quite simple—that he was desperately trying to reestablish his relationship with God. For years he had mourned the loss of his faith and the absence of God's love and forgiveness. He struggled with hopelessness and with feeling "unforgiven". He did not know how, but he believed that with his intent fulfilled, he would be able to finally purge the decades of guilt, shame, anger, and fear that were bottled up inside him—and finally open his mind.

### **\*\*Spirituality Alert!\*\***

Readers should be advised that I am about to begin discussing matters of a spiritual nature. While I will use the word "God", I am using Thomas's words. Neither Thomas nor I suggest, when using the word "God", that we are referring to the deity of a specific organized religion. We will discuss Thomas's intent and how the medicines met him where he was and gave him what he needed (as Ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT are well known to do). Thomas's companions arrived at Ambio with their own intents and while I will not reveal those, Thomas does not believe any were of a spiritual nature, whatsoever. The purpose of this article is not to proselytize for any religion, nor am I suggesting that Ambio, Ibogaine, 5-MeO-DMT, or any other aspect of the psychedelic journey will have anything at all to do with spirituality. Thomas's intent and psychedelic healing experience is the focus of this article. If I had interviewed Thomas's companions, there would be little, if any, mention of God or spirituality. For readers who do not wish to read anything regarding spirituality, I would not take offense if you stopped reading *here*.

## Mental Health Concepts Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

How much did Thomas pay for this you ask? Excellent question. With a veteran discount applied, the cost for treatment was about 6,400 USD (cost will vary due to a variety of circumstances). Naturally, unless one lives near southern California, one will need to arrange for airline tickets, as well. Does that seem like a lot? Please reserve your judgment until after you hear about Thomas's journey. Naturally, neither TRICARE nor the VA will pay for this treatment (so don't bother asking). The staff do accept tips and Thomas was very happy to oblige at treatment's end.

With a solid case of the butterflies, Thomas grabbed his bags and flew to southern California. He caught a ride to a nearby location and made his initial link-up with the Ambio driver on a warm and sunny morning. Thomas was encouraged when he met his three fellow "psychonauts", David (a former German soldier and police officer), Chase (a former US Army Paratrooper), and Anthony (a former USAF Pararescue "PJ"). Note that I have changed the names for the sake of privacy. They were very friendly and respectful and seemed very hopeful for the upcoming journey. Once the big SUV was packed up, they traveled south, crossing the border, entering magnificent Baja California, Mexico. After a while, they found themselves in a dense, upscale neighborhood packed with enormous homes. Once at the Ambio treatment facility, the four psychedelic travelers dismounted, grabbed their bags, and proceeded inside. Inside the front door, the group was introduced to some of the staff who would be caring for them during their treatment. Little did Thomas know how close they would become with these caring professionals during the challenges to come. While Thomas spoke with great respect for these staff members, we will refer to them as "Nurse A", "Nurse R", Nurse "I-the Elder", Therapists "G" and "B", and Spirit Woman "B". Thomas mentioned that if readers wish to know their real

names, they should sign up and attend the therapy program.

With introductions complete, each client was shown to their rooms to drop off their bags. Naturally, the nurses and staff conducted a search to ensure no contraband was brought into the facility, and as that was completed, the staff neatly stowed all the clothing into the drawers and closets in the room. While the move-in was being conducted, Thomas and his group attended a group session where they were introduced to their lead Therapist "G" and Therapist "B". They explained the basics of the facility and the schedule, and when that was complete, the group moved to the dining area where they were treated to their first meal, provided by the professional chefs (yes, actual chefs). Thomas was quite impressed by the exceptional quality of the food as he had not expected that (he is a Marine after all). Rumor has it that Trevor went to the best restaurants in Tijuana and hired their chefs on the spot.

Once lunch was complete, there was some medical administrative work to conduct with the physician and once that was finished, the group reboarded the SUV and traveled to the Temazcal for the "sweat lodge" ceremony. Thomas was about to confront his trauma...up close and personal and there was no more holding it in.

The Temazcal ceremony is hosted by a local family who conducts the healing ritual with a very traditional Mesoamerican spirit. Thomas and his fellow travelers were greeted and soon participated in a smudging ritual—to purify and dispel negative energy. All the participants entered the lodge (the actual lodge is shown in the photo on the next page) and settled themselves on a small bench that is built into the lodge's interior wall. The mechanism for producing heat is in the center of the lodge on the floor. The ceremony consists of four "doors" which are sessions relating to the four directions and



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*(Above): Temazcal (sweat lodge) in Baja California.  
Photo: Ambio.*

elements, allowing the lodge to be opened periodically to circulate air and release energy. Thomas told me that once the first door was closed and he was hit by the intense heat, he could not contain his emotions, and he began to suffer and cry. He related to me that he knew immediately that the process of purging, healing, and rebuilding had begun in earnest and that he surrendered to it.

The ceremony lasted what seemed to Thomas like an hour. For nearly the entire hour, Thomas was in such emotional pain (and by extension, physical pain) that he could only withstand the suffering by curling up on the floor in the fetal position. One of the hosts mercifully poured cool water on him many times during the ceremony since she could sense his suffering. As the ceremony was closing, Thomas was handed a drum and he mustered the strength to sit up, drum along with the lead host, and he sang along with the traditional song of healing. When the ceremony was

complete, the group said their grateful goodbyes to the hosts, mounted up in the trusty SUV, and headed back to the house.

**Author's note:** After pondering all that Thomas told me, I could see that Thomas arrived to Ambio with a focus on the Ibogaine and 5-Meo-DMT. What Thomas had not predicted was that the other healing ceremonies would be critical parts which contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the Ibogaine and 5-Meo-DMT ceremonies. As readers will likely see, the Temazcal, Breathwork, meditation, massage, Reiki, yoga, and group discussion are all essential parts of the experience. Thomas believes that if one omits any of these regimens, the intensity and effectiveness of the program would likely suffer.

The group arrived back at the house, enjoyed dinner, partook of an IV for post-Temazcal hydration, and settled in for a night of restful sleep.

### Ibogaine

I know what you are thinking. I thought the same thing when Thomas told me. You are likely thinking, "Already?" Yes, Ambio wastes no time. Trevor and his partners have really worked this out. The second day begins with some basic blood work, drawn by the on-site medical staff. Then off to breakfast, followed by a group circle with Therapist "G" to prepare for the day's events. Therapist "G" then took the group into one of the large activity rooms to teach them Breathwork. Breathwork is a breathing technique that uses a method that begins inhalation low in the abdomen, all the while drawing that breath up through the solar plexus, all the way into the throat. When repeated with deep breaths, the technique can create a deep and euphoric meditative state. Thomas began the process, as guided by Therapist "G", but soon found that he reached a point where he could no longer contain

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his emotions. He was surprised that he, once again, began crying uncontrollably. Thomas expressed that once the effects of the Breathwork had begun, he came to better appreciate just how much pain, guilt, sorrow, and loss had become stuck inside his body, mind, and soul. It was also not lost on him that he would need these breathing techniques when he journeyed with Ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT.

When the Breathwork instruction was complete, the group enjoyed lunch (their “last supper” before their Ibogaine journey) and a therapeutic massage by the staff massage therapist. Later in the evening, the medical staff administered a hydration IV, and the group made their way out to the “Fire Circle”. The Fire Circle is a gathering, led by Trevor with the assistance of the medical staff who monitor [continuously] and assist [when necessary] the group on their journey. Thomas and each of his companions, for weeks, had been working on defining their intent for the experience. And just as importantly, each had defined what they wished the Ibogaine to remove from them—guilt, anger, shame, fear, or damage caused by trauma to the brain...or whatever each person desired of the medicine. When Trevor and his staff were finished preparing the group for the journey, each psychedelic traveler took their turn sharing their thoughts, reflections, and intents before tossing into the fire their prepared list of burdens of which they wished the medicine to relieve them. Once the group was complete, Trevor administered the first dose of Ibogaine.

### What is Ibogaine?

Ibogaine is an indole alkaloid that is obtained either by extraction from the iboga plant or by semi-synthesis from the precursor compound voacangine, another plant alkaloid (Chris Jenks—Extracting Ibogaine). While that is a fine

clinical definition, several people with whom I have spoken have a more useful description, albeit anecdotal—but experiential, nevertheless. Decades of suppression of Ibogaine by the US Food and Drug Administration have stifled legitimate research and data collection. There does, however, appear to have been a recent Ibogaine study (as it relates to Ibogaine’s potential to heal TBI brain damage and neural pathways) at Stanford University with the assistance of a veteran advocacy organization. The results of this study are due to be released within a few months of the publication of this article.

My principal sources of information about the healing effects of Ibogaine come directly from Trevor Millar and Thomas, the subject of our interview. Ibogaine, for many, enters the brain and “rewires” the neural network, routing energy around (or repairing) areas of damage. Thomas describes the effects of Ibogaine on his brain as though Ibogaine, “...shut him off so that it could 3D print him a new brain.” And what’s more, he declares that his new 3D printed brain works like it had never sustained multiple TBIs or other traumas, or the horrible consequences of repeated intense interpersonal violence, abuse, and suffering. **No medicinal value?** Apologies, that should be marked with an “Author’s note”. While I cannot speak for the other members of Thomas’s group, every aspect of Thomas’s description suggests that each of the members had their own unique experience with Ibogaine, but that there are fundamental similarities among most participants. I will now discuss Thomas’s Ibogaine journey and readers can extrapolate the fundamentals of the effects of Ibogaine for themselves.

At about 2130, Thomas and his three companions entered the dim, candlelit room which had been set up for the night’s journey. Thomas cannot recall how many doses of Ibogaine he received from Trevor, nor the quantity of each dose,

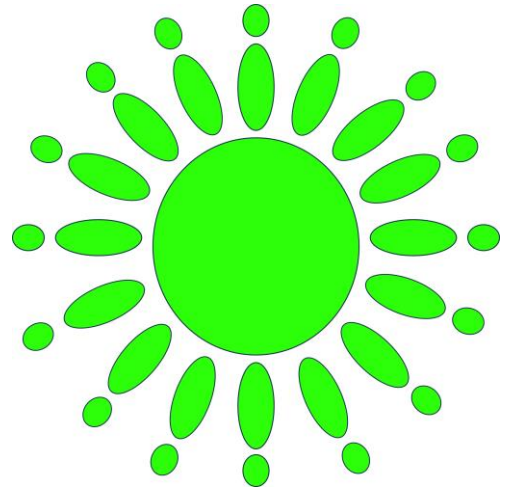
## Mental Health Concepts

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but suffice it to say, Trevor has years of experience administering the medicine. I have heard him described as a “Psychedelic shaman” although I have no idea how he would take to being addressed as such, in person. Once the complete dose was administered (Thomas laughingly described the final capsule as “very large”), the travelers sat down onto their mattress pads on the floor. In front of each, was a large mirror, literally for self reflection, a maraca, and a vase filled with beautiful flowers. Each mattress had a blanket in case the traveler became cold. To the immediate right was a small bucket with a plastic liner and an eye mask. Each member was then connected to a heart monitor for the resident nurse’s situational awareness. Ibogaine has shown that it can affect heart rates and rhythms in some since the path, for many, can be strenuous and turbulent.

Once all four members were situated, Nurse “I-the Elder” and Trevor turned on *the music*. I placed those two words in bold and put some *English* on them to attempt to duplicate the “emphasis” Thomas placed on them when he said them out loud. Clearly, *the music* had a profound and lasting effect on his experience. **Author’s note:** I have since had the opportunity to listen to the entire musical playlist from Thomas’s Ibogaine experience, as he heard it during his journey in the room. As an avid musical theory scholar, I will say that I can clearly see how this compilation is likely to significantly enhance a psychedelic experience. I found every song to be irresistible to my ears and mind. The creator of this playlist, Therapist “B”, is a psychedelic healer extraordinaire. For obvious reasons, Ambio keeps this playlist close-hold since they wish each traveler to hear *the music* for the first time when they are introduced to Ibogaine. So, *the music* started and Trevor and Nurse “I-the Elder” led the group in shaking their maracas to the rhythm. I will simply say that *the music* which marks

the beginning of the sacred ceremony does not follow the “rules” as set forth by, for example, Johann Sebastian Bach...and for good reason. Each member sat on their beds, shaking their maracas to *the beat*, while watching themselves in their respective mirrors. Thomas believes his psychedelic experience began about an hour after the last dose of Ibogaine. He relates that he was having difficulty looking himself in the eyes due to the intensity of the gaze looking back at him in the mirror. He then began to also perceive acoustic phenomena and decided to set the maraca down, lay back, and place his eye mask over his eyes. His journey had begun. Thomas estimates that his Ibogaine experience began at about 2230.



(Above): *Ibogaine presented to Thomas during his vision in this energetic form, terrifying him. Photo: Recreated from Thomas's journal.*

**Author’s note:** Readers should be advised that I have written the following account of Thomas’s Ibogaine experience based on the interview and on his journal which he kindly allowed me to read. I do not completely understand Thomas’s journey, but I will write it as best I can. After spending many hours with Thomas, I do not believe he will ever completely understand it either.

## Mental Health Concepts Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

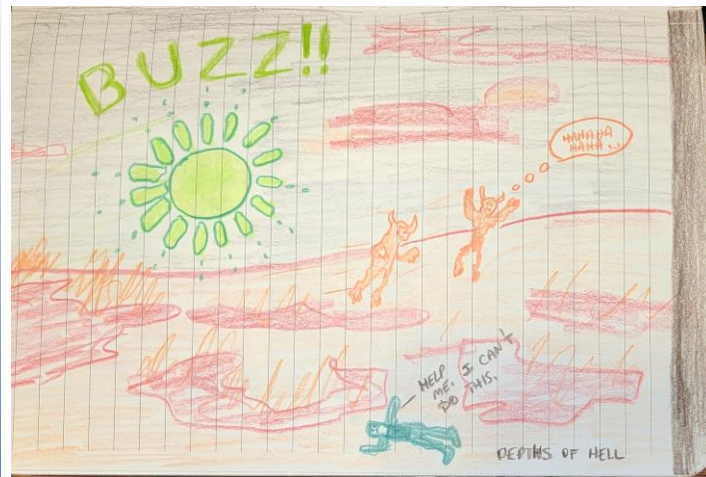
As Thomas settled back onto the pillow, he placed the eye mask completely over his eyes (the eye mask was designed to allow the wearer to open their eyes while wearing it). He then opened his eyes, if not simply as a reflexive way to check to ensure there was no light leaking through. When he opened his eyes, he saw the Milky Way through his eye mask, in all its glory, as if he was standing on top of a 20,000-foot mountain, with perfectly clear skies, and no light pollution whatsoever. He closed his eyes, and it was gone. When he opened them again, the Milky Way appeared, but soon faded out of sight. As he cleared his mind from the awe, he shut his eyes again. He began to hear conversations behind him and each time, he pulled up his eye mask, only to find that no one was there. The only presence in the back of the room was Nurse “I-the Elder” and he was not talking. Anthony, the PJ, began laughing intermittently—a slightly maniacal laugh, adding to the surreal aural phenomena which began to fray Thomas’s nerves. Entire conversations in a language Thomas had never heard (and did not believe to be an actual human language) continued every few minutes to his left, punctuated by the [actual] laughter of Anthony, just a few feet from him.

As Thomas began to struggle with the increasing intensity of his psychedelic trip, he felt the sudden intense pressure in his bladder. He thought to himself, “Damn it! How is my bladder so small!” He removed his eye mask, raised up on his elbows, and raised his hand to get Nurse “I-the Elder’s” attention. Ibogaine often causes ataxia (the loss of a degree of nervous system control over coordination, balance, and speech), but as Thomas rose with the assistance of Nurse “I-the Elder”, he found that the ataxia had “not yet kicked in very much.” He made his way to the bathroom, completed his business, and returned, with help, to his bed. He replaced his eye mask and immediately found he was back where

he had left off. He saw visions of himself as a young boy that were oddly distorted by the medicine. He asked the medicine the meaning of the visions, but the medicine was not interested in having a discussion with him.

Then out of nowhere, Thomas felt the overwhelming urge to vomit. He raised up from his bed, pulled the eye mask up out of the way, and aimed his face at the bucket beside him. He began retching with an intensity he did not know possible, as if his body was attempting to purge a demon. But nothing came out...not even fluid. He retched repeatedly until he collapsed back on his bed in exhaustion and pain. To make matters worse, not long after Thomas purged, at least two of the three other travelers began purging, making horrible retching sounds. This, in turn, caused Thomas so much grief, that he plugged his ears with his fingers, turned onto his side, and attempted to disappear under his blanket.

Ibogaine was just getting started with Thomas.



*(Above): Ibogaine found Thomas in the depths of hell. Then it saved his life. This is the last image Thomas remembers from his Ibogaine journey before his memory loss. Photo: Thomas’s journal.*



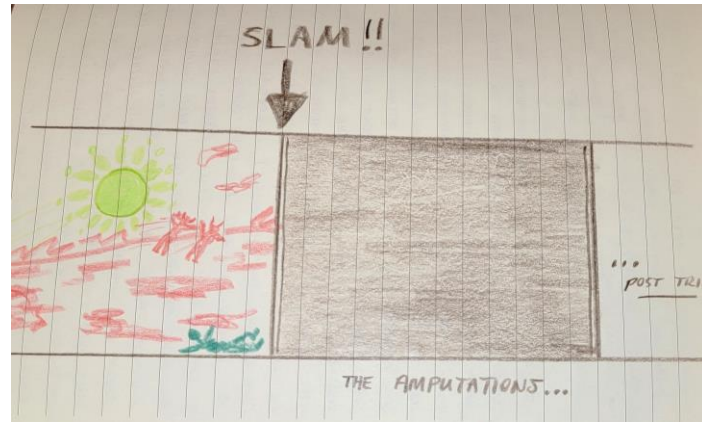
## Mental Health Concepts

### Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

For about two more hours, Thomas's visions became darker and more alarming to him, punctuated by periods of intense purging that further sapped his strength and will. Thomas soon realized that he was quickly approaching the limit of what he could endure. His visions became ever more chaotic and distressing while the incessant purging sapped his physical strength and resolve.

The last thing Thomas remembers was observing himself wallowing in the depths of hell, splashing around in several inches of urine and feces, surrounded by flames. He remembers wearing his USMC utility uniform, plate carrier, and his helmet. Despite being a spectator to his own suffering in hell, Thomas could also see and feel from within the poor soul he was [also] watching from a distance. Demons flew around him, poking him, and laughing at his suffering. Within seconds of his arrival at this place, Thomas heard a loud and horrible buzzing sound up above hell's horizon. To his horror, Thomas saw a brilliant green star-shaped entity that Thomas instinctively knew had come looking for him. Millions of volts of electricity emanated from the spikes on the star-object...and Thomas sensed that, "it was really angry." It was simply too much for Thomas. The object found Thomas, and just as he realized he had been discovered and that there was no hiding from this horror, Thomas lost cognizance. The last thing he saw, as he watched the movie reel-like images flash across his vision, was a huge piece of rectangular plate steel—slam, with a terrifying crash, across the movie reel of his perception. And he was out.

Thomas regained awareness what seemed to be both hours later (it was), yet moments later. He still had the sound of the steel plate, crashing over his consciousness, ringing in his ears. He pondered the image of the terrible green entity as it found him, and he was completely confused. He was heartbroken when he considered that he had



*(Above): Thomas lay in bed with the image of the steel plate blocking his memory. The image toward the left of the photo above is a recreation of the full image of the photo on the left side of this page. Photo: Thomas's journal.*

just lost hours of his Ibogaine experience to the cruel fate of oblivion. How could this happen after all that he had done? After the distance, both literally and figuratively, he had traveled? He could do little other than simply lie on his bed. The Ibogaine trip was finished. He had no more visions and no more auditory phenomena. Ibogaine [and God] had forsaken him, and there was no hope...or so he thought. Along played *the music*.

As Thomas lay in his bed, he began to understand what had just happened. In the few hours he remained in the room, Ibogaine revealed to him the wonderful truth—that Ibogaine had come looking for him and found him in the depths of hell. Upon seeing his suffering, Ibogaine mercifully “turned off his consciousness” to begin the process of an amputation, of sorts, of the darkness and pain within him. Ibogaine did not wish Thomas to suffer so it “concealed” this from his memory (the steel plate). The brilliant and energetic bright green entity was in fact Ibogaine, and Thomas had no reason to fear, as it was a benevolent force. Thomas did relate to me that once the experience coalesced into his truth, he did believe that Ibogaine was a bit upset

## Mental Health Concepts Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

with him...that he had allowed his body and soul to become so corrupted with darkness, guilt, and pain. Thomas, at one point, described Ibogaine's energy as that of an angry, but loving, Senior Drill Instructor (is there such a thing?) or tough Infantry Platoon Sergeant.

While Thomas lay awake, he did continue to empathize with his brothers as they continued to purge. But Thomas was finished with that pain, and he did not purge again.

At approximately 0800, Nurse "A" entered the room, walked to Thomas, and asked him if he wanted to go back to his room. He describes her as an angel who had come to save him. She disconnected him from the heart monitor, helped him stand up, and assisted Thomas to his room. There he got into his bed, rolled into the fetal position, and pulled the blankets up over his head. He was finished, though it was all beginning to make sense.

### Gray Day

"Gray Day", as it were, is the day following the Ibogaine journey. While the psychedelic trip is, for the most part complete, Ibogaine is not finished with the traveler—not by a long shot. Ibogaine can remain in a person's system for several months. Thomas spent the rest of the morning and a few hours of the early afternoon hiding in his bed. Nurse "A" checked on him frequently, and by the time he was feeling strong enough to leave his room, she had coaxed him into drinking a small fruit smoothie and eating half of a piece of toast. When he ventured out, he was quickly body-snatched by Nurse "R" for his Reiki session with Spirit Woman "B". The Reiki treatment seemed to reorient him and clear his mind. At about 1800, Thomas went to dinner with his brothers where he was able to eat a little more and gain some strength. Once dinner was complete,

he visited with his companions for a while, and then everyone went to their rooms and went to bed.

### 5-MeO-DMT \*\*We are going to talk about God\*\*

The next morning, Thomas and his companions met for breakfast, and everyone found their appetite had greatly improved. After breakfast, the group attended a much-welcomed Yoga session. When finished, it was time for a group circle with Therapist "G" where each member discussed their experiences. Thomas noticed how Therapist "G" took very detailed notes. He believes that she intends to follow-up with each traveler in the months to come. When the group was complete, everyone went back upstairs to one of the sitting rooms to prepare for the next ceremony—the experience of 5-MeO-DMT. Several of the links at the end of this article discuss this medicine which is often called the "God Molecule"...for good reason.

Thomas was set to go second, so he parked himself in a comfortable chair across from his new friend, David. Anthony was first. Therapist "G" came out of the room and conducted a smudging ritual for Anthony, preparing him for his journey. Once that was complete, Anthony loosened up a bit and proceeded into the room. Therapist "G" closed the door. Thomas listened closely for several minutes but heard only the occasional muffled voice or movement. At approximately the ten-minute mark, Anthony began his journey. While I do not wish to describe his experience in detail, I will relate that Thomas was profoundly affected by what he heard, including expressions of guilt and sorrow—dark and powerful enough to bring him to tears. Thomas was empathetic to his brothers' suffering, and it affected him deeply. As the sounds from inside the room subsided, Thomas regained his composure and recommitted to the task. After about ten minutes more, Anthony came out of the

## Mental Health Concepts Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

room, in tears, but clearly tears of joy and relief. It was Thomas's turn.

Thomas grabbed his pillow and entered the room at the direction of Therapist "G". They then completed the smudging ceremony. He hopped up and down, loosening his joints and muscles, and then entered the main room. As he rounded the corner of the second door, he observed much of the floor had been covered by mattresses, pillows, and blankets. He looked to his left and saw that "Therapist 'G' had sat down next to Nurse "A". On the other wall, to his right, sat Nurse "R" and Nurse "I-the Elder". Thomas joked that Spirit Woman "B" was astral projecting into the room. Nurse "R" instructed Thomas to sit down on the mattress and place his pillow behind him. She then had him lie back to ensure that his pillow was properly lined up with his head. She showed him the inhalation procedure for ingesting the medicine and gave him a couple practice runs. My dear reader, do you remember what Thomas's intent was?

**"Are you ready?"**

Nurse "R" administered the medicine to Thomas, placed the eye mask over his eyes, and guided him back into the supine position. As she counted down from 10, she instructed Thomas to release his breath.

As Thomas released his breath, he felt a surge of energy radiate up his neck and into his head. He also saw a brilliant light emanating from within his brain that shined through his eyes from behind them. Within a second, he was shot deep into the cosmos, describing the feeling as having been disintegrated and blasted into the presence of God. Waves of pure energy and joy washed through him with a power that he could not withstand. He basked in the glory of God. It was far too much for him to take and, unbeknownst to him at that moment, he began to

scream with all his strength. The waves continued smashing through him and he was ethereal, unaware of his physical body. While the waves did not decrease in intensity, the troughs between them became wider, allowing him to detect that someone was speaking to him. As he was blasted by waves of pure energy and light, he latched onto the voice...that of Nurse "I-the Elder". Nurse "I-the Elder" was calling him back. He then heard Nurse "R" also calling him back and reminding him to use the breathing techniques he had learned. He felt something on his chest, reached up, and with hands that were barely under his control, he felt other hands holding him safely down. He rematerialized where he had begun, in the room, but while he was becoming aware of his physical presence, he was not yet in control of his spirit.

Thomas cannot remember how he traveled from the direct presence of God to the next place, nor can he remember how long it took to get there. But he got there—to the place where he was suddenly aware of the overwhelming magnitude of his shame, guilt, sorrow, and his need for forgiveness and God's Grace. For what seemed to him to be many long minutes, he cried in sorrow and shame, wailing at times, with an intensity he had not thought possible. Decades of darkness and trauma shot from his body and soul, and as he approached exhaustion from his great purge, he asked God for forgiveness, and he was finally forgiven. The agony turned to pure joy, and he writhed on the floor, rejoicing in the pure joy of God's love for what seemed to him to be ten minutes.

Thomas had found God's love again after years of mourning his catastrophic loss and hopelessness. His rage, fear, guilt, and shame were gone, taken away in an act of divine forgiveness.

Thomas stood by and offered support to his brothers as they stepped off on their 5-MeO-DMT

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journeys. When they had all returned from their trips, everyone gathered in the group circle one last time. This time, integration back into their previous places in the world was discussed. Psychedelic Assisted Therapy can produce life changing alterations to one's consciousness (it can bring a hopeless atheist back to God's embrace, for example). This can cause some shock with family members who were not present to watch the transformation, in surprisingly complex ways. The group discussed these concepts and Therapist "G" prepared them for their reintegration as well as she could. When the group was finished, everyone moved to the dinner area to celebrate with "Taco Night"—in glorious Mexico, no less.

The next morning, everyone had one final breakfast together. The staff presented each member with their maraca from the Ibogaine journey, bags were packed and loaded, hugs and goodbyes exchanged, and the travelers ventured back to the USA.

Thomas is a profoundly changed man. His wife suggested to me that she suspects that he may have been replaced by the "pod people" and that the man standing before her is an alien. I suspect that she is not kidding. Thomas continues to process his psychedelic journey, but one thing is sure: Thomas has renewed his relationship with God, and he has been forgiven. That is **exactly** what he asked the medicine for. The horrible darkness and pain Thomas wrote on the paper he threw into the fire was also mercifully taken from him (and a host of other aspects Thomas had not anticipated). The Ibogaine was very busy for those hours. Thomas no longer smokes, has no desire for caffeine, and a host of other things he is still discovering since returning home. He is no longer afraid, and he is infinitely further away from his anger than he was before his psychedelic experience.

Thomas asked me to convey that if any of

this resonates with you, do not wait any longer. Live a long, healthy, and happy life in deep connection with those you love. You deserve it.

**The war is over.**

Readers are encouraged to click on the following links. Hear what Shawn Ryan, Trevor Millar, and many others have to say... **Reconnaissance is never time wasted.**

Ambio Life: <https://ambio.life/>

Trevor Millar-Shawn Ryan Podcast:

<https://shawnryanshow.com/blogs/the-shawn-ryan-show/shawn-ryan-show-30-trevor-millar-psychedelic-provider>

Shawn Ryan's Psychedelic Experience:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asrnXJ-xCzs>

Dr. Robin Carhart-Harris (with Dr. Huberman):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcxjwA4C4Cw>

Dr. Andrew Huberman:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkIXevEsupQ>

Dr. Matthew Johnson, Johns Hopkins University

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGqFjQI3is>

Marcus Luttrell Podcast with Trevor Millar

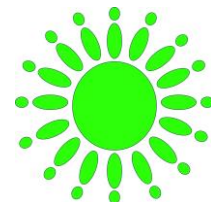
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bG3qJhux4TM&t=69s>

JRE-Michael Pollan on DMT

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASm3EJAFjYQ&list=PLVnduDyUGcMHN03qrr\\_dasx4HW3HrSety&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASm3EJAFjYQ&list=PLVnduDyUGcMHN03qrr_dasx4HW3HrSety&index=3)

For research into potential adverse effects of psychedelic use, the following study is provided:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0293349>





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The United States Carbine, Caliber .30, M1



*(Above): The ubiquitous M1 Carbine.  
All photos: Open source unless otherwise indicated.*

Let us begin by defining what a “carbine” is and the nature of the requirement. Traditionally, a carbine is a shoulder-fired weapon which has been shortened and lightened from a larger parent rifle and may be chambered for a less powerful cartridge [than the parent rifle]. Sometimes a carbine is designed to fire an entirely different cartridge from the primary service rifle. Carbiners are often issued to mounted/cavalry troops and military personnel who benefit from a more portable weapon, but where a handgun would generally be insufficient on the battlefield. Some examples of Marines and Sailors who could benefit from a more portable long gun would be crew served weapons team members, vehicle drivers, medical personnel, aviators, and armored vehicle crewmen. Readers should remember that training Marines and Sailors to operate handguns to high standards of battlefield effectiveness is impractical, especially considering the limited applications of a handgun in a long gun fight. There is an old saying...“Don’t bring a pistol to a rifle fight.” And no mistake. So, the US Armed Forces have for many decades armed some personnel with a carbine—with debatable results. In

previous editions of *The Bursting Bomb*, we discussed the Springfield 1873 Trapdoor rifle and carbine. In fact, the standard shoulder fired weapon of LtCol George Custer’s 7th Cavalry Regiment at the 1876 Battle of Little Bighorn was the Springfield 1873 Trapdoor carbine, chosen by the US Army for its relative portability for horse-mounted troops. Note that Custer’s troops were also issued lower-powered ammunition which had been designed to mitigate recoil in the lighter weapon. I will insert a question to which we will come back—is the M4 “Carbine” actually a carbine? And why does this matter?



*(Above): The Springfield 1873 Trapdoor Carbine (top) compared to its parent rifle. The carbine variant is about 10 inches shorter. While both fire the .45-70 Govt cartridge, the carbine cartridge has a lower powder charge and lighter bullet.*

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So, let's issue the mail clerk a carbine, right? Well, yes. Readers who are veterans of the 2003 assault into Iraq may remember Marines galivanting around the battlefield armed with nothing more than an M9 Service Pistol. **Author's note:** Readers would be correct in their estimation that this is foolishness and to their credit, most units figured this one out quickly. At best, a pistol is useful in that it may allow a [properly trained] Marine to survive long enough to get to a rifle or a machine gun. When I use the term "properly trained", I am describing the level to which a Force Reconnaissance Marine, for example, is trained during the work-up phase of a MEU deployment cycle. I posit that conducting the USMC Combat Pistol Program (a total of 200 9mm rounds) once a year is not sufficient to prepare Marines for combat with a handgun.

Now that all that context is out of the way, we have a requirement for a shoulder fired weapon which is more useful than a handgun but more portable than the full-size service rifle of the time. The next logical question is, "Why don't we just issue everyone a carbine?" It's just not that simple...most of the time. The following are the overall lengths of the USMC service rifles of the 20th century:

- M1895 Lee Navy: 47.75" with 28" barrel.
- Springfield 1903: 43.2" with 24" barrel.
- M1 Service Rifle: 43.5" with 24" barrel.
- M14 Service Rifle: 44.3: with 22" barrel.
- M16A1 Service Rifle: 38.81" with 20" barrel.
- M4/M4A1 "Carbine": ~31" with 14.5" barrel.
- M27 IAR: ~34" with 16.5" barrel.

Readers can easily see that the general overall lengths of USMC service rifles trend shorter. This phenomenon cannot, however, be solely attributed to the desire for greater portability. Advancements

in cartridge design, propellants, and projectiles have permitted acceptable ballistic performance through ever-shorter rifle barrels. Engineers, when selecting barrel lengths, also take into consideration the relationship of portability/weight and the ballistically optimal barrel length for a particular cartridge. For example, the Springfield M1903, with the standard .30-06 cartridge of the day, would not benefit from a barrel longer than 24 inches. A longer barrel does not necessarily cause a rifle to be more "powerful" or more mechanically accurate. Conversely, sometimes requirements demand a shoulder fired weapon whose barrel is much shorter than ballistically optimal (i.e. the Mk18).

But I digress. So, given the manufacturing limitations of industry, time crunches and demand spikes caused by wars, cost, training, and the nature of the mission of a particular Marine, the service often procures a "carbine" for select personnel and finds this sufficient to the general requirement.



*(Above): Two Marines from the 1st Marine Division on Peleliu in 1944. The Marine on the right is armed with an M1 Carbine, M1911A1 pistol, and a Mk2 knife. Quite an interesting loadout of weapons. Photo: USMC.*

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We now have the basics of what a carbine is and where it purposely fits in the doctrinal hierarchy of a close combat organization. We have even alluded to the fact that some within the services can place too much emphasis on weight and portability while accepting poor ballistic performance. Put another way, replacing an expensive full size service rifle with a carbine can sometimes be very tempting.

### Enter the M1 Carbine

In World War I, Marines were primarily armed with Springfield M1903 Service Rifles, M1911 .45 caliber pistols, or M1918 Browning Automatic Rifles. Combat history, while largely anecdotal by its nature, showed that service pistols produced an extremely low ratio of enemy casualties. One could even argue US service pistols, as issued to US troops for the past 100+ years, have produced far more casualties to our own troops than they ever have to our enemies—the consequences of countless negligent discharges. This is largely due to a lack of proper training and a chronic underestimation of the time, ammunition, and effort required to train troops to a high degree of proficiency and safety with a handgun. Just prior to World War II, the US Army generated and funded a requirement for a “light rifle” to issue to troops in lieu of a sidearm. Note: Despite the rather useful requirement of a “light rifle”, the US Armed Forces did not reduce the procurement and issuance of sidearms for many years. In fact, the USMC did not begin aggressively reducing procurement and issuance of service pistols until 2015 due to the impending adoption of the M18 Service Pistol. An example of this ad hoc weapons assignment policy can be seen in the photo on the previous page. The Marine is armed with an M1 Carbine and an M1911A1

pistol. “But hey, if it’s in the armory, it has to go out, right?” In the late 1930s and very early 1940s, reviews of the M1 Service Rifle within the US Army suggested that the M1 was too large for use with many support troops. The US Army and Marine Corps also took notice of the newly demonstrated Blitzkrieg tactics of the German army where the “front lines” became blurred. Support troops often found themselves on the “front line”, which for troops in contact, is wherever they are fighting for their lives. These valid concerns, and some convenient funding, provided the energy for the “light rifle” program. In 1940, Winchester created the .30 Carbine cartridge for use in the light rifle trials, but Winchester did not submit a weapon due to commitments elsewhere. This new intermediate cartridge was based on the .32 Winchester Self-Loading cartridge which had been used in the Winchester 1905 rifle.



*(Above): The Winchester 1905 rifle from which the .32 Self-Loading cartridge was borrowed (and scaled down) to create the .30 Carbine cartridge for the 1940 USA Army “light rifle” trials.*

The initial light rifle trials did not produce a winner. Coincidentally, the USMC ran a semi-automatic rifle trial in 1940, and Winchester’s G30 rifle (the rifle that had kept Winchester from entering any weapon into the Army trials), did not perform well under adverse conditions. A Winchester engineer, David Marshall “Carbine” Williams, who had previously modified the G30 with his famous short stroke gas piston, then redesigned the bolt to be like the M1 Garand’s bolt. Williams and the design team were able to

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reduce the rifle's weight down to approximately 7.5 pounds. The prototype was named the "M2" Winchester Military Rifle. What happened next would be impossible by today's federal acquisitions programs' standards. Once all the US Army light rifle submissions had been found unsuitable, the Army arranged another round of testing. Winchester requested that the Army Ordnance department consider their M2 prototype and when the Army representative inspected the M2, he requested a scaled down version (to .30 Carbine) as soon as possible. Winchester produced a working prototype in 13 days and after further development and testing in August and September of 1941, the Winchester prototype was selected as the winner of the trials. On October 22, 1941, the weapon was officially classified as the "M1 Carbine". While "Carbine" Williams has been credited with the creation of the M1 Carbine, the weapon was created by several engineers.



*(Above): The M2 Winchester Military Rifle which was scaled down to create the prototype M1 Carbine.*

*(Below): The first prototype of the M1 Carbine. Photos: Courtesy of the Cody Firearms Museum, Cody, Wyoming.*



### M1 Carbine specifications:

- Gas-operated, air-cooled, magazine-fed, short stroke piston, semi-automatic, shoulder-fired rifle.
- .30 Carbine (15 and 30 round magazines)
- Overall length: 35.6 inches
- Barrel length: 17.75 inches
- Weight: 5.8 pounds (loaded with sling).

The US Marine Corps received 333,374 M1 Carbines during World War II. What is perhaps more surprising, is that this accounts for only 5% of the total production. The M1 Carbine is the most widely fielded shoulder fired weapon of World War II, with 6,121,309 carbines having been produced between 1942 and 1945. The US produced 5,468,772 M1 Service Rifles from 1934 to 1957 and produced about 1.75 million Thompson submachine guns of all variants over the decades. World War II production costs: M1 Carbines cost \$45.00, M1 Service Rifles cost 85\$, and Thompson submachine guns cost as much as \$200 during the war.

As one can see, the USMC was flush with small arms weapons and personnel during World War II. The USMC swelled to nearly 500,000 personnel during the war. Naturally, Marine Gunners love to focus our initial thoughts on the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad, and we often think in the context of what we have experienced in our relatively recent USMC service. In World War II, however, the USMC was still codifying, for example, the construct of the Fire Team and Rifle Squad. By 1943, the USMC had largely adopted the M1 Service Rifle, so when the M1 Carbine came into service, it was quickly assigned to command element and support personnel. As we know from our historical studies, the USMC could rightly be called the "United States Marine Corps DRAFT", meaning that commanders do not often follow what is written in the doctrinal references. When looking back, one should expect to find small arms weapons assigned to personnel who were assigned a different weapon on the paper resting on a desk in Quantico. Readers who have deployed to combat likely know the phenomenon whereby unusual weapons magically appear out of some strange box on a Maritime Prepositioning Ship (MPS) (i.e. M79 Grenade Launchers, M500



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shotguns, etc.).

The M1 Carbine, while intended for command element and support troops, often found its way to exactly where commanders needed it, references be damned. And yes, some troops procured M1 Carbines because they preferred a lighter and more portable weapon with little regard for its mediocre ballistic performance (relative to the M1 Service Rifle).



*(Above): US Marines destroy a Japanese position and its occupants during the battle of Iwo Jima in February 1945. The Marine to the right of the flame thrower is armed with an M1 Carbine. Photo: AP.*

US Marines employed hundreds of thousands of M1 Carbines throughout the Pacific Theater of Operations. The weapon was generally well liked, reliable, and easy to maintain. Anecdotes suggest that the .30 Carbine cartridge was underpowered and often unable to reliably “stop” a Japanese soldier (a timeless complaint—the lamentations beginning the first time in human history someone shot someone else...and echoing though the ages). While many Marines have complained about the ballistic performance of the .30 Carbine round, when one does the math, one can easily see that the .30 Carbine round had superior ballistic characteristics when compared to the Thompson submachine gun, firing the “mythically-powerful” .45 Automatic Colt Pistol (ACP) cartridge. At the end of the day, as they say, everything is relative, and the weapons by which everything else was



*(Above): US Marines raise the Colors atop Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima (the first flag raising). The Marine in the foreground is armed with an M1 Carbine and a Mk2 “KA BAR” fighting knife. Photo: SSgt Louis R. Lowery, USMC.*

measured were the M1 Service Rifle and the Browning Automatic Rifle—both firing the appropriately-legendary .30-06 Springfield cartridge. As I sit and ponder what I just wrote, I realize that in my 30+ years of recent USMC service, many Marines still consider the M1 Service Rifle (or the M14) to be “what right looks like”.

### Variants—M1, M1A1, M2, and M3 Carbines

As with most newly introduced weapons, the M1 Carbine was modified throughout its production. The trigger safety, for example, on

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early M1 Carbine models was very close to and very similar in size and shape to the magazine release button. Later models were fitted with a safety lever so Marines would not accidentally press the wrong button while in a fight. Early production specimens did not have a bayonet lug, but by 1944, all M1 Carbines would have a lug installed. For paratroopers, the M1 was modified with a folding stock, creating the M1A1 Carbine.



*(Above): A Korean War era M3 Carbine with infra-red "sniperscope".*

The M3 Carbine, with night optic, proved useful during the battle of Okinawa in that Soldiers were able to detect infiltrating Japanese soldiers at night and direct tracer fire on them. This allowed US machine gunners to pour a high volume of fire into that location. The M3 Carbine had a general effective range at night of no more than 100 meters and mobility was restricted by a battery pack. One can simply look at the photo above to deduce this weapon was more suited for a static defensive position than in the assault. Nevertheless, approximately 20,000 M3 Carbines were produced before the weapon was removed from the US inventory.

### The M1 Carbine in Korea

In the summer of 1950, North Korea invaded the south, triggering a US response. After a series of defeats and retreats, the US managed to push the North Koreans back with air power and rapidly increasing ground combat power. The US Army and Marine Corps had made no small arms technological advances since the end of World War II. In fact, the Army and Marine Corps were manned to a fraction of their size during the war...and arguably, neither service was ready for the Korean War.

The M1 Service Rifle, M2 Carbine,



*(Above): An Inland M1A1 "Paratrooper" Carbine with a folding stock for airborne operations.*

In late 1944, the Carbine was reintroduced as a select fire weapon, capable of semi-automatic and automatic fire and was renamed the M2 Carbine. M2 Carbine production began in April of 1944 and a 30-round magazine was designed and issued. Reports suggest the 30-round magazine was easily damaged and not entirely interoperable with the magazine catch of the earlier production M1 Carbines, causing reliability problems. Select-fire conversion kits were made available for unit armorers to "upgrade" their M1 Carbines to the M2 variant. The M2 Carbine saw limited service at the end of World War 2.



*(Above): A Winchester M2 Carbine. Note the 30-round magazine and bayonet lug. Photo: Rock Island Auction Co.*

Also late in World War II, the US released an M2 Carbine variant (the M3) where the rear sight had been removed and replaced by a night vision optic.

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Browning Automatic Rifle, and the M1911A1 were back at war. For the Marine Corps, however, this war had an entirely different climate. The Marines and their M1 Carbines were about to be tested in some brutally cold conditions.



*(Above): US Marines of the 1st Marine Division prepare to withdraw from their positions near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Note: Marines are armed with M1 Service Rifles, M1-M2 Carbines, and Browning Automatic Rifles. Bayonets are fixed.  
Photo: Sgt Frank Kerr, USMC.*

During the Korean War, the USMC employed mostly the M2 select-fire variant of the M1 Carbine series. At the end of World War II, the USMC stopped issuing the Thompson submachine gun, having replaced the capability with the M2 Carbine. When the weather turned bitter cold during the winters in Korea, the Carbine began to suffer performance issues. The M2 gained a reputation for frequent jamming during periods of intense cold. Many of the jamming issues can be attributed to extremely cold gun oil gumming up the weapons' actions. Some Marines also traced their jamming issues to weak recoil springs. The .30 Carbine cartridge also demonstrated insufficient power to drive the bolt reliably when the propellant

became extremely cold. If all the cold weather jamming issues weren't enough, the .30 Carbine cartridge gained a very poor reputation for weak terminal ballistics performance against enemy forces who wore very heavy cold weather clothing. Naturally, Marines armed with the M1 Service Rifle did not have this problem. The .30-06 cartridge (and the M1 Service Rifle, itself) performed quite well during the Korean War. Despite these problems, Marines figured out ways to mitigate the cold weather problems and simply changed tactics and engagement practices to keep the M2 Carbines in the fight. Engagement ranges, for example, were rarely more than 50 meters and sometimes, Marines found that they had to "warm their weapons up" to get them running reliably during cold weather operations.

When considering the pros and cons of the M1 Carbine when compared to the M1 Service Rifle, one can see why Marines would like the Carbine. The M1 Carbine series used a detachable 15 or 30 round magazine which could be topped off unlike the M1 Service Rifle's 8-round clip. The M1 Carbine weighed significantly less and was handier than the M1 Service Rifle and for better or worse, became a select-fire weapon when the M2 variant was introduced. In the dense jungles of the south Pacific (in areas not stripped of foliage by artillery fire), the M1 and M2 Carbines were a fine close-in semi or fully automatic weapon. In terms of general ballistic performance in hot and cold climates, the M1 Service Rifle was the preferred weapon, of course, but sometimes lighter is better... no matter what (for those who must carry it). In the





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end, the M1, M2, and M3 Carbines were intended to replace the pistol...not the rifle. When properly considered in a relative sense, the M1 Carbine series proved quite successful. The Korean War Armistice took place in the summer of 1953 and the USMC went back into interwar years until the beginning of the Vietnam War.

In late 1950's, the US Army transitioned to the M14 Service Rifle and the USMC quickly followed suit. Some within the services believed the M14 would be able to replace most every other weapon; the M1 Service Rifle, the Browning Automatic Rifle, and the carbines and submachine guns. The USMC maintained stocks of M1/M2 Carbines and when the initial phases of the Vietnam War began, advisors and other specialized troops sent to Vietnam, often employed and preferred the M2 Carbine. The US also transferred a great many M2 Carbines for service with South Vietnamese partner forces.

With the adoption of the M14 Service Rifle and not long after, the M16A1 Service Rifle, the M1-M2 was rendered obsolete in US service.



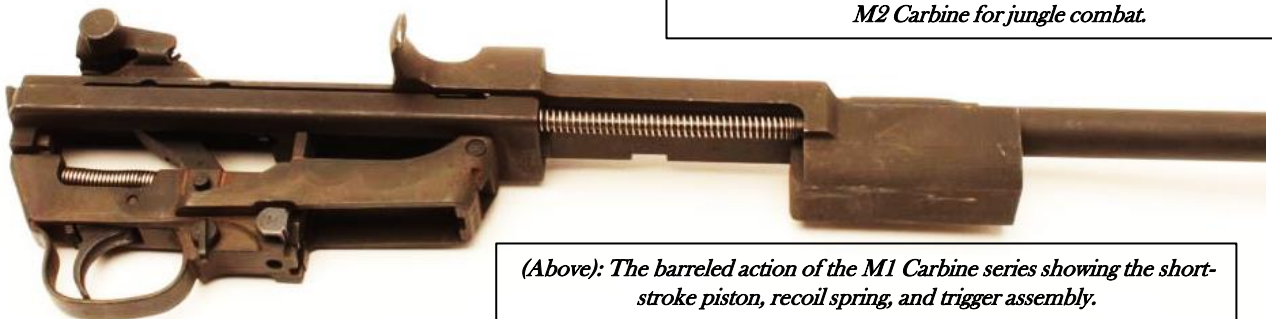
*(Above): The extremely long-lived M16 Service Rifle (this being an early M16A1 variant). The M16 series has been in formal US service since 1967.*



*(Above): A United States Soldier in Vietnam with a very modified M2 Carbine for jungle combat.*



*(Above): The short-lived replacement to the M1 Service Rifle, the M14.*



*(Above): The barreled action of the M1 Carbine series showing the short-stroke piston, recoil spring, and trigger assembly.*





## In the Next Bursting Bomb...

MGA SITREP & Message Traffic from the Executives and Staff

Interview with a Marine Gunner

Update on the Marine Gunners at TBS and IWOC

USMC Fireteam Concepts

USMC Rifle Squad Concepts

United States Service Rifle and Marksmanship Historical Study

Contributions from our Members

Mental Health Concepts



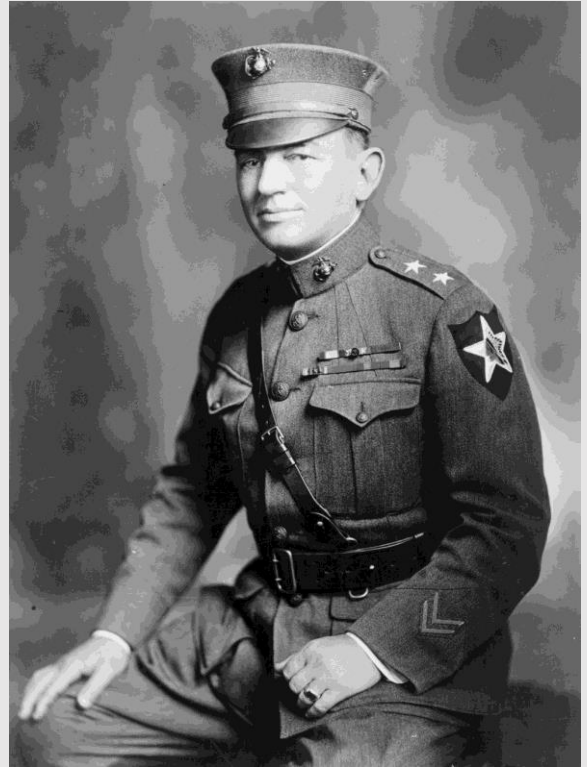
*Update to Mk2 historical article in edition 1-23: The Editor/author was able to obtain another fine historical specimen—a first generation USMC KA-BAR with red spacer handle and with markings on the sheath from the original owner, Mr. Laddie F. Cerny of D Battery, 11th Defense Battalion (a WWII USMC unit). Mr. Cerny, from Ohio, served as a US Marine in WWII. Photo: Editor.*

(1) On November 10, 1775, a Corps of Marines was created by a resolution of Continental Congress. Since that date, many thousand men have borne the name “Marine”. In memory of them, it is fitting that we who are Marines should commemorate the birthday of our corps by calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history.

(2) The record of our corps is one which will bear comparison with that of the most famous military organizations in the world’s history. During 90 of the 146 years of its existence the Marine Corps has been in action against the Nation’s foes. From the Battle of Trenton to the Argonne, Marines have won foremost honors in war, and in the long eras of tranquility at home, generation after generation of Marines have grown gray in war in both hemispheres and in every corner of the seven seas, that our country and its citizens might enjoy peace and security.

(3) In every battle and skirmish since the birth of our corps, Marines have acquitted themselves with the greatest distinction, winning new honors on each occasion until the term “Marine” has come to signify all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue.

(4) This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the corps. With it we have also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the Marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to flourish Marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our Nation will regard us as worthy successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as “Soldiers of the Sea” since the founding of the Corps.



**Happy 248<sup>th</sup> Birthday,  
Marines!**

**Semper Fidelis,  
MGA Staff**



**MajGen John A. Lejeune,**

13th Commandant of the Marine Corps

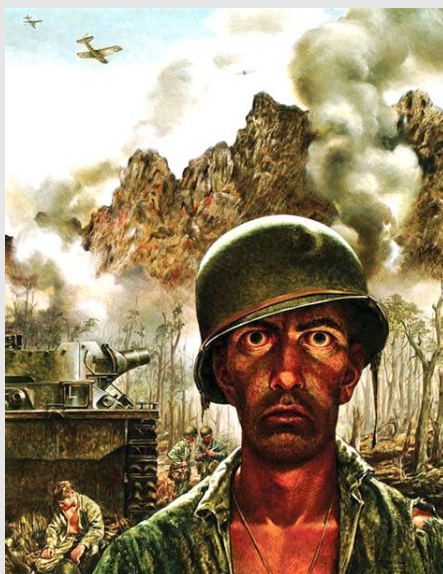
\*\*If you, or someone you know needs help, support is available 24/7. Service members and their families can call Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, or chat at [militaryonesource.mil](https://militaryonesource.mil). Service members, Veterans, and their loved ones can also call the Military and Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat at [veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net), or text to 838255. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available to anyone at 1-800-273-8255.

More excellent sources for Veteran's mental healthcare are:

**The Headstrong Project:** Contact <https://theheadstrongproject.org> and select "Connect to Care".

**The Cohen Veterans Network:** Contact at <https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/> . Help is available for Veteran mental health issues and for help in transitioning from military to civilian life and family related issues.

**Ambio:** <https://ambio.life/>



*"The 2000 Yard Stare"  
Painting by Thomas Lea  
Battle of Peleliu.*

