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The Commandant of the Marine Corps and the JCS

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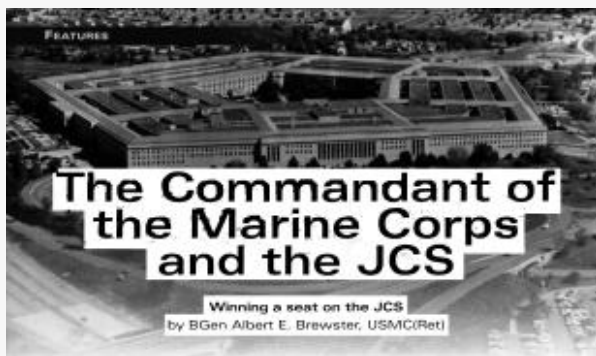
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[Headnote]

Winning a seat on the JCS



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Photo: The Pentagon. (Photo by SSgt Hugh Jeffrey, Leatherneck. 1972.)

On 30 September 2005, Gen Peter Pace became the first United States Marine Corps general officer to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), succeeding United States Air Force Gen Richard Myers in the position as America's highest ranking military officer below the President. He had also served as Vice Chairman of the JCS from 1 October 2001 to 12 August 2005. Gen Pace was the sixth officer, and first Marine, to hold the Vice Chairman position within the Department of Defense.

On 8 June 2007, the new secretary of Defense (secDef), Robert Gates, speaking at a news conference, announced:

. . . that until recendy, I had intended to re-nominate General Pace for another two years, but that after consulting with senators in both parties, I have concluded that the focus of his confirmation process would have been on the past and not on the future. I am no stranger to contentious confirmations, and I do not shrink from them. However, I have decided that at this moment in our history, the nation, our men and women in uniform, and Gen. Pace himself would not be well-served by a divisive ordeal in selecting the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

While I strongly suspect that some degree of inter-Service rivalry still exists among today's Services (and may well have played a small part in Gen Pace's departure), I also believe that civilians and current officers have little understanding of the "struggles" that have gone on in the past among the Services. I am certain that Navy, Army, and Air Force officers from as short a period as 30 years ago never considered the remote possibility that a U.S. Marine would ever serve as Chairman, JCS.

In this article I will trace some of the more important events that occurred prior to 1978 and provide the details of the circumstances that led up to a change in Title 10 and that finally made the Commandant a full member of the JCS, thereby opening the opportunity for Gen Pace to become Chairman, JCS.

At the end of World War II (WWII) it was generally recognized by both the Congress and the civilian leadership that the defense structure that had successfully won that war was in some need of reorganization. On 19 December 1945, President Harry S. Truman proposed creation of a unified Department of National Defense. The proposal reached Congress in April 1946 but was held up as congressional hearings in July 1946 looked at concerns over the concentration of enormous power within a single military department. During this period there were efforts made by certain individuals and Services to basically do away with the U.S. Marine Corps. On 6 May 1946, then-Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Alexander A. Vandegrift, appeared before the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs and in an address that became known as "the bended knee" presentation stated:

For some time I have been aware that the very existence of the Marine Corps stood as a continuing affront to the War Department General Staff, but had hoped that this attitude would end with the recent war as a result of its dramatic demonstration of the complementary and conflicting roles of land power, naval power and air power. But following a careful study of circumstances as they have developed in the past six months, I am convinced that my hopes were groundless, that the War Department's intentions regarding the Marines are quite unchanged, and that even in advance of this proposed legislation it is seeking to reduce the sphere of the Marine Corps to ceremonial functions and to the provision of small ineffective combat formations and labor troops for service on the landing beaches. Consequently, I now feel increased concern regarding the merger measure, not only because of the ignominious fate which it holds for a valuable Corps, but because of the tremendous loss to the Nation which it entails.

Gen Vandegrift went on to say:

It may be said that the apprehensions which I have just voiced are unnecessarily pessimistic, that the value of the Marine Corps is so obvious that its destruction is unthinkable-its perpetuation a foregone conclusion. Nevertheless, I know that the War Department's intentions with respect to the Marine Corps are well advanced and carefully integrated. I have seen them in a form emanating from the highest quarters of the War Department. And I also know that the structure of the unification bill as it now stands will provide perfect implementation for those designs. Under the provisions of this legislation, the single Secretary for Common Defense and the all-powerful National Chief of Staff are entirely free, either to abolish the Marine Corps outright or to divest it of all its vital functions, leaving only a token organization in order that the name of the Corps may be preserved. And if the proposed Chief of Staff is of Army antecedents, I feel there is strong possibility that is precisely what will take place. Finally, it is of great significance to note that, as the bill is now framed, this summary and altogether arbitrary action could be effectuated by simple departmental order, without prior reference to the Congress.

Gen Vandegrift closed his rather lengthy presentation with:

In placing its case in your hands, the Marine Corps remembers that it was this same Congress which, in 1798, called it into a long and useful service to the Nation. The Marine Corps feels that the question of its continued existence is likewise a matter for determination by the Congress and not one to be resolved by departmental legerdemain or a quasi-legislative process enforced by the War Department General Staff. The Marine Corps, then, believes that it has earned this right-to have its future decided by the legislative body which created it-nothing more. Sentiment is not a valid consideration in determining questions of national security. We have pride in ourselves and

in our past, but we do not rest our case on any presumed ground of gratitude owing us from the Nation. The bended knee is not a tradition of our Corps. If the Marine as a fighting man has not made a case for himself after 170 years of service, he must go. But I think you will agree with me that he has earned the right to depart with dignity and honor, not by subjugation to the status of uselessness and servility planned for him by the War Department.

Gen Vandegrift certainly knew the politics existing at that time in Washington, DC, and that the animosity against the Marine Corps was not limited to just the War Department. President Truman (who had served as a U.S. Army artillery captain in WWI) expressed his true feeling concerning the Marine Corps in a letter to Congressman Gordon S. McDonough on 29 August 1950, when he stated:

I read with a lot of interest your letter in regard to the Marine Corps. For your information the Marine Corps is the Navy's police force and as long as I am President that is what it will remain. They have a propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin's. Nobody desires to belittle the efforts of the Marine Corps but when the Marine Corps goes into the army it works with and for the army and that is the way it should be. I am more than happy to have your expression of interest in this naval military organization. The Chief of Naval Operations [CNO] is the Chief of Staff of the Navy of which the Marines are a part.

The Marine Corps had many friends and admirers within the U.S Congress; some were former Marines. Through hearings and personal contacts the problems within the proposed legislation were brought out. As a result, President Truman eventually sent new legislation to Congress in February 1947, where it was again debated and amended for several months. During this period Gen Vandegrift appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) on 22 April 1947, and stated:



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Gen Pace responds to a question from Tim Russert, host of Meet the Press. (Photo by SSgt D. Myles Cullen, USAF, 5 March 2006.)

I have never opposed the principle of unification, although I have expressed strong opposition to the objectives underlying the original Collins Plan for outright merger of the armed forces. I am in accord with the overall objectives which the bill now under consideration seeks to attain. In my judgment, however, there are certain defects in this bill which should be corrected.

Later in his testimony he indicated:

Stated concisely and with respect to the Marine Corps, the defects of the bill are twofold: First: It affirms the existence of the Marine Corps without expressly stating the roles and missions which the Corps is expected to perform. second: It completely excludes the Marine Corps from participation in the joint bodies and agencies which the bill would establish [emphasis added].

And again:

Unless a statutory statement of the missions of the Marine Corps is included, its functions become dependent solely upon the arbitrary judgment of the secretary of National Defense. The size, the character, and the organization of the Corps will lie in his hands.

Going on:

Section 106 of the bill, which contains the sole mention of the Marines and which goes no further than to affirm the presence of a Marine Corps within the Department of the Navy, contains no guarantee that the Corps will retain a single one of the characteristics it has today, with the one exception of its name. As a guarantee of vigorous Marine Corps existence, section 106 is completely without meaning unless it is accompanied by a statement of what the toles and missions of the Marine Corps shall be.

He closed his remarks with:

With respect to the Marine Corps, the necessary changes are few in number and simple in character-the insertion of a clear statement of the status and functions of the Corps, and a slight rewording of certain sections to provide for Marine Corps representation on the appropriate joint bodies and agencies. I am prepared to submit draft amendments which will accomplish these changes.

Fortunately for the Marine Corps (and, in my humble opinion, the country) a few of those recommended changes (but not the provision of making the Commandant even a part-time member of the JCS) were included by the Congress when the National Security Act of 1947 (Public Law No. 235, 80 Congress, 61 Stat. 496, 26 July 1947) was signed by President Truman. As it relates to the Marine Corps, the bill provided the following:

The United States Marine Corps, within the Department of the Navy, shall include land combat and service forces and such aviation as may be organic therein. The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign. It shall be the duty of the Marine Corps to develop, in coordination with the Army and the Air Force, those phases of amphibious operations which pertain to the tactics, technique, and equipment employed by landing forces. In addition, the Marine Corps shall provide detachments and organizations for service on armed vessels of the Navy, shall provide security detachments for the protection of naval property at naval stations and bases, and shall perform such other duties as the President may direct: Provided, That such additional duties shall not detract from or interfere with the operations for which the Marine Corps is primarily organized. The Marine Corps shall be responsible, in accordance with integrated joint mobilization plans, for the expansion of peacetime components of the Marine Corps to meet the needs of war.



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Gen Vandegrift minced no words in his congressional testimony. (File photo.)

However, passage of this bill did not end the inter-Service battles within the new Department of Defense. The first secDef, James Forrestal, had become so concerned over "roles and missions" as they related to the division of the military budget among the Services that in March 1948 he assembled the JCS in Key West, FL in an attempt to work out some sort of an agreement on this subject. These became known as "The Key West Agreements." It is interesting to note that the new Commandant, Gen Clifton B. Cates (January 1948 to January 1952), was neither invited nor had any input in determining what roles and missions were assigned to the Marine Corps. As a result the Marine Corps mission was principally limited to amphibious operations. This limitation did not prevent GEN Douglas MacArthur, some scant 2 years later, from calling upon the Marines to provide troops to fight an extended major ground campaign during the Korean War. It was not until June 1952 that the Congress, as the result of much lobbying by the Marine Corps and its friends, finally passed Public Law 416:



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President Truman and Gen Cates, best of political smiles on this occasion. (Official photograph, Photo Services, MCS Quantico, 1949.)

To fix the personnel strength of the United States Marine Corps, and to establish the relationship of the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This law provided:

That the first sentence of section 206 (c) of the National Security Act of 1947 is hereby amended to read as follows: 'The United States Marine Corps, within the Department of the Navy, shall be so organized as to include not less than three combat divisions and three airwings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein, and except in time of war or national emergency hereafter declared by the Congress the personnel strength of the Regular Marine Corps shall be maintained at not more than four hundred thousand.'

SEC. 2. Section 211 (a) of the National Security Act of 1947 (61 Stat. 505), as amended, is hereby further amended by adding at the end thereof the following new paragraph:

'The Commandant of the Marine Corps shall indicate to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff any matter scheduled for consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which directly concerns the United States Marine Corps. Unless the Secretary of Defense, upon request from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a determination, determines that such matter does not concern the United States Marine Corps, the Commandant of the Marine Corps shall meet with the Joint Chiefs of Staff when such matters are under consideration by them and on such occasion and with respect to such matter the Commandant of the Marine Corps shall have co-equal status with the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.'

As a result of the above provisions, the 20th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., became the first Commandant to serve as a "member" of the JCS. This arrangement remained in effect until 1978, when

circumstances occurred that brought this issue to a head and resulted in the Office of Legislative Affairs, Headquarters Marine Corps being tasked by the Commandant to see if Congress would change the law affecting the Commandant's status as a member of the JCS.

In August 1977, as Chief of Staff, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, I accompanied MajGen John K. Davis to meet then-Commandant Gen Louis H. Wilson as he landed at El Toro to attend a funeral at Camp Pendleton. Since I had met Gen Wilson only once in my career, you can imagine my surprise when, after exchanging salutes, Gen Wilson looked at me and said, "You are coming back to Washington to be my Legislative Assistant." I replied, "Sir, I do not want that job!" To which he said, "That was not in the form of a request, and I want you back there in 7 days." I said, "General, I have three kids in school; there is no way I can be in DC in 7 days!" He replied, "OK, take 10 days!" and got into his waiting helicopter.

Ten days later I presented myself to Gen Wilson in his office at Headquarters Marine Corps. His directions to me were simple:

The SecDef does not want the Corps to have the AV-8B Harrier, SecNav [the Secretary of the Navy] does not want us to have the Harrier, and the CNO does not want us to have the Harrier. I want the Marine Corps to have the Harrier! Your job is to get the Congress to Authorize and appropriate the AV-8B over all their objections. Do whatever you have to do to make this happen. If you get caught doing something you should not have done-you are expendable.

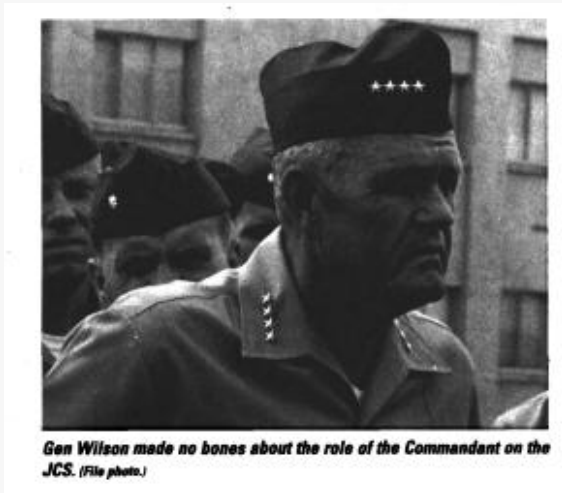
Gen Wilson, who had previously served as the Legislative Assistant to the Commandant, continued:

I want to know everything that is going on 'on the Hill'; my door is always open to you. Come and see me. Do not write me any memo that you would not be willing to read on the front page of The Washington Post. Do you have any questions?

"Not at this time," was my response.

True to his word, his door was always open to me, and I met with him three or four times a week to keep him informed. The AV-8B was authorized and funded by Congress for the next 3 years. As a result of my frequent meetings with Gen Wilson, I was not surprised to get a call from his Military Secretary saying, "General Wilson wants to see you immediately." When I walked into his office he was in the most agitated state I had ever witnessed in him. He said, "I will not allow the Marine Corps to be insulted like this. You will not believe what the Joint Chiefs have just done to insult the Corps!" As he explained I began to understand his ire. Prior to passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which for the first time established the position of Vice Chairman of the JCS, it was the practice of the JCS to designate an Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs when the Chairman was going to be outside of the Washington, DC area. This designation was normally based on the seniority of the other Chiefs. A most unusual situation had arisen in that not only was the Chairman going to be traveling in an upcoming period, but the CNO, the Chief of Army, and the Chief of Air Force were all scheduled to be absent. Gen Wilson had assumed, once the issue was raised, that he had "co-equal status with the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff" (as provided by Public Law 416) and that he would be designated as Acting Chairman. However, the other Chiefs would not stand for that to happen, saying, "The Commandant was not a 'full member' of the JCS, only a 'part time' member." They then designated the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force as the Acting Chairman. Gen Wilson was direct in his orders to me: "I want the law changed to make the Commandant a regular, full time member of the JCS!" I replied: "Sir, I think that would require an Amendment to the National Security Act of 1947, and Title 10 of the Code." His reply was again direct: "That is correct; get it done!" I returned to my office to confer with my executive officer, Col Gene Silverthorn. We agreed that if we tried to accomplish this openly we would meet with resistance from the other Services and probably would not be able to get it done. Fortunately, Gen Wilson had a most unusual relationship with Senator John C. Stennis, then-Chairman of the SASC. While a young captain, Gen Wilson had been awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the assault on Guam during WWII. When presented with the medal by President Truman, he was accompanied by a newly elected Senator Stennis from his home state of Mississippi. They had developed a bond and stayed in contact over the years. Since the House

Armed Services Committee (HASC) had already passed their Authorization Act, the Senate was our necessary place for action. I had my Senate liaison officer, LtCol Al Barry, contact the SASC staff director, Frank Sullivan, and request a "very private" meeting with Senator Stennis and Sullivan. There I laid out for Senator Stennis what had occurred and that Gen Wilson wanted the laws changed to make the Commandant a full-time member of the JCS. Senator Stennis listened carefully and noted, "I think I need to hear Louis tell me that he wants this done." I told him that I could get him on the phone immediately. He asked his secretary to "get me the Commandant," and they had a very short conversation. Senator Stennis then told Frank Sullivan, "Draw up the required changes and I will offer it on the floor when the bill is in consideration. Keep this just between the four of us." And that was that! Almost, that is. Several times I checked in with Sullivan to see if "everything was OK" and was always told, "Got it under control." On 11 July 1978, the day the Senate was to take the bill to the floor for consideration, I received a frantic call from Gen Wilson:



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Gen Wilson made no bones about the role of the Commandant on the JCS. (File photo.)

What in the world is going on? Senator Stennis just called me and said, 'Let me see, Louis. You want me to change the law so the Commandant is a full-time member of the JCS. Is that right?' I think that old gentleman is losing his memory! You get over there and make sure this is happening!

When I arrived at the Senate they were already considering the Authorization Act, with both Senator Stennis and Sullivan on the floor, so all I could do was watch the action unfold from the gallery. Late in the day, Senator Dewey Barden (R-OK and a former Marine) rose and offered an "unprinted amendment." Senator Bartlett stated:

This amendment will change the present law to reflect the existing practice, namely, that the Commandant of the Marine Corps act as a permanent member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

He went on discussing how the Commandant had, in the last 2 years, participated in some 99 percent of all JCS discussions and had broad knowledge of all types of warfare. He then stated:

My amendment would simply remove the archaic legal distinction existing between the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the other chiefs of staff, which the Honorable J. William Middendorf, when Secretary of the Navy, called 'unnecessary and undesirable.'

Senator Bartlett continued discussing the reasons why the change was necessary, finally adding:

Certainly I can think of no good reason why the Commandant should be excluded from the meetings of the Joint Chiefs. . . . My amendment only corrects the law to reflect current practice; namely, that the Commandant of the Marine Corps is a regular member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This amendment will not change the present practice, and I know of no opposition to this amendment.

Senator John Tower (R-TX), ranking minority member of the SASC (also former Navy and strong supporter of the U. S. Navy), was recognized.

I think what the Senator from Oklahoma is doing is simply recognizing with appropriate statutory language what is a de facto situation, but which certainly gives the Commandant of the Marine Corps the status he should have on the Joint Chiefs. I hope the Senate will adopt this amendment.

Senator Stennis then stated:

Mr. President, I shall be brief on this matter. It is not just a simple matter. It is highly important. To pass this amendment, after all, in my judgment, would be merely to confirm what has become an established practice pattern that goes without deviation.

Speaking without any notes, Senator Stennis then displayed that he was far from "losing it" as Gen Wilson had been concerned.

The present law-and of course it would take time to read it-Chapter 5, Joint Chiefs of Staff, goes back to the National Security Act of 1947, setting up the Joint Chiefs and 2 years later, selecting a chairman and putting the Commandant of the Marine Corps in here was a very delicate and sensitive situation. I was not here at the time, but I got in within 2 or 3 weeks or months and got all the reverberations that came out of this situation, as well as others.

He then read a short excerpt of existing law, and continued:

My first impulse, when this was mentioned to me, was that it was so important that there ought to be a hearing on it. Then, frankly, after I learned all these facts that I have related here and thought back over the years about it, I thought an extensive hearing on it might open up the thing and stir up the matter more than just the change of the law here would do. This would really just confirm the status of the operation now. I think it is not a dramatic step, by any means. It is confirming what has grown to be a practice that is settled now and accepted. There is nothing at issue, even though there was, at first, considerable talk about whether or not the other Chiefs were going to let the Commandant sit in on anything unless it vitally and totally concerned the Marine Corps.

He went on for a short time, concluding with:

I never have seen the Marines fail to arouse some interest around matters that concern them. They usually have good reason for their position and they give more for the military dollar, in my opinion, than anybody else. I am supporting it on those principles, Mr. President.

The presiding officer then called the question, and the amendment was agreed to and voted to lay on the table. Later that day the bill was passed on a roll call by a vote of 89 to 3.

The issue moved to the HASC and the joint conference that would occur with the Senate to iron out any differences between the two bills. Since our provision was not in the House bill, we needed to get those members of the HASC that would be members of the conference to "accept" the Senate language.

Paragraph 5047 of Title 10- Armed Forces, Subtitle C - Navy and Marine Corps, PART I - Organization, Chapter

506 - Headquarters Marine Corps specifically provides for the position of Legislative Assistant to the Commandant. The other Services, departments, and the secDef also have this position authorized by the Congress. Clearly the Congress wants to have available a single individual within each Service through which they can receive information. Historically the Corps has done well in this area, using the contacts with both former Marines serving in the Congress and other members who recognize the Corps' value to the maximum advantage. This was the case in the battle of survival in 1947 and later by an exceptional individual serving as Legislative Assistant for an unbelievably long tour from June 1952 to January 1960, one Col James D. "Don" Hittle. Don established such a reputation that on retirement in 1960 he was asked to serve as Deputy Assistant to the SecDef in the Office of Legislative Affairs. In 1953 Don encouraged Joe Bartlett, a WWII Marine working in the House, to "pull together all the former Marines serving or working on the Hill" into a loose knit group known as "The Congressional Marines." Joe was extremely successful in bringing together this group and maintaining it over the years, as he became the senior Republican staff officer of the House of Representatives, a position to which he was reelected six times before his retirement in 1979. Graduating from high school, Joe volunteered to join the Corps and was commissioned in 1944. He went on to serve as a brigadier general in the Reserves, retiring in 1978. The Congressional Marines usually met at breakfast and were well attended by both House and Senate members and professional staff who were former Marines. The Commandant and the Legislative Assistant were always invited to these monthly meetings and were frequently asked to discuss legislation that was of interest to the Corps. Recognizing that the "best lobbyist" is one congressional member lobbying another, we immediately had the Marine Legislative Representative in the House, LtCol Marlin "Buzz" Hefti, schedule meetings with the House members of this group. They were provided with background information that would allow them to ask for support of the Marine Corps position with the HASC members who would be attending the joint conference. Contacts with the HASC Chairman, Charles Melvin "Mel" Price (who had served a short period in the U.S. Army from October 1943 until he was elected to Congress in October 1944), indicated that he was willing to accept the Stennis position, if the Senator would agree to accept one of his issues not included in the Senate bill. Following multiple contacts with the House conference attendees and by the time the conference date arrived, we felt fairly certain that the members of the HASC would accept the Bartlett amendment. During the joint conference the provision was accepted, and the House agreed to and passed the amended bill on 4 August 1978.



Gen Shepherd with the Fort Henry Guard colors, July 1955. He was the first Commandant of the Marine Corps to serve as a "part-time member" of the JCS. (Defense Department photo A402516.)

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Gen Shepherd with the Fort Henry Guard colors, July 1955. He was the first Commandant of the Marine Corps to serve as a "part-time member" of the JCS. (Defense Department photo A402516.)

With final passage the issue appeared settled; however, President Jimmy E. Carter vetoed the bill on 17 August and all matters were up for review, as both houses would have to reconsider the bill following the House's failure to override the veto on 7 September 1978. Then, seeking to avoid a complete rewrite of the bill, both the Senate and House Committees agreed to simply drop the \$2 billion added for an additional carrier from their bills, with time being a factor against opening up other issues included in the original bill. On 15 September both committees reported their new bills to the floor, and on 26 September the Senate passed its bill, followed by the House passing its bill on 4 October. Then on 7 October, in order to avoid a time-consuming conference, the Senate concurred in the House bill and sent it to the President for signature.

On 20 October 1978, the President signed Public Law 95-485 and the Commandant of the Marine Corps became a "full" member of the JCS. Gen Louis H. Wilson was the first to serve in this capacity, as has every Commandant since that date. This new language fully opened the door to allow Marine officers to serve as commanders of the various joint commands, and eventually as Vice Chairman and then Chairman of the JCS.

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-433) was an attempt to fix problems that the Congress believed were a result of continuing inter-Service rivalry that they believed had again emerged during the Vietnam War and was still evident as late as the invasion of Grenada in 1983. The act made major changes in the command structure of the United States military. It provided that the Chairman became the principal military advisor to the President of the United States, the National Security Council, and the SecDef. The act also established a new position of Vice Chairman of the JCS and attempted to simplify the chain of command. It made no changes as it related to the Commandant's position on the JCS, which by now was accepted as "normal"- something that would have made the 1950s to 1970s Army and Air Force generals, Navy admirals, and President Truman turn over in their graves!

Currently, under 10 USC, Sec. 151, Title 10 - Armed Forces, Subtitle A - General Military Law, Part I - Organization and General Military Powers, Chapter 5 - JCS, sec. 151. JCS: composition; functions it simply states:

-STATUTE-

(a) Composition. There are in the Department of Defense the Joint Chiefs of Staff, headed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consist of the following:

- (1) The Chairman.
- (2) The Vice Chairman.
- (3) The Chief of Staff of the Army.
- (4) The Chief of Naval Operations.
- (5) The Chief of Staff of the Air Force.
- (6) The Commandant of the Marine Corps.

I do not believe that the Congress will ever change this arrangement, and the country (and the United States Marine Corps) is much better off as a result. I also believe that the opportunity to get this law changed was unique to the time period of Gen Wilson's service and Senator Stennis' personal relationship with the Commandant.

[Sidebar]

On 20 October 1978. the President signed Public Law 95-485 and the Commandant of the Marine Corps became a "full" member of the JCS.



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[Author Affiliation]

On 20 October 1978, the President signed Public Law 95-485 and the Commandant of the Marine Corps became a "full" member of the JCS.

by BGen Albert E. Brewster, USMC(Ret)

BGen Brewster served as the Legislative Assistant to the Commandant from August 1977 to May 1980. He retired on 1 July 1980.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

[...] following a careful study of circumstances as they have developed in the past six months, I am convinced that my hopes were groundless, that the War Department's intentions regarding the Marines are quite unchanged, and that even in advance of this proposed legislation it is seeking to reduce the sphere of the Marine Corps to ceremonial functions and to the provision of small ineffective combat formations and labor troops for service on the landing beaches. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-433) was an attempt to fix problems that the Congress believed were a result of continuing inter-Service rivalry that they believed had again emerged during the Vietnam War and was still evident as late as the invasion of Grenada in 1983.

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