

**OFFICE OF  
THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

**WREATHLAYING CEREMONY**

**REMARKS BY  
GEN. JAMES F. AMOS,  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

**DECEMBER 2010**

*Transcript by  
Federal News Service  
Washington, D.C.*

GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: Good morning. We have a host of very important people here, and they all claim the title of United States Marine. Welcome to this celebration and this memorial service. We have several thousand troops all in the background. This is a wonderful day for us.

We were here early this morning. Six hundred Marines. We ran in formation from the Pentagon, came out here and stood at the base of this war memorial and sang all three stanzas of the Marine Hymn in honor of those that have gone before us.

General Mundy – sir, it’s good to have you here, our 30<sup>th</sup> Commandant. The [Under] Secretary [of the Navy], the Honorable Bob Work, a Marine himself and a great patriot and a friend of our Corps. It’s good to have you here, Mr. Secretary. We have a host of retired Marines. You’ll notice I will not say “former Marines”; that term is no longer authorized. We are all Marines that have stepped on the yellow footprints.

Sergeant Major Overstreet is here. Sitting down front, the 12th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. It’s good to have you here. Sergeant Major Carlton Kent – stand up, Sergeant Major, turn around and let all of these great Marines see the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. Thank you.

As we gather today on this beautiful, absolutely gorgeous Wednesday in celebration of 235<sup>th</sup> birthday of our beloved Corps, we need to be mindful that we have 31,000 Marines and our sailors, our docs, our corpsmen, and our chaplains and our chaplain’s assistants – 31,000 of them forward-deployed around the world. We have 20,000 deployed in the Helmand province in southern Afghanistan in a pretty tough fight today.

Three Marine Expeditionary Units are afloat as we speak – two of them are in the Persian Gulf. A total of 11 naval amphibious ships are afloat today at sea with about 10,000 Marines on board. There couldn’t be a more fitting place for us to be today, than at the base of that statue that Felix de Weldon built many, many years ago, to celebrate our rich heritage and to pay tribute to those Marines that have gone before us.

Today, as we reflect on what’s taken place in the last eight straight years of combat, we’ve had 851 Marines that we have lost, killed in action, in Iraq; 229 Marines killed in action as of this morning in Afghanistan; and almost 11,000 wounded.

This morning, we are joined by an American patriot. A genuine hero, a political statesman and senator, an astronaut, and last but not least, a United States Marine – Senator John Glenn. A man who has served this nation for 67 years. To his left, as I place him, is his wonderful wife, Annie. They were married in 1943, and she has put up with him and the Marine Corps for 67 years. God bless them.

I looked up to Senator Glenn – Colonel Glenn, astronaut Glenn since I was 15-years old when I first watched him in space. That was on a black-and-white television. It wasn't real-time, it wasn't streaming video. It was everything after-the-fact. I watched when he splashed down and we picked him up, and I admire him. And that was when the inkling in my life began to burn to be a Marine, to be a pilot and later on, to be a fighter pilot based on his legacy and his record in World War II and Korea.

He continued his service to America...through four terms in the United States Senate, and then went back into space in 1998 in a NASA shuttle Discovery mission. Absolutely unbelievable, Senator.

Although I'm confident that Senator Glenn has been reminded of his remarks often, there are maybe those of you who in the audience here that have never heard his now famous rebuke of an incumbent senator during his initial bid for senator in the Ohio primary in 1974.

I want to share it with you because it speaks volumes about the character of the man we are honoring today – senator, colonel, Marine –John Glenn. In the 1974 Ohio primary, John Glenn challenged the incumbent for the U.S. Senate seat. Glenn's opponent claimed that he had never held a real job.

This is how soon-to-be Senator John Glenn replied: "I have served 23 years in the United States Marine Corps. I served through two wars. I've flown 149 combat missions in World War II and Korea. My plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire on 12 different occasions. I was in the space program. It wasn't my checkbook, it was my life on the line. It was not a 9-to-5 job where I took time off to take the daily cash receipts to the bank. I ask you to go with me, as I went the other day, to a veterans' hospital and look those men with their mangled bodies in the eye and tell them, they did not have a job.

"You go with me to the space program and go as I have gone to the widows and orphans of Ed White, Gus Grissom and Roger Chaffee. And you look those kids in the eye and tell them their dad didn't have a job. And you go with me and you stand in Arlington, where I have more friends than I'd like to remember. And you watch those waving flags. You stand there, and you think about this great nation. And you tell me those people didn't have a job. I'll tell you, you should be on your knees every day of your life thanking God that there were men, some men, who held a job. And they required a dedication to focus and a love of country that was more important than life itself. And their self-sacrifice is what made this country possible. I have a hell of a job."

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Marines, friends of Marines, family of Marines, Colonel John Glenn, United States Marine.