

Secretary of the Navy's  
Birthday Message to the Marine Corps

On November 10th, Marines all across the world will stand to honor 235 years of history and 235 years of a proud and enduring legacy. It is a day of celebration, and a day to remember those who fought in the Marine Corps' famous battles from Nassau to Tripoli and from Guadalcanal to Marjah.

But on November 10th, another ceremony - smaller and more solemn -will take place in Londonderry, New Hampshire. At this ceremony, a few Marines will honor the memory and heroism of one of their own, Corporal Michael Ouellette, killed in action in Afghanistan and awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism.

Corporal Ouellette was a squad leader in First Platoon, Company I, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines. On March 22, 2009, he led his squad on patrol, where he was severely wounded by an improvised explosive device that was the first volley of an enemy ambush. Although critically wounded, Corporal Ouellette continued to direct the actions of his squad, calling for and directing close air support helicopters and coordinating reinforcements. When relief forces arrived to aid in the fight, Corporal Ouellette refused evacuation until all members of his squad were accounted for. As he was evacuated, Corporal Ouellette died of his wounds.

235 years has provided the Marine Corps with a host of victories and dozens of heroes: Marines like Samuel Nicholas, Presley O'Bannon, Chesty Puller, and now Jason Dunham and Michael Ouellette. Now, as then, it is these heroes - and the contributions of every individual Marine - that make the Corps what it is: the deadliest fighting force the world has ever known. It is every Marine's devotion to duty, loyalty to comrades, and unrelenting courage in combat that ensures our country will endure and freedom will prevail.

On behalf of the American people, happy 235 years to the Marine Corps. Thank you for guarding our liberty every day. Semper Fidelis.

Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy