

History of 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines



The 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines was formed in July 1914 and immediately deployed to protect U.S. interests in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In June 1917, the Battalion sailed for France. During World War I, the Battalion fought multiple actions, including the Battle of Belleau Wood, Soisson, and the Meuse-Argonne Campaign. For its outstanding combat performance, the Battalion was twice awarded the French Croix de Guerre with Palm and once with Gold Star. The Fourragere representing these awards is worn today by members of the Battalion.

2nd Battalion, 5th Marines participated in the post-war occupation of Germany and returned to the U.S. in August 1919. In 1920, the Battalion was ordered to guard U.S. mail trains. The Battalion deployed to Nicaragua in 1927 to fight bandits and supervised the 1928 Nicaraguan elections.

At Quantico, Virginia from 1934 on, the Battalion participated in numerous exercises contributing to the development of Marine Corps amphibious doctrine. In 1941, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines joined the newly-formed 1st Marine Division at New River, North Carolina.

During World War II, the Battalion fought at Guadalcanal, New Britain, Peleliu, and Okinawa. After the war, the Battalion served on occupation duty in Northern China until 1947.

In July 1950, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines sailed from Camp Pendleton, California to Pusan, Korea. In August, the Battalion fought at the Pusan Perimeter. The Battalion fought during the landing at Inchon, the liberation of Seoul, the Chosin Reservoir, and the defense of the East Central and Western Fronts. From 1953 to 1955, the Battalion defended the Korean demilitarized zone.

In April 1966, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines deployed to the Republic of Vietnam. During the next five years, the Battalion fought at Hue City, Que Son, Phu Bai, and Dong Ha, returning to Camp Pendleton in 1971.

During the next decades, the Battalion deployed regularly to Okinawa, Japan under the Marine Corps Unit Deployment Program. In December 1990, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines sailed for the Persian Gulf and participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, liberating Kuwait. On the return transit, the Battalion provided humanitarian relief in Bangladesh in Operation Sea Angel.

In 1994, the Battalion deployed as part of 11th MEU(SOC) and participated in Operations Continue Hope and Quickdraw in Somalia and Operation Distant Runner in Burundi. In 1995, the Battalion began regular deployments to Okinawa, Japan in support of the 31st MEU(SOC).

In February 2003, the Battalion deployed to Kuwait. 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines attacked into Iraq in March 2003, freed the Iraqi people, and conducted security operations through August 2003. The Battalion earned its fourteenth Presidential Unit Citation for its actions during Operation Iraqi Freedom. In August 2004, the Battalion again deployed to Ramadi, Iraq in support of OIF II. From December 2005 to July 2006, the Battalion deployed in support of the 31st MEU(SOC).

2nd Battalion, 5th Marines is the most highly decorated battalion in the Marine Corps. The Battalion motto, "Retreat Hell," comes from the 1918 Battle of Belleau Wood. When French soldiers advised the newly-arrived Marines to retreat, Captain Lloyd Williams, a company commander with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, replied, "Retreat? Hell! We just got here!"