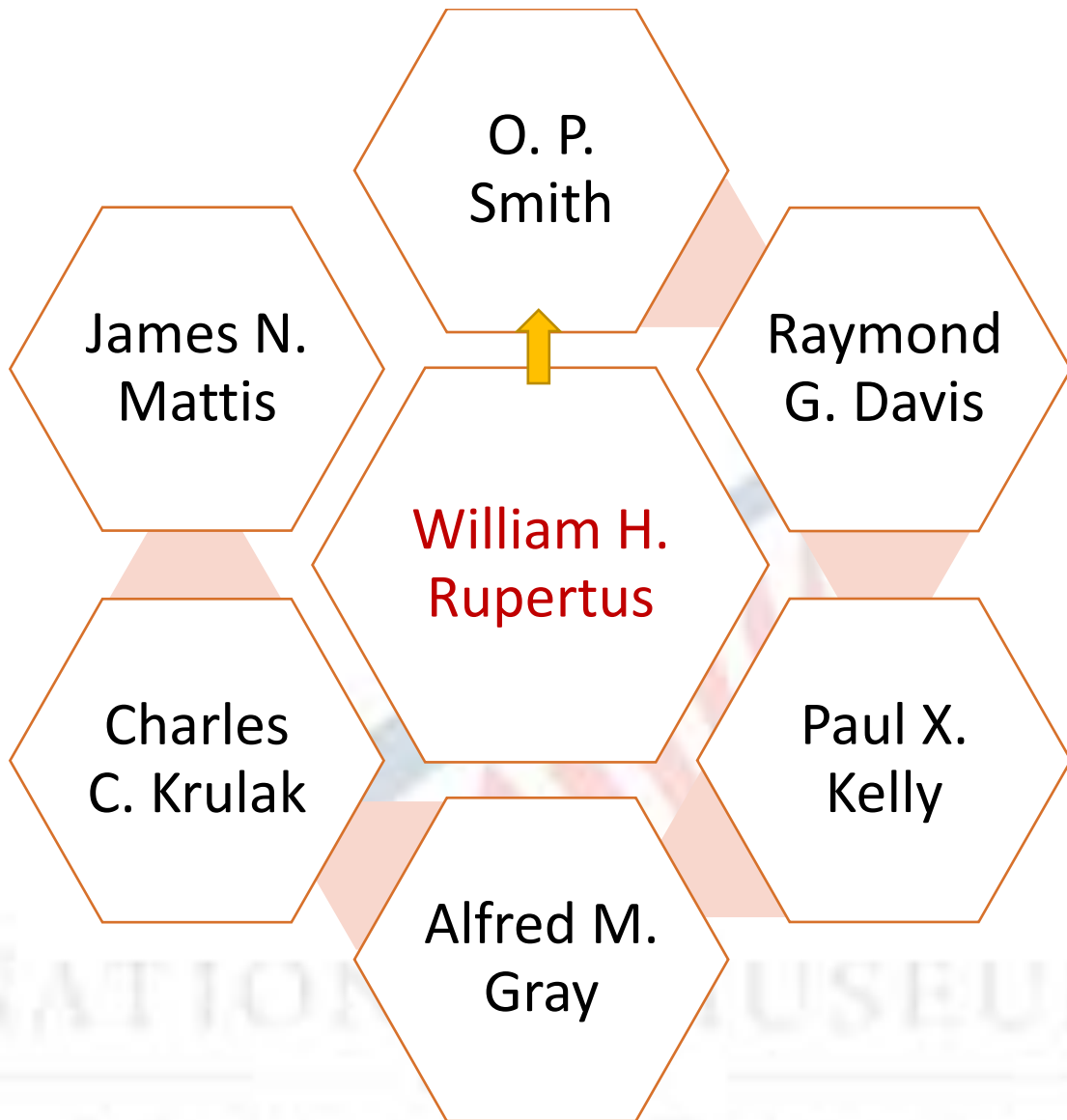


## The Six Degrees of William H. Rupertus: The Intellectual Corps



### **William H. Rupertus**

The name of William Rupertus is not necessarily recognized by the casual observer of Marine Corps history. He is, however, one of the unsung heroes of the modern Marine Corps. Rupertus entered the Marine Corps in 1913 after failing to pass the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service's physical examination. The Marine Corps recruited Rupertus because of his superior marksmanship ability. He graduated from Marine Corps Officers School in 1915, spending the next three years in Haiti. In 1919, Rupertus was sent to staff officer training, being made Inspector of Target Practice in the Operations and Training Division at Marine Corps Headquarters. Between 1929 and 1939, Rupertus spent two long assignments in China, observing the collapse of Chinese authority and Japan's invasion in 1937. These assignments made Rupertus a valuable source of information on Japanese military capabilities.

During World War II, as commanding officer of the Marine barracks at San Diego, he wrote the Marine Corps "Rifleman's Creed" right after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The writing of the creed was intended to encourage expert marksmanship and Marines' trust in their weapons. In March 1942, he served as assistant division

commander of the 1st Marine Division under MGen. Alexander Vandegrift in New River, North Carolina, assisting in the formation and training of the First Marine Division.

Rupertus commanded the Landing Task Force Operation, which captured Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo in the Guadalcanal campaign. After Vandegrift left the division in 1943, Rupertus took command. He led the 1st Marine Division during the Battle of Cape Gloucester and the Battle of Peleliu. In November 1944, Major General Rupertus became the Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Virginia. However, his tenure was short as he died of a heart attack on 25 March 1945, just four months later. Rupertus' lasting legacy is his devotion to the Marine Corps' traditions and the need to continually educate all Marines on their role in the modern Marine Corps.

### **Oliver Prince Smith**

The path to the Marine Corps for O.P. Smith could not have been more different than Bill Rupertus. Smith was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, enlisting in the Marine Corps as a second lieutenant in 1917. His first direct contact with Rupertus came in the 1920s in Haiti. He was serving directly under Rupertus in Port-au-Prince as the Chief-of-Staff with the Gendarmerie d'Haiti. Rupertus and Smith became great friends sharing a love of history and education. After completing the Field Officer's Course, U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, Smith was assigned to the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, as an instructor in the Company Officers' Course. In September 1933, he was named assistant operations officer of the 7th Marine Regiment at Quantico under Rupertus. In 1934, Rupertus recommended Smith for an appointment at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. According to Smith, he "encouraged diversity in the training of Marines. The more well-rounded a Marine, the better the Marine could understand and carry out his mission."

Smith returned to the U.S. in August 1936 and joined the staff of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico as an instructor in the Operations and Training Section of the school. He acquired the nickname "the professor," gaining a reputation as an intellectual during these years. Smith was also recognized as an expert on amphibious warfare. Smith claimed he was following a path set for him during his time spent under Rupertus' command. Smith was transferred to Fleet Marine Force as an operations officer at the Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California. Rupertus took command of the Marine Corps Barrack at San Diego in 1941. It was in San Diego the Rupertus wrote the Marine Corps "Rifleman's Creed." He was part of the inner circle of friends that Rupertus used to develop his ideas. Smith stated the creed was "the single most important piece of educational writing for every Marine."

Smith spent 1942 and 1943 at Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., to become executive officer of the Division of Plans and Policies. He remained in this capacity until January 1944, when he joined the 1st Marine Division on New Britain under the command of Rupertus. He took command of the 5th Marine Regiment and subsequently led the regiment in the Talasea phase of the Cape Gloucester operation. Smith replaced Rupertus as Commander of the 1st Marine Division in October 1944. When Rupertus died of a heart attack in March 1945, Smith replaced him as Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Virginia. Smith served as the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division during the first year of the Korean War, retiring from the Marine Corps in 1951. Smith learned the lessons taught to him by Rupertus, passing them on to other Marines under his command.

### **Raymond G. Davis**

The traditions of the Marine Corps run deep, as does the loyalty of those in the ranks. Ray Davis was born in 1915 in Fitzgerald, Georgia. Graduating from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1938 with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering, Davis received a commission in the Marine Corps that year. Between 1939 and 1942, Davis trained as an artillery officer, serving as an executive officer and commander of various battery companies. In 1942, Davis was assigned to the 1st Marine Division under the command of BGen. Rupertus. Captain Davis participated in the Guadalcanal-Tulagi landings, Guadalcanal's capture and defense, the Eastern New Guinea and Cape Gloucester

campaigns, and the Peleliu operation. It was at Peleliu that Davis came under the command of O.P. Smith. "I was most impressed by the deliberate and calm manner that General Smith displayed.", according to Davis. In September 1944, Davis received the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart Medal when he rallied and led his men in fighting to reestablish defensive positions after a Japanese breakthrough. Smith recommended Davis for the Navy Cross and a promotion to lieutenant colonel. Like many great leaders, Smith recognized talent in the ranks. Smith wrote that Davis "was a unique leader in that he understands the academic side of warfare and knows how to apply it." In November 1944, Davis fell under the command of Smith as the Chief of the Infantry Section, Marine Air-Infantry School at Quantico. Between 1945 and 1950, Davis led several command and training divisions as he continued to follow an instructional path in the Marine Corps.

When the Korean War began in 1950, Smith requested Davis be assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, as its commander. During this time, one of his men described him as "...from Georgia and soft-spoken. No gruff, no bluff. Never talked down to you and made you feel comfortable in his presence." In many respects, Davis had become a mirror image of Smith. In December 1950, Smith recommended Davis for the Medal of Honor for his Chosin Reservoir actions. After the Chosin Reservoir campaign, Davis was also awarded a Bronze Star with the combat "V" for rebuilding the 7th regiment in Korea. He returned to the United States in June 1951 and was assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, D.C. Davis served as the head of the Operations and Training Branch, G-3 Division. While serving in this capacity, he was promoted to full colonel in October 1953.

In June 1960, Davis attended the National War College in Washington, D.C. Between 1960 and 1965, Davis served with NATO and SEATO as a Marine Corps representative. When the Marine Corps began offensive operations in Vietnam, Davis served as the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1 Division. Davis was promoted to major general in November 1966 and remained with the G-1 Division until 1968. In March 1968, Davis was sent to the Republic of Vietnam and served until May 1968 as the Deputy Commanding General of the Provisional Corps in South Vietnam. He then became commanding general, 3rd Marine Division, until April 1969. When Davis took command of the division, he ordered Marine units to move out of their combat bases and engage the enemy. He had noted that the manning of the bases and the defensive posture they had developed was contrary to their typically aggressive fighting style. As part of this change in tactics, he would order *Operation Dewey Canyon* in early 1969 to engage the NVA in the A Shau Valley.

In May 1969, Davis was assigned duty as deputy for education with additional duty as Director, Education Center, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia. After his promotion to lieutenant general on 1 July 1970, Davis was reassigned as commanding general, Marine Corps Development and Education Command. Davis retired from the Marine Corps in 1972 with the rank of a four-star general in 1972.

### **Paul X. Kelley**

Born in 1928, Kelley grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, graduating from Villanova University in 1950. In June 1950, through Villanova College's Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps program, Kelley was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. After graduating from The Basic School in March 1951, he served with the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, as an infantry officer in a wide variety of billets, including his first assignment to the Aircraft Engineering Squadron-12 (AES-12) out of Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. Here, Kelley first met Ray Davis, who did several lectures at the Marine Schools while serving in Washington. Davis's lesson to the young officers was, "an educated Marine was a better Marine." In September 1952, he was assigned to the *USS Salem*, where he served for 20 months, first as executive officer and then as commanding officer of the Marine Detachment on the *Salem*. While onboard the ship, he qualified as Officer of the Deck and was promoted to captain.

From July 1956 to December 1957, Kelley served as the Special Assistant to the Director of Personnel at Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C. This position would be Kelley's most direct contact with Ray Davis, the Operations and Training Division head at Headquarters Marine Corps. Davis encouraged Kelley to train for assignments outside of his MOS. This strategy widened his impact on the Marines underneath him. Kelley requested a training assignment at the Airborne Pathfinder School at Fort Benning, Georgia, which he completed in February 1958. Assigned to the newly activated 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company, Force Troops, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, he served as the executive officer and then commanding officer. Kelley stated that the "relevance of the Corps was depended on the relevance of each Marine." Kelley was practicing what he preached.

From September 1960 to May 1961, Kelley was the United States Marine Corps Exchange Officer with the British Royal Marines, becoming one of the few foreigners to earn the Royal Marines Commandos' coveted green beret. During this tour, he attended the Commando Course in England, served as Assistant Operations Officer with 45 Commando in Aden, and as Commander "C" Troop, 42 Commando in Singapore, Malaya, and Borneo. On 1 March 1961, he was promoted to major. From June 1964 until August 1965, Kelley became Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Newport, Rhode Island.

In 1965, Kelley deployed to South Vietnam. He served under Gen. Victor Krulak as the Combat Intelligence Officer for the 3rd Marine Amphibious Force, FMF, Pacific. Following this assignment, he served as the Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines in combat. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on 20 January 1966. During his tour as battalion commander, he earned the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit with Valor device, and two Bronze Star Medal awards with Valor device. From 1970 to 1971, Kelley commanded the 1st Marine Regiment, the last Marine regiment in Vietnam. He earned a second Legion of Merit during this deployment.

In 1974, Kelley was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. As a general officer, he served as Commanding General of the 4th Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force; Director, Marine Corps Development Center; Director, Marine Corps Education Center; and Deputy Chief of Staff for Requirements and Programs, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps. In February 1980, Kelley was promoted to lieutenant general and named the first Commander of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. On 1 July 1981, Kelley was promoted to general, the youngest Marine to have achieved that rank. He then assumed duties as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and Chief of Staff, Headquarters Marine Corps. On 1 July 1983, Kelley was named Commandant of the Marine Corps. He inherited a Marine Corps that was different from the Marine Corps of the 1960s and 1970s. Under Kelley's leadership, the Marine Corps increased its emphasis on education and warfighting tactics. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1987, leaving a legacy of educational growth and the Marine Corps' continued relevance.

### **Alfred M. Gray**

A native of Rahway, New Jersey, Alfred Gray was born in 1928. Graduating from the State University of New York in 1950, Gray joined the Marine Corps as a private first-class. He served overseas with Fleet Marine Force (FMF), Pacific, attaining sergeant's rank before being commissioned a second lieutenant in April 1952. His first tours included service with the 11th Marines and 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division in Korea, the 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C. Gray also served in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Vietnam. During these early assignments, Gray served under Ray Davis and P.X. Kelley.

Gray rose steadily through the ranks, reaching the rank of major in 1965. In October of that year, Gray joined the 12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division in South Vietnam. Gray served concurrently as a regimental communications officer, regimental training officer, and artillery aerial observer. He took command of the Composite Artillery Battalion and the United States Free World Forces at Gio Linh in April 1967. In September, Gray



was reassigned to the III Marine Amphibious Force in Da Nang, where Gray commanded the 1st Radio Battalion elements throughout I Corps until February 1968. Following a brief tour in the United States, he returned to Vietnam from June to September 1969 in conjunction with surveillance and reconnaissance matters in the I Corps area serving under MGen. Ray Davis.

After his Vietnam War tour, Gray served as Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, Battalion Landing Team; the 2nd Marine Regiment; the 4th Marine Regiment; and Camp Commander of Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan. At the same time, he was commanding the 33rd Marine Amphibious Unit and Regimental Landing Team-4. Gray also concurrently served as Deputy Commander, 9th Marines Amphibious Brigade. He directed the *Operation Frequent Wind* evacuation of Saigon in April 1975. Advanced to brigadier general in March 1976, Gray served as Commanding General, Landing Force Training Command, Atlantic, and the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade. During these years, Gray became a disciple of P.X. Kelley's philosophy of a better Marine Corps through education. The Marine Corps was in a transition period in the 1970s from the Vietnam experience. The relevance of the Marine Corps was again in question in certain government circles. Just as Davis encouraged Marines to expand their skill sets, Kelley encouraged Marine leaders like Gray to do the same. Anyone who served under Gray during this time remembers his instructions in education and leadership. For Gray, education was not just about a book education, for it had to possess an applicable purpose.

Promoted to major general in February 1980, he assumed command of the 2nd Marine Division, FMF, Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in June 1981. Gray was recommended for this position by LtGen. Kelley. While in the position, he was a confidant to Vice-Admiral Arthur S. Moreau Jr., finding Marines for a covert team that targeted terrorists and drug traffickers. Gray saw this as the new mission for the Marines in order to prove their relevance. Following his promotion to lieutenant general on 29 August 1984, Gray was reassigned as Commanding General, FMF, Atlantic/Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force, and Commanding General, FMF, Europe. Gray was promoted to general and became Commandant of the Marine Corps on 1 July 1987. His appointment as Commandant of the Marine Corps was recommended by Jim Webb, then-Secretary of the Navy.

Gray presided over changes in training in the 1970s, emphasizing large-scale maneuvers in the desert and cold-weather environments, and changed Marine doctrine to maneuver warfare in the 1980s. This transformation from the Vietnam War era is sometimes called the second enlightenment of the Marine Corps. It included developing a robust maritime special operations capability, emphasizing the education of leaders, establishing Marine Corps University, and developing a long-range desert operations capability. As a reminder that the primary role of every Marine is a rifleman, he had his official photograph taken in the Camouflage Utility Uniform, the only Commandant to have done so. The Marine Corps careers of Alfred Gray and P.X. Kelley paralleled each other. Gray will be influenced by Ray Davis just as Kelley's career fell under the same influence. However, Gray credits Kelley as the Marine he admired most and tried to emulate in his career.

### **Charles C. Krulak**

Born in Quantico in 1942, Charles Krulak is the son of Marine Corps legend Victor "Brute" Krulak. Chuck was destined to be an officer in the Marine Corps from his early years. "Brute" Krulak was surrounded by other Marine Corps legends like Ray Davis and Lewis "Chesty" Puller. Chuck's Marine Corps education was an unknowing brand of homeschooling. Graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1964, Krulak was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps after graduating from The Basic School in 1965.

Krulak received his baptism of fire immediately as he was assigned to a rifle company in Vietnam in 1965, serving under Al Gray. After his first tour in Vietnam, Krulak was assigned to the Special Training Branch at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. There he served under P.X. Kelley as an executive and training officer. Krulak's

combat experience convinced him that the key to success on the battlefield lies in advanced training and innovation. Kelley and Gray reinforced these thoughts. During his second tour of duty in Vietnam, Krulak served

directly under Ray Davis. This influence was a one-two-three punch of Marine Corps educational principles for Krulak. Following his second tour of Vietnam, he became the Counter-Guerilla Warfare School commanding officer on Okinawa. During the 1970s, Krulak took part in the reorganization plan for the Marine Corps in various assignments. Through his name and experiences, he gained the ear of experienced Marine Corps leaders. Seeing directly the problems that Marines faced in Vietnam, Krulak built on the ideas he accumulated from his commanders. As the commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines from 1983 to 1985, Krulak implemented advanced leadership training to all Marines under his command.

In 1987 Krulak was assigned duty as the deputy director of the White House Military Office. While serving in this capacity, he was selected for promotion to brigadier general in November 1988. He was advanced to that grade on 5 June 1989 and assigned duties as the commanding general, 10th MEB/Assistant division commander, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina on 10 July 1989. On 1 June 1990, he assumed duties as the commanding general, 2nd Force Service Support Group Group/Commanding general, 6th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, and commanded the 2d FSSG during the Gulf War. He served in this capacity until 12 July 1991 and was assigned duty as assistant deputy chief of staff for manpower and reserve affairs (personnel Management/Personnel Procurement), Headquarters Marine Corps on 5 August 1991. He was advanced to major general on 20 March 1992. Krulak was assigned as commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, on 24 August 1992, and was promoted to lieutenant general on 1 September 1992. On 22 July 1994, he was assigned as Commander of Marine Forces Pacific/commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Pacific, and in March 1995, he was nominated to serve as the Commandant of the Marine Corps. On 29 June, he was promoted to general and assumed duties as the 31st Commandant on 30 June 1995.

As Commandant of the Marine Corps, Krulak had his most significant influence on education and innovation. Stating that “Marines must be willing to look foolish for innovation to occur,” he emphasized the importance of calculated risk-taking. During his tenure, Krulak annually increased the Marine Corps’ Department of Defense budget share by \$1.5 billion to initiate a modernization effort. He also instituted the Marine Corps Fighting Laboratory, lengthened and strengthened recruit training, and fathered “Three Block War” and “The Strategic Corporal” concepts to help Marines better understand and prepare for warfare in the 21st century. Gen. Krulak retired from the Marine Corps in 1999 and entered the world of business and advanced education, where he is still seen as an influential leader.

### **James N. Mattis**

Born in 1950 in Pullman, Washington, James Mattis grew up in a structured environment. Lucille, his mother, immigrated to the U.S. from Canada as an infant and worked in Army Intelligence in South Africa during the Second World War. His father, John West Mattis, was a merchant mariner before World War II. During the war, he worked at a plant supplying fissile material to the Manhattan Project. Mattis was raised in a bookish household that did not own a television. Graduating from high school in 1968, Mattis earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Central Washington University in 1971.

While in college, Mattis enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves. Upon graduation, he entered The Basic School, commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps in 1972. The post-Vietnam Marine Corps brought about many changes, and Mattis was in the middle of these modifications. Branded immediately as an “intellectual” by the upper ranks, Mattis fit well into the Marine Corps’ new order, led by Gray, Kelley, and Charles Krulak. Mattis was assigned as a rifle and weapons platoon commander in the 3rd Marine Division as a first lieutenant. As a

captain, he was assigned as the Naval Academy Preparatory School's Battalion Officer, commanded rifle and weapons companies in the 1st Marine Regiment, then served at Recruiting Station Portland, Oregon, as a

major. Mattis graduated from the Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and the National War College. His love of history drove him to "look at the past to influence the future." Some estimate that his personal library includes 7,000 volumes of historical writings.

Mattis understood his Marines' needs throughout his commands, a trait he was learning directly from commanders like Chuck Krulak. He required his Marines to be well-read in the culture and history of regions where they were deployed. He also required his Marines deploying to Iraq to undergo "cultural sensitivity training." Because of his enthusiasm and energetic spirit, the enlisted Marines nicknamed him "Mad Dog," a name he never embraced. Mattis also received the nicknames "Chaos" and "The Warrior Monk" during his career. As a lieutenant colonel in 1991, Mattis was under the command of Krulak during the Persian Gulf War as a part of *Task Force Ripper*. When the War on Terror began in 2001, Mattis led *Task Force 58* in Afghanistan. In 2003 during *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, MGen. Mattis led the 1st Marine Division, often appearing on the front lines communicating with the enlisted men.

In 2005, after being promoted to lieutenant general, Mattis took command of Marine Corps Combat Development Command. In 2006, he was selected to command the I Marine Expeditionary Force, based out of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. In 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that President George W. Bush had nominated Mattis for appointment to general to command U.S. Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia. On 5 November 2007, Mattis was appointed as the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation for NATO.

The higher Mattis climbed up the military ranks, he continually stressed the importance of an educated Marine. In early 2010 Mattis was reported to be on the list of generals being considered to replace James T. Conway as the Marine Corps commandant. His many colorful comments in the past, however, worked against him. Mattis referred to the decision as "the Smedley Butler Effect." In July, he was recommended by Defense Secretary Robert Gates for nomination to replace David Petraeus as Commander of United States Central Command (CENTCOM). Mattis was formally nominated by President Obama on 21 July 2010. His confirmation by the Senate marked the first time Marines had held billets as Commander and Deputy Commander of a unified combatant command. As the Head of Central Command, Mattis oversaw the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and was responsible for a region including Syria, Iran, and Yemen. His public criticisms of the Obama Administration's handling of Iran led to his dismissal from the post in 2013, leading to his retirement from the Marine Corps. His influence on Marine Corps policy still is prevalent today. Mattis' message on education in the Marine Corps rings true throughout all ranks in the Marine Corps.

## **Questions**

1. What is the unified message that links the Marines in this exercise?
2. In what ways are the backgrounds of these Marines similar?
3. In what ways are the background of these Marines different?
4. How does the cause/effect principle apply to the Marine Corps' leadership chain based on these stories?
5. Which of these Marines most exemplified the central theme of this exercise? Why?
6. Which of these Marine officers had the most significant impact on the enlisted ranks? Why?

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