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201st Birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)
AT THE 201ST BIRTHDAY OF
THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1976

General Wilson, ladies and gentlemen.

Mrs. Mansfield and I are especially honored to be your guests this evening. This is, indeed, a very noteworthy occasion. It marks the anniversary of the founding of our Nation's first and proudest line of defense--a fighting force which, throughout its history, has been second to none in the world. But, we should also note that this is the year of our Nation's 200th Birthday, and yet we celebrate tonight the 201st Birthday of the United States Marine Corps.

That alone reserves for the Marine Corps a unique place in the history of our Nation. But more than that, the history of this country is replete with the names of famous places about which it has been so often rightly said, "The Marines have landed and have the situation well in hand."

The Marine Corps record speaks for itself in eloquent terms. From the American Revolution through the war in Vietnam the Marines have distinguished themselves as no other fighting force in history. Since that day on November 10 in 1775 when the Continental Congress passed a resolution authorizing two Marine battalions, more than three million men and women have served as soldiers of the sea and on land and in the skies. Let us recall some of the names of famous places in our history: Tripoli, Bladensburg in the War of 1812, Guantanamo Bay in the war with Spain, Belleau Wood in World War I, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima and Okinawa in World War II, Inchon and the Chosen Reservoir in Korea, Khe Sanh and Hue in Vietnam, and many, many other names less well known but, in their own way, just as significant. It is these places and others that have filled 200 years of distinguished history. It is in these places and others that the Marines have again and again shown their courage and fighting skills, winning 298 Congressional Medals of Honor.

Yet this proud and enviable history has also been marked with a periodic but never ending fight for survival. Challenged at times by the Army or the Navy and even by unfriendly Presidents, the Marine Corps has nevertheless endured. And it has endured and been strengthened, I am proud to say, because its friends in the Congress have assured its survival as our most important tactical fighting force.

As you know, for example, after World War II when our armed forces were unified under the Department of Defense, the Marine Corps had no voice in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And the Second Secretary of Defense even forbade the official observance of this day as the Marine Corps' Birthday.

I remember in 1951 when Senator Paul Douglas and I introduced in the Senate and House the Douglas/Mansfield bill which would have made it matter of law that there be four Marine divisions and four Marine air wings. Senator Douglas and I fought successfully, I am glad to say, to assure that the Marine Corps be preserved as it always has been since its inception as

a separate and distinct service. That bill remains today the legal foundation for the present Marine Corps, with a floor of three divisions and three air wings, and co-equal status for the Marine Corps Commandant and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in matters concerning the Corps.

It is, indeed, a proud history we celebrate this evening. And as a Marine--once a Marine, always a Marine--I have been proud to have contributed a very small footnote in that history.