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We Have Broken Ground!
Groundbreaking Ceremony Marks A New Era for
the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum



On **October 28, 2025**, the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum and the Orange County Great Park celebrated a major milestone — the official **groundbreaking ceremony** for our museum's new building on the site of the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in Irvine.

Hosted near the museum's current temporary home in Hangar 297, the event featured a striking fly-over by two North American SNJ-5 Texans, including BuNo 90917 "War Dog," once assigned to MCAS El Toro. Museum President & CEO Michael J. Aguilar (Ret.) delivered remarks before the ceremonial golden-shovel moment alongside City of Irvine and Marine Corps leadership.

This groundbreaking marks the first construction underway in the Great Park's "Cultural Terrace" — a dedicated zone for museums and cultural institutions. Our new facility will span approximately 131,000 square feet and houses over 40 historic Marine Corps aircraft, along with an interactive STEAM-focused education center and a public-access research library.

location and serve as a beacon of history, valor, and education to one of my proudest moments," said Great Park Board Chairman and Councilmember Mike Carroll. "This milestone, coupled with the United States Marine Corps' 250th anniversary, couldn't feel more right."

The venue's move is deeply symbolic. Our museum was originally founded at MCAS El Toro in 1989, relocated to MCAS Miramar in 1999, and has now returned to the site where the legacy began. With restoration work already underway on many aircraft, and construction scheduled to proceed through 2026, the museum is on target for public opening in spring 2027.

We are thrilled to share this historic step forward with our members and supporters. Your commitment continues to propel us toward a world-class museum dedicated to the legacy of Marine Corps aviation — right here in Irvine.



250 Years of the United States Marine Corps — A Legacy of Valor



On **November 10, 2025**, the Marine Corps marks a truly historic milestone — its **250th anniversary**. Born on that date in 1775 at Philadelphia's Tun Tavern, the Corps has served continuously through every major conflict, war, and mission to protect our nation and uphold the values of *Honor • Courage • Commitment*.

Key Milestones & Accomplishments

- **Founding and Early Conflicts** – The Continental Marines first fought during the American Revolution, and by 1805 the famous attack at the “*shores of Tripoli*” demonstrated the Marines’ expeditionary capability.
- **World Wars and Global Reach** – From the infamous Iwo Jima flag-raising in WWII to amphibious operations across numerous theaters, Marines became known for rapid deployment, ship-to-shore operations, and combat innovation.
- **Post-Cold War and Modern Era** – The Corps has conducted operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, humanitarian missions, peacekeeping, and has adapted to the demands of modern warfare including expeditionary and littoral missions.
- **Institutional & Cultural Milestones** – To commemorate its 250 years, the Corps has launched initiatives including a 12-episode historical series, special

Education, Service & Outreach. Celebrating in locations nationwide such as Nashville (Marine Week) and Philadelphia, Marines have engaged with communities, shared their stories, and strengthened public-military relations.

At the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum, we celebrate this landmark anniversary as more than a date—it's a reaffirmation of our mission to preserve the history of Marine aviation and the spirit of Marines past and present. With over 40 aircraft in our collection and a new museum facility rising at the Great Park in Irvine, we are proud to honor the Marine Corps' legacy while inspiring new generations of aviators, engineers, and historians.

As we reflect on two-and-a-half centuries of service, sacrifice, and innovation, we invite you to join us in commemorating this milestone. Whether through a visit, a donation, or simply sharing a Marine's story, your support keeps the legacy alive. Semper Fidelis.



Every year in November, our nation observes **National Veterans and Military Families Month**, a time to honor the service and sacrifice of our veterans **and** the families who support them. The month-long recognition was proclaimed by the

At the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum, we join in this national tribute with deep gratitude. Over the years, Marine Corps aviators and aviation-support personnel have defended our sea-air-land readiness, flown daring missions, and preserved freedom through innovation and sacrifice. Their legacy is part of our mission to preserve and share Marine aviation history.

This November, we especially recognize:

- The veterans whose service spans decades and continents—those who rose at dawn, launched in darkness, and returned under stars.
- The military families that silently bore the challenges of deployment, relocation, and reintegration, often carrying burdens unseen.
- The countless veterans entering civilian life—bringing expertise, leadership, and the spirit of “Honor, Courage, Commitment” into our communities.

We also stand committed to action—not just remembrance. Resources such as the Military OneSource toolkit remind us that supporting veterans means supporting their well-being: relationships, transition from service, financial security, and work-life balance.

What you can do:

- Reach out to a veteran or military family in your life and offer your gratitude.
- Consider making a donation to our museum, which is honoring veterans in everything we do
- Volunteering with a veteran-service organization.

This November, as we commemorate 250 years of the Marine Corps and look ahead to our future with the new museum at the Great Park, let us reaffirm our promise: we will remember, we will honor, and we will serve those who served us.

Thank you to our veterans and military families—you are the backbone of our freedom.

Semper Fidelis.

Spotlight on the Offensive Air Support one of the Seven Functions of Marine Aviation



Offensive Air Support (OAS), as one of the Seven Functions of Marine Aviation, is defined as air operations conducted against enemy installations, facilities, and personnel to directly assist in achieving Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) objectives through the destruction of enemy resources or by isolating the enemy's military forces. OAS is designed to shape the battlespace, restrict enemy freedom of action, and disrupt the cohesion and tempo of enemy operations.

OAS is divided into two types of air support. First is Close Air Support (CAS) and the second is Deep Air Support (DAS). DAS is further broken down into Air Interdiction (AI) and Armed Reconnaissance (AR).

CAS is focused on direct fire support to ground forces in close proximity to enemy ground forces. CAS requires detailed and very close coordination with the friendly ground forces to ensure that the friendly forces are not endangered by "friendly

that close coordination with friendly ground forces and their movements is not necessary.

The types of Marine Aviation platforms that currently conduct OAS missions include the AV-8B Harrier, the F/A-18 Hornet, the AH-1Z Viper, and the F-35B Lightning II.

Successful OAS operations demand battlefield coordination with the ground forces and other aviation assets such as a Forward Air Controller (FAC) who is a Marine Aviator located with the ground forces and who can provide sequencing of attack aircraft and target marking to ensure the safety of friendlies while maximizing the destruction of enemy forces and equipment. Another aviation coordinating asset is the Fast Forward Air Controller (Fast FAC), a mission routinely performed by the two-seat F/A-18D Hornet. The F/A-18D can also serve in the role of Tactical Air Coordinator-Airborne (TAC-A) which is an extension of the Direct Air Support Center (DASC) and controls the flow of attack aircraft into and out of the objective area.

The emergence of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) or drones have taken OAS to the next level as UAS platforms themselves ("kamikaze drones") or drones carrying precision munitions (i.e. Hellfire, JAGM, etc.) have been and will continue to be viable OAS platforms.

Inspiring Partnerships Taking Flight!

We were honored to welcome **Mayor Larry Agran, UCI Vice Chancellors**, and **Dr. Glenn Roquemore, VP of Student Services at Irvine Valley College**, to **Hangar 297**, the future home of the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum.

Dr. Roquemore and our CEO, **Brigadier General Michael Aguilar (Ret.)**, delivered outstanding presentations on the museum's vision and educational mission. The group was especially **captivated by the UCI students' incredible work** restoring the full-scale replica of the **Curtiss Jenny**, a World War I-era biplane that has become the centerpiece of our STEM and history collaboration.

...and the UCI team, who expressed interest in exploring state-level **funding** to support and expand this exciting educational project.

📷 Pictured: Michael Tou with the museum's Marine Corps **ejection seat display** — a reminder of the innovation and bravery that define Marine Aviation!



Building History: UCI Students Bring the Jenny to Life - 30% Complete!



Since spring 2025, senior mechanical engineering students from the **University of California, Irvine** have been playing a key role in the **reopening of the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum**, scheduled for late 2025 or early 2026. Under the leadership of **Silvia Tinelli** and **Stuti Patel**, the UCI team is designing and constructing a **full-scale replica of the Curtiss JN-4D “Jenny”**, a World War I-era biplane that trained thousands of U.S. pilots and later became famous for barnstorming and air mail delivery.

This Smithsonian-grade replica will be suspended in the **museum’s main entrance**, serving as a striking symbol of early aviation innovation. Students have meticulously recreated the aircraft’s structure and materials—using original blueprints, 3D printing, laser cutting, and traditional woodworking techniques—to ensure historical accuracy.

The collaboration has offered students an unparalleled hands-on learning experience in engineering, leadership, and aviation history. “This project has connected us with aviation restoration experts, museum professionals, and experienced mechanics who have shared techniques you simply can’t learn in a classroom,” said Patel.

Now approximately 30% complete, the Jenny project continues to progress at the museum’s hangar, inspiring both the next generation of engineers and the future visitors who will marvel at this timeless piece of aviation history.

Board Member Spotlight: Colonel Patrick “Paddy” J. Gough, USMC (Ret.)



The Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum proudly highlights **Colonel Patrick “Paddy” J. Gough, USMC (Ret.)**, a decorated aviator, combat veteran, and proven leader whose distinguished military and civilian careers reflect an enduring commitment to service and excellence.

Born in Waterford, Ireland, Colonel Gough immigrated to the United States as a young boy and grew up in Whittier, California. After earning a degree in History from **California State University, Fullerton**, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1980 and earned his **Naval Aviator wings** in 1981, graduating *with distinction*.

Over his **30-year Marine Corps career**, Colonel Gough completed **eight overseas deployments**, including **four in combat**, and flew **more than 100 combat missions**. A highly accomplished pilot and leader, he logged over **4,000 flight hours** across rotary, fixed-wing, and special operations aircraft. In addition to commanding both **Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169** and **Marine Aircraft Group 39**, he also served as the **G-3 Operations Officer** for both the **3rd Marine Aircraft Wing** and **I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF)**—two of the Marine Corps’ largest operational commands.

A graduate of the Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) Course—the Marine Corps equivalent of *Top Gun*—Colonel Gough went on to serve as both an

Equipment One (M1A1), training the next generation of Marine aviators. His military decorations include the **Legion of Merit (three awards)**, **Bronze Star**, **Defense Meritorious Service Medal**, **two Meritorious Service Medals**, **three Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medals**, the **Air Medal (with numeral 2)**, and the **Combat Action Ribbon**, among numerous other commendations.

Following his retirement from the Marine Corps in 2008, Colonel Gough continued his leadership journey in the civilian sector. He served as **Executive Director of Human Resources and Organizational Development** for the **Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA)**, where he also held roles as both **Interim CEO** and **Deputy CEO**. He later became **Chief Operating Officer** and ultimately **CEO and President of PKL Services, Inc.**, a global aerospace maintenance and training company, where his leadership drove record growth and national recognition for veteran employment and innovation.

Today, Colonel Gough serves as **CEO of Poseidon Consulting LLC**, specializing in **domestic and international business brokerage services**, and remains actively involved in leadership and service across multiple organizations. In addition to serving as **Vice Chairman of the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum and Foundation Board of Directors**, he is also a valued member of numerous **academic advisory councils** and **charitable foundation boards**.

Colonel Gough's extraordinary record of military distinction, executive leadership, and lifelong dedication to the Marine Corps community continues to inspire those around him. His expertise, strategic vision, and steadfast commitment to preserving Marine aviation history make him an indispensable part of the Flying Leatherneck team and its mission to honor the legacy of Marine Corps aviation for generations to come.



Do you have a special connection to a Marine Aircraft? Your support can help!

Each of our aircraft has a rich history and a story to tell. By supporting our restoration efforts, you contribute to preserving these flying legends for future generations. Your donation helps cover the costs of materials, labor, and expertise required to bring these historic aircraft back to their former glory.

Your support ensures that these iconic aircraft's legacy lives on. Together, we can honor the past and inspire the future.

Click below to search our inventory of 34 aircraft and make your donation for restoration today!

[CHECK OUT THE AIRCRAFT AVAILABLE FOR SUPPORT](#)

Have you Become a Member Yet?

As we approach our grand opening in 2027, we invite you to join our Membership program. This exclusive group



role in shaping the future of the museum and preserving the storied legacy of Marine Corps aviation. Get exclusive access, discounts and more!

[LEARN MORE](#)

You Won't Want to Miss....

Each month you'll discover the latest milestones we've achieved, meet some of the dedicated individuals making this vision a reality, and get a glimpse of what to expect when we open our doors. Your support and enthusiasm fuel our journey, and we can't wait to share more with you each step of the way.

Thank you for being a valued part of our community. Stay tuned for exciting news and exclusive previews!



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