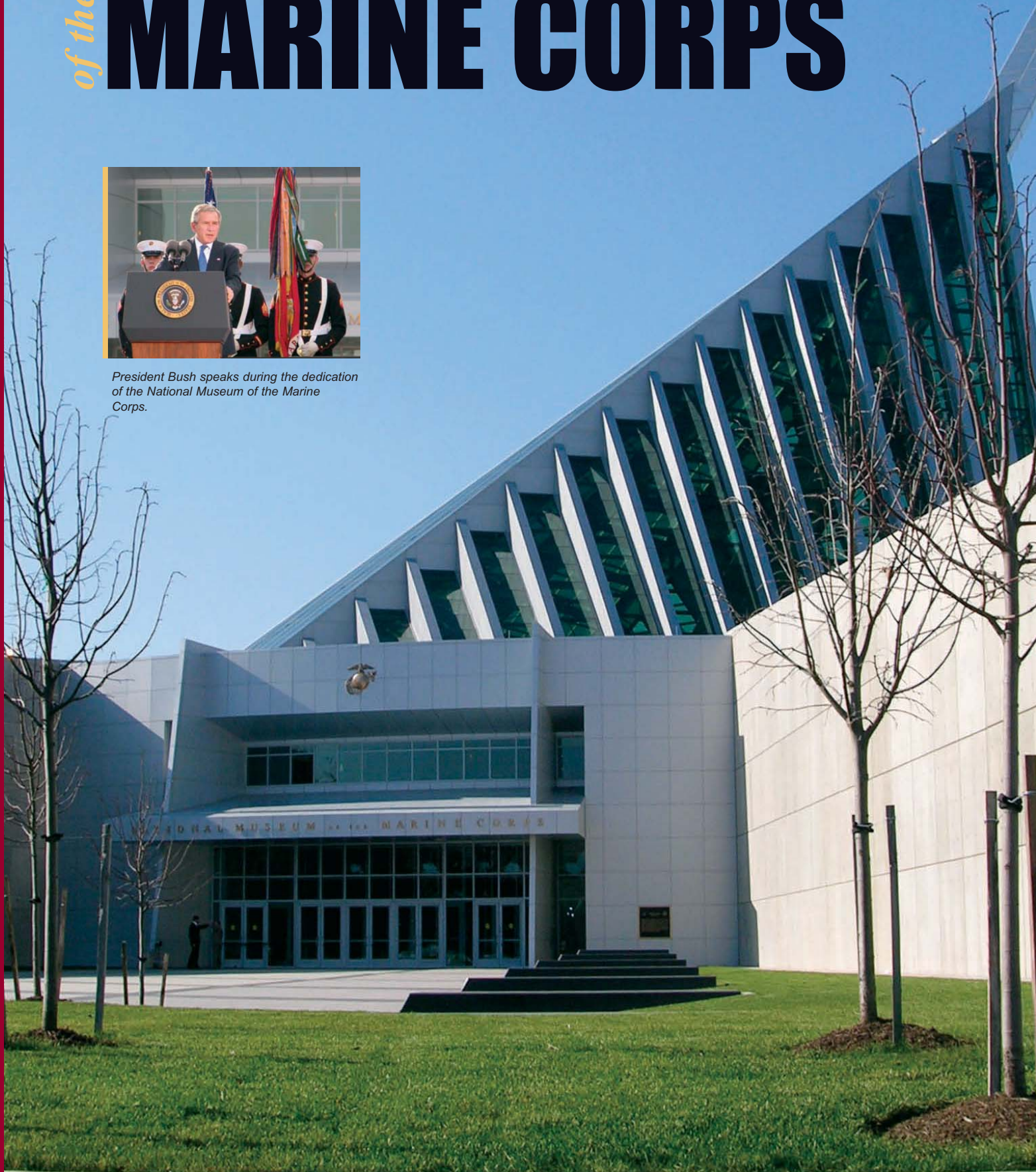


NATIONAL MUSEUM *of the* MARINE CORPS



President Bush speaks during the dedication of the National Museum of the Marine Corps.



MCSC displays equipment that helps warfighters win

A Marine in full combat gear stands ready with weapon in hand. Not far away, the barrel of a Marine Corps Lightweight 155mm Howitzer aims skyward while the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) sits patiently nearby. Sounds like a battlefield in some far off locale, but instead, this scene unfolded in a static display tent at the November 2006 dedication of the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Va. For most of the dedication day, Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) exhibited tons of weapons, vehicles and systems, showing thousands of museum guests how the organization "equips the warfighter to win."

A banner bearing that theme hung outside of the display tent and could be seen by the estimated 10,000 attendees - mostly Marine Corps veterans. During the dedication ceremony, veterans and other guests listened to stirring patriotic words delivered by top Marine Corps leadership and their Commander-in-Chief, President Bush. Many visitors arrived early for the event and passed the time strolling by more than 25 displays manned by nearly 200 MCSC team members, filling a huge 26,000-square-foot tent.

"I feel proud to be able to show and tell the public and Marine veterans that MCSC is fielding state-of-the-art equipment to serve our Marines in harm's way," said Peter Pham of MCSC's Counter IED Technology Directorate.

"I'm just thrilled to be here," stated Sgt. Alexander Wesley, an instructor at The Basic School on Marine Corps Base Quantico. "It feels good to display this new technology. Marines are going to be safer because of it."

Wesley exhibited the full combat load, including the Modular Tactical Vest (MTV). "This is the new MTV prototype," Wesley told war veteran Richard Johnson. "It feels great. It feels much lighter than the body armor currently being worn. It's a lot more comfortable."

"All this equipment is quite unbelievable," said Johnson, a 26-year retired Marine colonel who served from 1954 to 1980. "And it's so important that we keep producing high quality items. I got hit by shrapnel in Vietnam, and my helmet saved my life. You can't provide Marines with enough good equipment. It's critical."

"Events like this are important because we want to show that the Marine Corps is actively fielding new equipment to help the warfighters win the Long War on Terror," added Pham. "We want to show that tax dollars are being used to buy better equipment, to save Marines' lives."

Seven-year-old Jacob Gonzalez of Texas doesn't pay taxes yet, and he may be a little young to understand how the equipment can save lives. But he did seem to enjoy the HIMARS. "I like the rocket launcher," said Gonzalez. "It's cool."

Kids also enjoyed the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer, one of the more popular displays with a steady line of people waiting to try their luck at virtual target practice. Paul Nichols, who provides support to MCSC's project manager for Training Systems, helped operate the simulator.

"This event served to tie all Marines together," said Nichols, "from four-star generals to four-year privates from 60 years ago."

Leroy Diamond of New York served more than six decades ago and fought on Guadalcanal, where he earned the Navy Cross. The Marine Corps hero admired the howitzer. "If we had gear like that in World War II, we wouldn't have had to use ammo," he said. "We would have scared them to death."

"The older the veteran the more shock and amazement was apparent," said Barton Soucy, a MCSC deputy project officer who enjoyed talking with visitors. "It is a pleasure to show the benefits of a tight team oriented toward success."

This sentiment was echoed by many MCSC professionals at the museum dedication who are continuing to equip warfighters to win on battlefields around the world.

— Bill Johnson-Miles, Corporate Communications



A Marine tells a visitor about the Stinger Missile Launcher on display during the museum dedication.



Dan Fitzgerald, Marine Corps Systems Command's program manager for Infantry Combat Equipment, helps a visitor try on some combat gear that Marines wear on the battlefield.



Two boy scouts check out a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) on display during the museum dedication.

(Photos by Bill Johnson-Miles)