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July 9, 2021

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the Navy
Office of the Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Del Toro,

The 250th anniversaries of the founding of the Navy and Marine Corps in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1775 are soon approaching. As Mayor of Camden, New Jersey, I, Victor G. Carstarphen, write to you to strongly advocate for the main celebrations of the Navy and Marines 250th Anniversary to be held in Philadelphia and Camden, home of the USS *New Jersey* – the most decorated Navy ship afloat.

As part of the Semiquincentennial of the Independence of the United States, it is important to commemorate the events that enabled and protected that independence: the creation of the American military services in 1775. On October 13, 1775, the Second Continental Congress at Independence Hall founded the Navy, whose first ship was soon commissioned on the banks of the Delaware. On November 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution to raise the first battalions of Marines, who were recruited at nearby Tun Tavern. From there, the Marines soon sailed down the Delaware on their first amphibious operation.

There is no more fitting place to celebrate the 250th birthdays of the Navy and Marine Corps than at their birthplace: the Philadelphia and New Jersey banks of the Delaware River. New Jersey has a long Navy heritage, from Francis Hopkinson, New Jersey signer of the Declaration of Independence who headed the Navy Board and designed the first Navy flag which set the pattern for the Stars and Stripes, to the Camden shipyards that produced so many Navy vessels that helped win World War II. A group of New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania organizations and citizens have joined together as “Homecoming 250 Navy Marine Corps” to propose “Launching the Semiquincentennial” with two exciting historic celebrations.

The 250th anniversary of the Navy will be commemorated in October 2025 through ceremonies and parades at Independence Hall in Philadelphia and on both banks of the Delaware. It will also be celebrated by assembling on the Delaware River historical, replica, and active-duty ships representing every major war which the Navy has fought: the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Middle East. The Delaware is the best and indeed only location for this unprecedented gathering of Navy history, as Philadelphia has preserved the USS *Olympia*, the only surviving ship from the Spanish-American War (which also served in World War I), and Camden has preserved the USS *New Jersey*, the only battleship to fight in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, and the Middle East.

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The 250th anniversary of the Marine Corps will be celebrated, in November 2025 through ceremonies and parades on both banks of the Delaware, including at Independence Hall. It will also be celebrated by assembling on the Delaware historic, replica, and active-duty ships with a special connection to the Marine Corps, including the *Olympia* and the *New Jersey*. The Marines' 250th also will be celebrated by rebuilding Tun Tavern, hallowed birthplace of the Corps, near its original location on the Delaware River. A rebuilt, operating Tun Tavern will be a mecca for Marines and others to visit the Delaware Valley for decades to come.

I ask that you support the launch of the Semiquincentennial proposal by designating Philadelphia and Camden as the site of the main celebrations of the 250th anniversaries of the Navy and Marines. I request that you authorize those services to participate and cooperate by bringing in active-duty ships, aircraft, and personnel to the Delaware River in order to represent the Navy and Marine Corps of recent years, today, and the future. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you and working with your team on this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor G. Carstarphen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Honorable Victor G. Carstarphen
Mayor
City of Camden