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Subject: The Newly Adopted, Ontario-Made, U.S. Marine Corps, OKC 3S Bayonet.

There has been a bit of public confusion concerning the newly adopted Marine Corps bayonet, but as of the month of August, 2003 the production bayonet has begun being distributed to Marine Corps units around the world. The first 5,000 pieces were delivered to Camp Lejeune, the second 5,000 were delivered to Camp Pendleton, and the third 5,000 were delivered to Okinawa. This will continue until the entire 95,000 bayonet contract is completed. An add-on to this contract has recently raised the total amount of the contract to 120,000 bayonets.

The new bayonet's design is now standardized, but there could be additional very minor changes in the webbing system over time. This would come about as results come in from the bayonet's field service. The OKC 3S was purposely designed as a bayonet, a fighting knife and a field knife. This is what the Marines wanted, and what they got.

I personally carried the first of the finalized-design bayonets to Afghanistan with me in August, and taught classes on the new bayonet and on the psychology of the use of the bayonet, to the members of the 6th Marines Infantry Regiment. The 6th Marines was the unit to receive the 1st fielded Prototype bayonets, and the reinforced company guarding the embassy carries and trains with these same bayonets.

The design of the new Marine bayonet is an evolution of the Ontario Spec 3 commercial knife. The official Marine designation of the bayonet is the OKC 3 S (Ontario Knife Company #3 Serrated). As "officially," this was an "off-the-shelf" procurement, the model designation was assigned to the bayonet by Ontario. So far there has been no move to give the bayonet an "M" designation, and that may never take place, due to the changing rules of U.S. government procurement.

The bayonet's grip, scabbard and scabbard webbing are officially "Coyote Brown" in color. This color was specifically selected to match up with the Marines new digital woodland and digital desert camouflage uniforms. The new Marine light brown boots are also of this color, and the majority of new equipment being purchased by the Corps will follow in this color scheme. This color change came after years of study and field testing, with the Marine Sniper School leading the charge. The Marines have adopted an entirely new (to the U.S.) concept of camouflage for uniforms and equipment, and the new bayonet is in keeping with this forthcoming effort.

The Marine Corps also recognized that the brown colors are much less heat absorbent than the traditional darker colors, especially black and dark green, and thus are less infrared light reflective. Reducing the infrared signature of Marines and their equipment is something under constant and serious study by the Corps, and the new bayonet's color is a product of this expanded effort.

The OKC 3S has a blade of 8-inches, and is made from a 1095 high carbon steel, proprietary to Ontario. They call it Ultra steel or "Ultra Carbon steel" (UC), and it is in the hardness range of Rockwell 54-55, although the Marine contract permits a wider range of hardness. The longer blade was favored by the Marines, as the opponents they are facing in the 21st Century often wear some sort of body armor, or are wearing chest pouches and chest packs filled with ammunition magazines and supplies. Likewise the amount of NBC and winter weather clothing that may be encountered was also a consideration. A blade is worthless unless it can reach an opponent's vitals.

The OKC 3S purposely has a full tang design, with the pommel being permanently peened to the end of the blade tang. The grip, not being required to stabilize the crossguard or the pommel, is made of a soft ribbed material, which greatly reduces hand fatigue when using the bayonet as a fighting knife and a field knife. Also molded into the grip ovals is "USMC" on the right side, and the Marine Corps emblem on the left side.

The blade's ricasso is marked on both sides. On the left side are two lines:

COMBAT
MARINE

On the right side are three lines:

OKC 3S
ONTARIO
KNIFE CO.

The new bayonet has a set of 1 ¼ inch long serrations in front of the lower section of the crossguard. These are Mission-style serrations designed by Mission Knives, which makes the non-magnetic MPK knife for the Marine Corps Force Recon units. This was found to be the superior style of serrations for use and also for resharpener; so with Mission's cooperation these were adopted as part of the Marine Corps specification.

The new bayonet is delivered sharp, and in a change of tradition, each Marine will be responsible for keeping it sharp. This includes the sharpening of the true edge, the false edge and the serrations. The bayonet is completed and protected with a phosphate type of parkerized finish.

The OKC 3S, has a very distinctive scabbard, designed by Ontario, with a one-piece molded body, and a removable metal throat spring. The scabbard is identified as its "stealth" model by Ontario, and its soft body reduces its noise coefficient without degrading its protection of the bayonet's blade and the Marine's body.

The scabbard body is complimented by an excellent webbing system, which was designed to be compatible with the new loop-system of carrying equipment being used by the Marines (and the U.S. Army as well). These loops are frequently called MOLLE loops, as they were introduced with the MOLLE pack system. In fact, the MOLLE pack

system is going out of Marine Corps service as it was found unsuitable during the Afghan campaign. The loop carrying system, which is on the new incoming pack system, and is on the current vests and on the body armor, will remain the service standard.

The OKC 3S scabbard webbing has two MOLLE straps with lift-the-dot snaps on its back. At the webbing's tip, by the tip of the scabbard, is an elastic band which can be slid off to allow access to the sharpening stick embedded into the back of the scabbard. This stick is of a fine grade, and is designed for light sharpening of the bayonet and the serrations. It is not intended to take out large nicks and gouges in the blade.

The upper part of the scabbard webbing, loops through the back of the scabbard, and wraps around its throat. It then emerges up behind the bayonet's hilt with two separate bayonet retention straps, to ensure that the bayonet completely secure, especially during rappelling, parachuting and the climbing required during urban assaults.

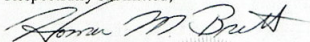
The one place there has been some initial weakness in the webbing design, is where the webbing wraps around the front of the scabbard throat. At this point the two ends of the webbing overlap, and the snap is embedded through both webbing straps. Because this point suffers constant strain from the snapping and unsnapping of the diagonal cross strap, it is a major stress point, and constant use can, potentially, cause the male part of the snap to eventually pull off.

On the first 5,000 bayonets the web overlap went from right to left. Subsequent scabbards have the overlap going from left to right to reduce the stress problem, but in my learned opinion, this spot is still insufficiently strong and will require further modification/redesign to strengthen it.

The Marines now have an excellent bayonet, far superior to the old M7, and one which will carry them into the 21st century with determination and élan.

It is a high point in my Marine Corps service that I, serving as the Subject Matter Expert on Edged Weapons to the Martial Arts Center of Excellence (MACE), have been able to participate in the development and fielding of the new bayonet. It should be noted that the MACE is also responsible for the development of all tactics and training related to hand-to-hand combat, knife fighting and bayonet fighting.

Respectfully submitted,



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