

**REMARKS BY
GENERAL WALTER BOOMER, USMC (RET.)
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE MARINES
OCEAN PALACE RESTAURANT, HOUSTON, TEXAS
JULY 4, 2004**

General Laan, General Sheehan, General Joy – Fellow Marines, families of Marines and friends:

We are together tonight to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the South Vietnamese Marines and to renew the bonds of friendship between them and their fellow U.S. Marines, the Covans. We thank you for inviting us to be with you.

Also today, the United States celebrates its birth as a nation. Though we have formerly existed for over two and a quarter centuries, our history goes back several hundred more years.

It is the history of a land that has reached out its arms to people from everywhere on Earth, offering them hope, freedom, refuge and the opportunity to build a new life. In my view, this diversity of people and cultures is the strength of our great nation.

Almost 30 years ago, many of you sought refuge here under tragic circumstances. Though the early years were difficult, in what was then a strange land, you persevered and succeeded as generations of Americans before you have done. You brought with you to America the same traits of honor and courage that marked you as the best fighters in South Vietnam. Honor and courage were the rock upon which you stood when you arrived here. And look at you today. I salute you!

I know a piece of your heart will always remain in Vietnam. But I also know you have contributed greatly to your new country. The United States is better for your presence.

Tonight we will celebrate and reflect on the past. That is entirely appropriate. But tomorrow we will turn our eyes again to the future and you, your children and grandchildren are an important part of the future of our wonderful country.

There was something special that existed between the U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese Marines. I am not exactly sure how that special tie developed as we fought together. I believe it sprang mostly from mutual respect. The South Vietnamese Marines were the best of their Nation's warriors. Though slightly prejudiced, I believe the Covans were the best of America's warriors. Regardless of what it was, the friendship and respect that was forged in battle, is something all of us treasure and one of the reasons that causes us to be here.

It is appropriate therefore that we are together again at this time, and at this place, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the South Vietnamese Marines, our special friendship, celebrating your success as Vietnamese Americans and joining hands as our nation celebrates its birthday.

Thank you, Semper Fidelis