



Ian Douglas

Star Corps
ISBN13: 9780380818242

MARINES ON THE HIGH FRONTIER

The Marines have always led the way, in space as well as in America's wars. Lieutenant Colonel John Glenn, the first American in orbit, was a Marine. Walter Cunningham, one of the first three men to fly the Apollo spacecraft; Fred Haise, who helped bring the crippled Apollo 13 spacecraft around the Moon and safely back to Earth; Jack Lousma, pilot of Skylab 3 and commander of Space Shuttle Columbia's third test flight, with almost 1600 hours in space . . . all of them, Marines. Marines have already written themselves into the history of manned space flight. They will continue to do so in the future. The question, of course, is whether Marines will be needed in space in their traditional roles as peacekeepers, as protectors of America's strategic interests, as America's "first to fight." The answer, sadly, depends on whether Humankind will carry its squabbles and tribal bloodlettings into space. Given our past record in such matters, war on the High Frontier seems inevitable. And if it is inevitable, then it is inevitable that the U.S. Marine Corps will be there, leading the way . . . as always. Scorned in

peacetime, derided by anti-military types, all too often with outdated weapons and second-hand equipment, the Marines will lead the way. Why? Here's one possibility. We've just begun to appreciate the danger posed by small bodies — asteroids and comets — to all of Earth. A ten-mile asteroid striking what is now the Yucatan 65 million years ago ended the era of the dinosaurs, and came damned close to snuffing out all life on the planet. A smaller body could devastate continents . . . or wreck coastal cities with mile-high tidal waves. And think about it. With a modest space capability, a small nuke, and a good computer, any nation that so desired could deliberately alter the orbit of a suitable asteroid, sending it to a precise impact point on Target Earth. The longer it took to spot the incoming missile, the harder it would be to stop. Even a rock the size of a school bus could wreck a city. God help us if a terror group or a madman dictator with Armageddon on their minds ever developed such a capability. For this reason we will one day establish outposts in space — ships on patrol, bases in solar orbit, all with the mission of charting potentially dangerous rocks, challenging suspicious vessels, and keeping Earth's skies safe. Such outposts might well lead the way to the full scale colonization and commercial development of space in the 21st century in exactly the same way that Army posts and forts opened the Old West in the 19th. This would be essentially a military mission, rather than civilian. The U.S. Navy, with its long experience in crewing large vessels on extended tours of duty in far-off climes, would likely fly those ships. And the Marines, "the Navy's police force" as one short-sighted American president derisively called them, will be aboard, standing watches, boarding suspicious vessels, planting the explosives to redirect Earth-bound bits of rock. As they say: "The meek can have the Earth; the rest of us are going to the stars." And the Marines will lead the way. Count on it.