

Wilson Expected to Get Top Marine Post

By Michael Getler

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Lt. Gen. Louis H. Wilson, a World War II Medal of Honor winner and now commander of U.S. Marine forces in the Pacific, is expected to be nominated by President Ford to become the next commandant of the Marine Corps.

The anticipated nomination of Wilson to the top Marine post reflects a decision by the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense to overrule the recommendation of outgoing Commandant Gen. Robert E. Cushman.

Cushman is known to have recommended that his assistant four-star Gen. Earl E. Anderson, succeed him when he retires later this year.

In recent months, however, senior Pentagon officials said that Navy Secretary J. William Middendorf II and Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger have interviewed more than a dozen top Marine generals and that both secretaries have declined to go

along with Cushman's recommendation.

Instead, Wilson's name has been forwarded by Schlesinger to for the President's endorsement, which is expected by senior military and civilian sources.

Defense officials say the Pentagon's recommendation of Wilson was based on "the big, broad issues confronting the Marine Corps, and not much on personalities."

Anderson, who was a front-runner for the job until recently, has been the focus of a bitter, behind-the-scenes dispute within the general officer corps for the past year.

Two months ago, some Marine generals alleged that private letters sent to them by the commandant, which were typed in Anderson's office, may have been secretly coded to identify them with their views on who the next commandant should be.

An investigation was undertaken by Navy Under Secretary David S. Potter. Potter acknowledged that about half

of the 70 Marine generals had expressed concern or protest over the episode.

The investigation, he said, showed that there were sufficient variations in typing to identify each general with his response, but that the variations could have been accidental. Anderson has denied any wrongdoing.

Other generals have complained privately that Anderson has dominated the selection boards by which Marine Corps generals are chosen for promotion.

Marine records show that since being named assistant commandant by Cushman in April, 1972, Anderson has headed four of the seven general-officer selection boards held in the past three years. That is more than any other senior officer, though former Assistant Commandant Gen. L. W. Walt and former Commandant Gen. Wallace M. Greene each headed three boards in different time pe-

In a recent interview, Cushman suggested that some Marine generals may be behind the allegations against Anderson because Anderson, if nominated, would become the first aviator, rather than ground officer, named commandant.

Other senior generals—who asked that their names not be used—have vigorously denied that any air-ground battle is behind the controversy.

Cushman, who was an aide to then-Vice President Nixon and was later appointed by Nixon first to the deputy director's job at the Central Intelligence Agency and then to the commandant's post, is due to retire in December, but may do so earlier.

Wilson, 55, is a native of Brandon, Miss., and is known to be a favorite of Sen. C. Stennis (D-Miss.), who heads the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee.

Wilson joined the Marines in 1941 and won the Medal



LT. GEN. LOUIS WILSON ... Medal of Honor winner

of Honor as a 24-year-old captain in July, 1944, for his actions during an assault on Guam. Wilson was wounded three times in the assault but managed to lead his rifle company in capturing an enemy position.