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2 Top Officers Of Marines Ask to Retire

Associated Press

Rebuffed by civilian leaders, the two top officers of the Marine Corps have asked for early retirements, Pentagon sources said yesterday.

Gen. Robert E. Cushman Jr., Marine commandant, and Gen. Earl D. Anderson, assistant commandant, have submitted letters asking for retirement July 1, the sources said.

Secretary of the Navy J. William Middendorf II is expected to approve.

The two generals acted less than a week after President Ford followed the recommendation of Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger and Middendorf and nominated Lt. Gen. Louis Wilson, a Medal of Honor winner, to succeed Cushman.

Cushman, whose four-year term normally would end Dec. 31, supported Anderson to follow him as chief of the 196,000-member Marine Corps. Rarely has a Marine commandant given up his post before finishing his full term.

Cushman has told newsmen that he would lose about \$300 a month in retirement pay if he stayed on beyond September because of a technical quirk in the law. Anderson also would stand to lose the same amount, sources said.

The sources said it would be incorrect to say that Cushman and Anderson were fired.

But one official said that, while Cushman and Anderson made their own decisions on retirement, there was "encouragement" from senior civilian officials.