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# Top Marines Ask Early Retirement

Washington

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

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

Secretary of the Navy J. William Middendorf 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 Lieutenant General Louis Wilson to succeed Cushman.

Cushman, whose four-year term normally would end December 31, is known to have supported Anderson to succeed him.

Rarely has a corps commandant given up his post before finishing his full term.

Cushman, who has had more than 40 years of service, 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.

Jockeying by Marine Corps factions always has been prevalent before a new commandant is named. But this year it was marked by special bitterness, in part because of a rivalry between corps aviators and ground officers.

If Anderson had become commandant, he would have been the first aviator to reach the top of the corps.

Another factor believed to have figured in the outcome of the competition was a dispute over letters sent to 70 marine generals asking their views on who should succeed Cushman.

Some of the generals claimed that the letters were coded so they could be identified with their preferences. Both Cushman and Anderson denied any wrongdoing.

Undersecretary of the Navy David S. Potter investigated the situation and, sources said, nothing legally wrong was found.

*Associated Press*