



# America's First Marines: Gooch's American Regiment, 1740- 1742

*Lee G. Offen*

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In 1740 Great Britain declared war on Spain and so began the War of Jenkin's Ear. The British decided to include American soldiers in the land force element of their Caribbean expedition, bringing Gooch's Regiment into being. The Regiment was nominally commanded by the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia and composed of thirty-six companies raised in nine North American colonies. One of those companies was commanded by Lawrence Washington, the elder half brother of George Washington. They fought as Marines at the siege of Cartagena, an occupation of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, an assault on Portobello and finally an occupation of the Island of Ruatan. They were forced to serve as sailors, replacing an ever dwindling number of seamen suffering from life in the tropics in the days before modern medicine. They were America's First Marines!

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