

**MAKE PEACE OR DIE:**  
The First Days of War in Iraq with  
First Battalion, Fifth Marines

62 Area Films presents  
a Valerian Bennett film  
92 minutes

[www.MakePeaceOrDie.com](http://www.MakePeaceOrDie.com)

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## SYNOPSIS

March 2003. Thousands of troops are massed on the border of Iraq poised for war. Among the first to cross the line of departure is one of the most decorated units in the American military having served since World War I: First Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment. The Marine Corps infantry unit known as “1/5” (one-five) carries to battle a flag with its salient motto, “Make Peace or Die.”

**“Make Peace or Die: The First Days of War in Iraq with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines”** is a boots-on-the-ground account of the treacherous journey from the oilfields of Kuwait to Saddam Hussein’s palace in Baghdad. For three weeks as a lead element charging 300 miles to the Iraqi capital, 1/5 rages across the desert and into the full range of human emotion. Courage. Fear. Gain. Loss. Love. Hate. Joy. Pain.

Footage from embedded reporters, Department of Defense archives, images from the Marines themselves, and interviews conducted by a former member of 1/5 provide a rare glimpse into the souls of America’s warriors. From the first encounter with insurgents at Saddam Canal to dealing with the fog of war at a roadblock on the streets of Baghdad, we witness in these men the essence of conflict, both personal and professional, as seen through the ages. Along the way, 1/5 suffers the first American combat casualty of the war and, in the blink of an eye, forty days and nights of tedious desert living is instantly replaced with an inescapable new reality.

**“Make Peace or Die: The First Days of War in Iraq with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines”** serves as both an intensely personal oral history and a chilling snapshot of the foundation which would give way to the then unseen future in Iraq.

*“This is a game where people get shot and killed and don’t get back up. It’s not like the movies.”* – Captain Wilbur Dickens

## CREDITS

Directed and Edited by Valerian Bennett

Producer – Sgt. Sam Hunter, USMC

Producer – Jonathan Haug

Producer – Valerian Bennett

Interviews conducted by Sgt. Sam Hunter, USMC

### Featuring

LCpl. Alkatan	LCpl. Klingel
Cpl. Beavers	Cpl. Kuster
Sgt. Camozzi	Cpl. Lee
Cpl. Colth	LCpl. Lujan
SSgt. Daughtery	Lt. McGaughey
Cpl. Dawani	LCpl. Newman
Lt. Denial	LCpl. Oda
Capt. Dickens	Sgt. Peyton
Cpl. Dumas	LCpl. Roper
LCpl. Geez	LCpl. Rutledge
Sgt. Genetti	Cpl. Salazar
Cpl. Hancock	Cpl. Schaefer
Lt. Horton	Capt. Smith
PFC Igo	Sgt. Smith
Cpl. Keith	HM Williams
Sgt. Kinzer	

### Combat photos and footage courtesy

Sgt. Peyton, Sgt. Reed, SSgt. Gominsky, CWO2 Fairburn

Department of Defense, Associated Press, ABC News, Fox News, CNN, NBC News,  
Discovery, National Geographic, BBC News

## **ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

A Northern California native, Valerian Bennett graduated from the prestigious University of Southern California with a B.A. in Cinema-Television Production.

In 1995, he traveled with acclaimed filmmaker Jon Bokenkamp from Los Angeles to Kearney, Nebraska (mostly on side-roads) filming the documentary “After Sunset: The Life and Times of the Drive-In Theater,” a snapshot in time and tribute to a great institution of Americana.

Valerian made his directorial and editorial debut with “SYNERGY: Visions of Vibe,” a comprehensive documentary chronicling the underground rave culture in the deserts of Southern California. Shot primarily on 16mm film, SYNERGY is both a moving entertainment experience and an intimate portrait of a modern counter-culture.

Since then Valerian has gone on to lens the digital narrative feature “PonyBoy” (2004) and has lent his editorial and production experience to scores of commercials, short films, and music videos. Valerian is currently the proprietor of a creative boutique in Santa Monica, CA specializing in commercial editorial and motion graphics design. He is also the lead editor for a new ESPN documentary series about drag racing entitled, “American Dragster.”

### Filmography

(2004)

“PonyBoy”

Director of Photography

(1999)

“SYNERGY: Visions of Vibe”

Director, Editor, Director of Photography

(1995)

“After Sunset”

Director of Photography

## **HISTORY OF FIFTH MARINES**

The activation of the Fifth Marines dates back to June 1917, just prior to the U.S. force deployment to France during World War I. The Regiment won its nickname, the “Fighting Fifth,” on the battlefields of Western Europe. So fierce was its efforts in the Battle of Belleau Wood and subsequent victories that the French government awarded the Regiment the Croix de Guerre with two palms and one gilt star. Today, each Marine serving in the Regiment also wears the Fourragere, a French unit award, on the left shoulder of his uniform to recognize the legacy and valor of his predecessors.

Briefly deactivated, the Regiment was reactivated in June 1920, to guard the delivery of the U. S. Mail against domestic bandits. While they were on the job, not one Marine was killed and not one piece of mail was lost to thieves. In March 1927, the Regiment deployed to South America and fought in support of the Nicaraguan government against rebel bands until April 1930. Shortly thereafter, the Regiment was again briefly deactivated. Troubled times and small conflicts in the Americas, however, led to the Regiment’s reactivation on 1 September 1934.

After further service in the U.S. and in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the Fifth Marines deployed to New Zealand in 1942 as part of the U.S. Pacific Campaign against Japan. During the course of World War II, the Regiment further distinguished itself in action at Guadalcanal, Eastern New Guinea, Peleliu and Okinawa. The post-war years found the Regiment on occupation duty in North China until May 1947, when it relocated to Guam. In August 1950, it moved to its current home, Camp Pendleton, California.

The country again called upon the Fifth Marines in August 1950, when the Regiment found itself in combat on the Pusan Perimeter in Korea. During the next three years the Regiment fought at Inchon and Seoul, the Chosin Reservoir, and on both the East Central and Western Fronts. The Fifth Marine Regiment returned to Camp Pendleton in March 1955, and remained there for the next eleven years.

In May 1966, the Fifth Marines arrived in the Republic of South Vietnam where it would remain until April 1971. Vietnam-era Marines added the names Rung Sat, Chu Lai, Phu Bai, Hue, Khe Sahn, An Hoa, Tam Ky, and Da Nang to the Regiment's long list of distinguished battle actions.

In August 1990, the nation again called on the "Fighting Fifth" – this time in support of Operation Desert Shield. On 26 January 1991, while embarked with the largest amphibious task force since World War II, Regimental Landing Team (RLT) Five, in conjunction with RLT-2, conducted heliborne and surface assaults for Exercise Sea Soldier IV in Southern Oman. On 25 February 1991, the Regiment disembarked in direct support of Operation Desert Storm and the liberation of Kuwait. Less than three months later, Fifth Marines received an executive order to conduct humanitarian assistance and relief operations in Bangladesh. The Regiment returned to Camp Pendleton on 29 June 1991.

In the decade following Operation Desert Storm, the Regiment deployed to Yellowstone National Park, the Umatilla National Forest in Oregon and Clear Creek, Idaho to combat wild fires. Simultaneously it sourced the battalion landing teams for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), or MEU (SOC).

In January of 2003, the Fifth Marines deployed to Kuwait as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On 21 March, the Regiment became the first unit to cross the line of departure into Iraq as it moved to seize the Rumayllah Oilfields. During the course of the next few weeks, the Regiment repeatedly distinguished itself in combat actions as it continued the offensive to liberate Baghdad and collapse the regime of Saddam Hussein. During much of the attack north, the Regiment led the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in the deepest attack in Marine Corps history.

*SOURCE: WWW.USMC.MIL*