Marine Fighter Foray 2026 - 531 Gray Ghost Squadron Reunion Recap

Hello Grey Ghosts,

This year, the 531 Gray Ghost Squadron held its annual reunion in conjunction with Marine Fighter Foray 2026 in Dallas, Texas, from Wednesday, October 14, through Saturday, October 17, 2026. More than 500 people attended the event at the Hyatt Regency, and the 531 Gray Ghost Squadron was one of the Marine fighter community's largest groups.

Events began Wednesday afternoon with a golf tournament at Irving Golf Club for early arrivals. That evening, the Grey Ghosts gathered for a private Brazilian barbecue at the Steakyard restaurant. The excellent food and outdoor setting gave old friends time to reconnect and made new members feel welcome. After dinner, the annual auction of Grey Ghost and Marine Corps memorabilia raised funds for our own, Second Chance Scholarship. Very generous donations should keep the scholarship well-funded for our squadron members' children and grandchildren planning to attend college or trade school.

Thursday's exhibits featured a Martin-Baker ejection seat and a Lockheed Martin F-35 flight simulator. When the planned Lockheed Martin F-35 production plant tour was canceled, a group from the Gray Ghost Squadron walked 10 minutes from the Hyatt Regency to tour Dealey Plaza and the Sixth-Floor Museum at the Texas School Book Depository, gaining a firsthand view of the site of President Kennedy's assassination. The day ended with a welcome reception and more time to reconnect in the Foray Ready Room.

Friday began with a tour of the recently opened National Medal of Honor Museum. Its distinctive design is elevated on five pillars representing the original five branches of the U.S. military, with an open circle at the center representing the Space Force. Viewing more than 200 exhibits honoring over 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients was both inspiring and humbling.

That afternoon, the 531 GGS held its annual General Membership meeting. Mark your calendar. Next year's reunion is tentatively scheduled for September 15–19, 2027, in MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina. We are already delegating assignments to coordinate tours, a possible fishing charter, and a highly reputed steak dinner at the local VFW. We also approved a 3rd option for membership dues. $65 for a 5-year membership in addition to the current rates of $ 15 a year and $40 for a 3-year membership. These are all excellent price options when compared to other organizations' membership rates.

The Friday evening Squadron Dinner was a Tex-Mex Buffet provided by the Hyatt. My table was privy to a hilarious tale by Rusty Smith and Earl Wederbrook of their Tu-22M Backfire encounter that had everybody roaring. IYKYK; otherwise, join us in Cherry Point next year to hear the story yourself. More tall tales in the Foray Ready Room rounded out the night.

Saturday began with Lockheed Martin presentations on the F-35 Lightning, followed by a question-and-answer panel with active-duty Marine pilots recently returned from deployment. I found the session informative, engaging, and a sobering reminder of events overseas.

The week concluded with the evening Fighter Foray Banquet. 531's own Bill "Spider" Nyland served as master of ceremonies and introduced the guest speaker, Gen. Christopher Mahony, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

My wife and I arrived at Marine Fighter Foray 2026 unsure what to expect, but we had a wonderful time reconnecting with former squadron mates and their spouses. The Hyatt Regency provided an excellent setting for the week's events. Kudos to Mike "Horse" Frese and Rusty "Snuffy" Smith for coordinating our reunion with the MFF. I'm looking forward to the next Marine Fighter Foray reunion.

For Cherry Point reunion updates throughout the coming year, visit https://531grayghostsquadron.org/ and follow us on our two Facebook sites, "VMFA-531 Gray Ghosts" and "531 Gray Ghost Squadron". There you will find photos of our Dallas Reunion along with historical squadron photos. If you are not yet a squadron member, download an application from the website or leave me a comment below. I will send you an application by direct message or US mail. Join us in preserving the legacy of the VMFA-531 Grey Ghost Squadron. I look forward to seeing everyone next September at Cherry Point.

Semper Fi, Doug