

Leatherneck

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LEATHERNECK. The code name used by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Wendell A. Metzger. Born in Stromsburg, Nebraska, Leatherneck enlisted at a young age to start a long career in the Marine Corps. After serving at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Leatherneck fought in the war in Vietnam as a member of the 1st Recon Battalion. After the war, he became a drill instructor, serving at Parris Island and finally Camp Lejeune. Around 1986, he was recruited for the G.I. Joe team. Leatherneck is tough, loyal and mean. Any Joe would feel safe having him watch his back, but that doesn't mean they like him. Leatherneck is also gruff, opinionated, overbearing and stubborn. He has no patience with anyone he sees as indecisive, lazy or dishonest. This attitude has brought him into several confrontations with his teammates, but Leatherneck is always at his best on the battlefield.

Leatherneck's first mission with the Joe team was one of the team's biggest operations ever, the Battle of Springfield. After that first mission, the Joe team was placed on suspension and quartered at Fort Wadsworth. During this time, Cobra attacked the Pit and the Joes' headquarters was destroyed. Once the team was back on duty, Leatherneck joined a group of Joes sent to aid the counter-revolutionaries of Sierra Gordo, who were fighting a government backed by Cobra. The mission was actually two-fold, since the Joes also had to rescue Snake-Eyes, who was being held in Cobra's Terror-Drome launch base. The rescue was successful until Stalker -- the team leader -- was seriously wounded. Snake-Eyes was the next senior man and relieved him, staying behind while the other Joes got Stalker to safety. Snake-Eyes was captured again and rescued some time later. A short time after that, Leatherneck and a group of Joes traveled to the war-torn Middle East where they stole a top secret spy plane from the dictator Colonel Sharif. Leatherneck's next mission was in the jungles of Southeast Asia. The Joes were on a transport plane carrying a stolen Cobra Firebat when they were attacked and shot down by the October Guard, who had sustained enough damage from the Joes to crash as well. The team was forced to bail out of their plane and the Joes headed out to find the plane before the Soviets got there first. One of the Joes' medics, Lifeline, took part in the mission and quickly came into conflict with Leatherneck. Lifeline was a pacifist, and refused to fight or use violence in any way, even in the face of enemy fire which injured Wild Bill. Leatherneck thought Lifeline was a useless coward and told him so, though the medic continued to do his job and ignore the marine's insults. Leatherneck never came to respect Lifeline, and was angered when the mission ended with Lifeline giving up the team's objective to save their lives and the October Guard's lives from vicious river pirates.

Some time later, Leatherneck confronted Outback when the Joe returned from the nation of Borovia. Outback, Stalker, Quick Kick and Snow Job went on a secret mission into the country, but only Outback evaded capture and returned home. Though he left the others behind per Stalker's orders, many of the Joes were suspicious. Leatherneck openly questioned Outback's honesty. Outback wasn't interested in his opinion, but when Leatherneck started to threaten him, Outback pulled a hunting knife on him, warning the marine not to threaten him. The situation calmed down and Roadblock explained that Outback was following Stalker's orders. Leatherneck wasn't completely convinced (recalling the mission in Sierra Gordo when Stalker wanted no man left behind), but he never brought it up with Outback again. Leatherneck continued to participate in many more missions, including a near-disastrous mission to capture a traitorous American scientist in Southeast Asia when the man was travelling with a Soviet convoy. He was also one of the many Joes who took part in the Cobra Island civil war, which the Joes entered on the side of Serpentor. Leatherneck stayed with G.I. Joe for the next several years until the team was shut down in 1994. He was later called back to join the reinstated Joe team in its battle against the forces of a revived Serpentor on Cobra Island.

(GI 49, 50, 53, 55, 62, 64, 67, 74-76, 83; SM 3, 4, 8, 23; GIv2 24, 25; Figures: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)