

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Logistics Operations School
Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools
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STUDENT HANDOUT

MARINE AIR-GROUND TASK FORCE ORGANIZATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- a. Terminal Learning Objective. Without the aid of references, describe the Marine Air-Ground Task Force Organization.

- b. Enabling Learning Objectives: Without the aid of and per the references, describe the MAGTF organizational structure on a multiple choice exam by identifying the:
 1. Major units of the Fleet Marine Force.
 2. Major units of the Marine Division.
 3. Major units of the Marine Air Wing.
 4. Major units of the Force Service Support Group.
 5. Elements of a MAGTF and from where they are sourced.
 6. Types of MAGTF's.
 7. Notional composition of a Marine Expeditionary Force.
 8. Notional composition of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade.
 9. Notional composition of a Marine Expeditionary Unit.

OUTLINE:

1. Introduction. MARITIME STRATEGY. The United States is a maritime nation with coastlines on two oceans. Throughout history the United States Marine Corps has been called upon to respond to crisis situations around the globe of varying actions. The Marine Corps prides itself as being the nations force in readiness. Our ability to respond to virtually any contingency is best manifested in the employment of our MAGTF's as landing forces for the Second, Third, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Fleets.

a. Sea Lines of Communication. The United States is a maritime nation and depends on sea lines of communications for economic trade and to exercise international policy.

b. Strategic Chokepoints. Strategic chokepoints are those areas along sea lines of communications which restrict movement of surface vessels due to geographic features. Strategic chokepoints may be as narrow as the Straits of Gibraltar or the Panama Canal, or as wide as the GIUK Gap (an imaginary line drawn from Greenland, to Iceland, to the United Kingdom).

2. Marine Forces. Marine Corps operating forces are drawn from a reservoir we call the Marine Force. From these reservoirs we can task organize our forces and create Marine Air-Ground Task Forces of any size or composition and tailor them to accomplish any mission.

3. Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). An integrated Air-Ground Team, at the tactical level, under the direction and control of a single commander. The MAGTF is task organized to accomplish assigned missions and designed to exploit combat power of closely integrated Air-Ground operations.

a. Operational Characteristics

- (1) Expeditionary Readiness
- (2) Strategic Mobility
- (3) Forcible Entry Capability
- (4) Environmental Versatility
- (5) Integrated Sea/Air/Land

(6) Tactical Surprise (Over-the-Horizon -- OTH)

b. MAGTF Capabilities. The ability of the MAGTF to task organize and deploy rapidly is one of its strengths. Forward basing, sealift and seabasing, airlift, and prepositioning enable rapid deployment of the MAGTF.

c. MAGTF Employment. Although sometimes employed independently, MAGTF operations of an independent nature would likely be limited in both scope and duration. In most cases, the MAGTF will function under the control of a unified, sub-unified, or joint task force command.

(1) Established Theater - Other forces are in place.

(2) Austere Theater - No infrastructure or forces present.

d. Types of MAGTF's. MAGTF's range in size from the smallest (which can number from fewer than 100 to 3,000 Marines) to the largest (which can number from 40,000 to 100,000 Marines). There are four basic types of MAGTF's.

(1) Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)

(2) Marine Expeditionary Force [Forward] (MEF FWD)

(3) Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)

(4) Special Purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF)

e. MAGTF Composition. Regardless of the size of the MAGTF, all have the same basic structure. There are four elements of a MAGTF, the command element, the ground combat element, the aviation combat element, and the combat service support element.

(See figure C102-1)

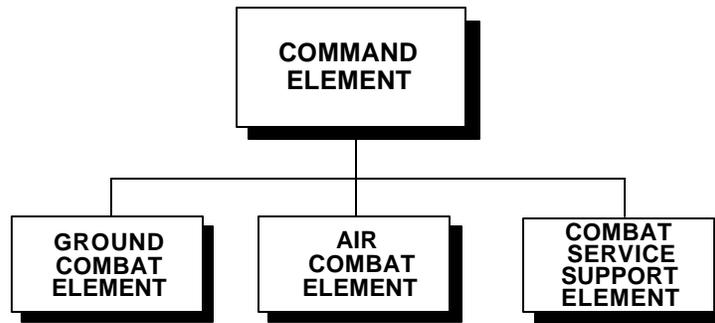


figure C102-1

(1) Command Element (CE). The command element is the Marine Corps mechanism on the battlefield by which combat power is synchronized to achieve tactical and operational advantage over the enemy. The CE provides command and control for effective planning and execution of operations, and is designed to facilitate sequencing of additional MAGTF's as necessary.

(a) Composition of the Command Element

1. MAGTF Commander
2. Deputy Commander
3. General Staff
4. Staff

(b) Functions of the Command Element. Several key aspects of the CE activities are different from those of its major subordinate commands.

- 1 Land operations
- 2 Requesting and integrating joint capabilities
- 3 Collecting intelligence
- 4 Deep, close, and rear operations
- 5 Deception and psychological operations
- 6 Nuclear Biological and Chemical (NBC) weapon

systems

7 Interoperable command, control, and communications network

8 MAGTF concept of operations

9 Task organizing the MAGTF forces

(c) Functional Areas. Functional responsibilities are the same for each echelon of command within the MAGTF. These functional areas serve to establish the focus of effort of the MAGTF command element.

1 Manpower and Administration (G/S-1)

2 Intelligence (G/S-2)

3 Operations (G/S-3)

a Current operations section

b Future operations section

4 Command, Control, and Communications Countermeasures (C³CM)

5 Mobility/Counter mobility/Survivability

6 Nuclear, Biological and Chemical

7 Logistics/Combat Service Support (G/S-4)

8 Air

9 Air Defense

(2) Ground Combat Element (GCE). The GCE conducts ground combat operations. It is composed of an infantry unit varying in size from a platoon of Marines to one or more divisions. It has combat support units and some organic combat service support capability.

(3) Aviation Combat Element (ACE). The ACE conducts air operations and provides aviation support to the GCE and Combat Service Support Element (CSSE). It is composed of aviation units and it varies in size from a reinforced helicopter (HMM) squadron to a reinforced air wing. It routinely integrates air/ground combat operations. This is a

critical element in the effective application of combined arms. Coordination among the CE, GCE, and ACE is achieved through the integrated Marine Air Command and Control System (MACCS). It has some combat support and combat service support units assigned to it from Marine Wing Service Support Squadron (MWSS).

(4) Combat Service Support Element (CSSE). The CSSE provides the range of combat service support functions and capabilities necessary to support the MAGTF's mission. It complements combat service support capabilities of the GCE, ACE and CE. It is composed of supply, landing support, maintenance, transportation, general engineering, health services, and services (disbursing, postal, exchange services, information systems, legal, security support, civil affairs support, and graves registration).

4. Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). The MEF is the largest and most capable MAGTF. Because the MEF can deploy with a formidable fighting force that can sustain itself, it is the Marine Corps "Force of Choice". It is normally composed of assets from one or more Marine divisions, wings, and FSSG's. A MEF is normally commanded by a Lieutenant General.

a. Permanent MEF Headquarters

- (1) I MEF - Camp Pendleton, California
- (2) II MEF - Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
- (3) III MEF - Okinawa, Japan

b. Notional MEF. A MEF's typical composition provides for the following organization: (See figure C102-2)

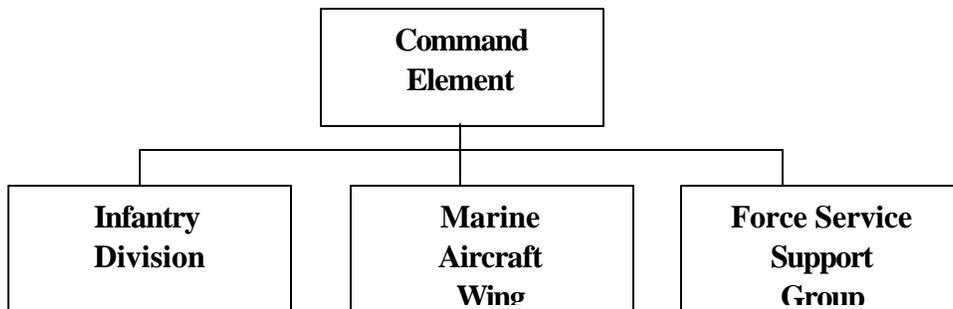
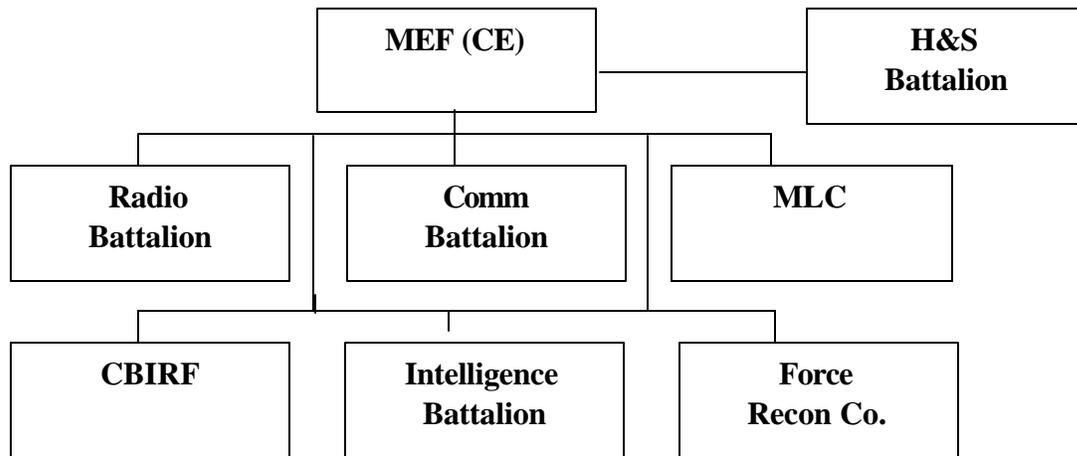


Figure C102-2

(1) Command Element. Same structure as stated in Paragraph 3. e. (1) above. (See figure C102-3 below)

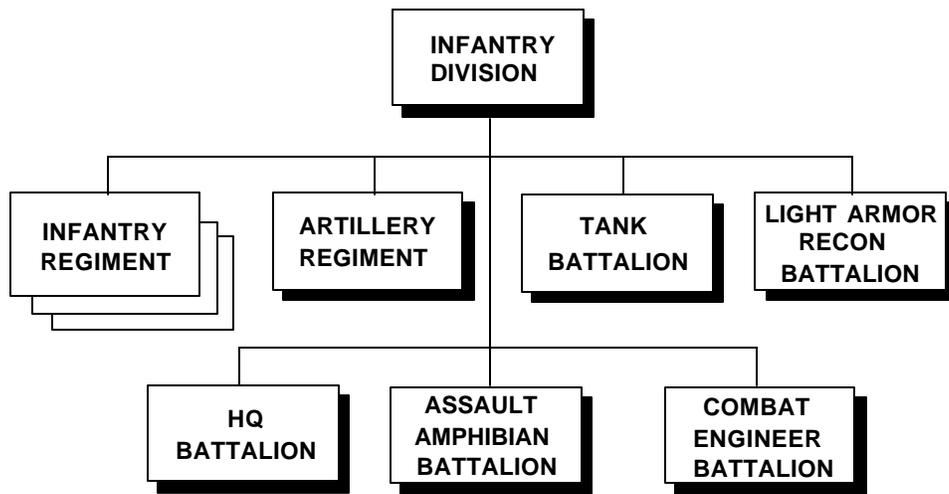


figure

Figure C102-3

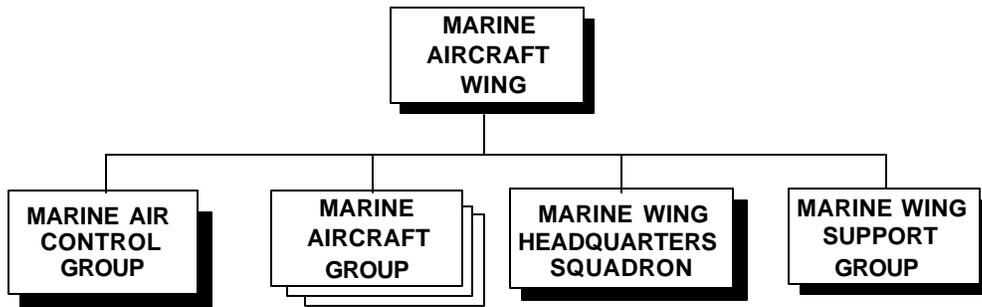
- (a) Radio Battalion
- (b) Comm Battalion
- (c) H&S Co
- (d) MLC
- (e) Intelligence Battalion
- (f) Force Reconnaissance Company
- (g) CBIRF

(3) Ground Combat Element. The Marine Division is the largest permanent organization of ground combat power in the Marine Corps operating force. A Marine Division may be employed as the Ground Combat Element (GCE) of a large landing force or detach Regimental (RLT) or Battalion Landing Team(s) (BLT) for employment with smaller landing forces. Major subordinate elements of the Marine Division are:



- (a) Infantry Regiments (3)
- (b) Artillery Regiment
- (c) Tank Battalion
- (d) Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion
- (e) Assault Amphibian Battalion
- (f) Combat Engineer Battalion
- (g) Headquarters Battalion

(4) Aviation Combat Element. Largest organization of aviation combat power in the Marine Corps operating force. There are three active duty aircraft wings and one reserve. A Marine aircraft wing, which is commanded by a Major General, may be employed as the Aviation Combat Element (ACE) of a large landing force or detach Marine Aircraft Groups or composite (HMM) squadrons to be employed with smaller landing forces.



(a) Marine Wing Support Group (MWSG).

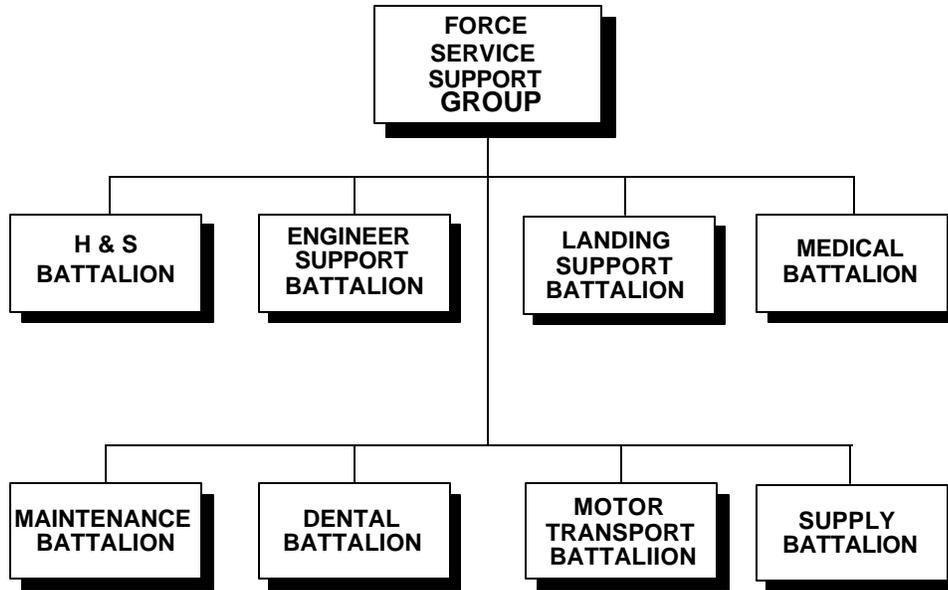
(b) Marine Air Group (MAG).

(c) Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron (MWHS).

(d) Marine Air Control Group (MACG).

(5) Combat Service Support Element. Largest composite grouping of combat service support units in the Marine Corps operating force. There are three active duty FSSG's and one reserve. Each Group is commanded by a Brigadier General, may be employed as the Combat Service Support Element (CSSE) of a large landing force or detach task organized combat service support elements for employment with smaller landing forces. Major subordinate units of the FSSG are:

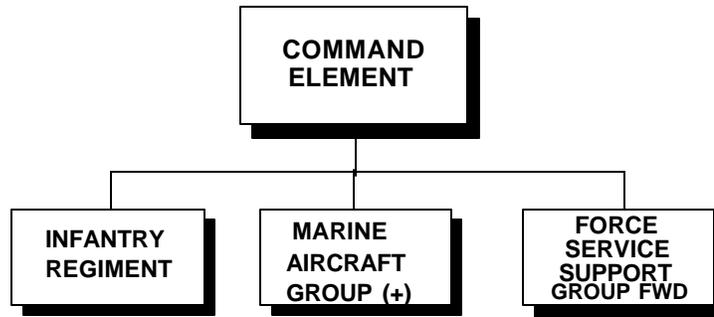
DIAGRAM ON NEXT PAGE



- (a) Headquarters and Service Battalion
- (b) Engineer Support Battalion
- (c) Landing Support Battalion (combined with
Bn in 3d FSSG)
- (d) Medical Battalion
- (e) Maintenance Battalion
- (f) Dental Battalion
- (g) Motor Transport (MT) Battalion
- (h) Supply Battalion

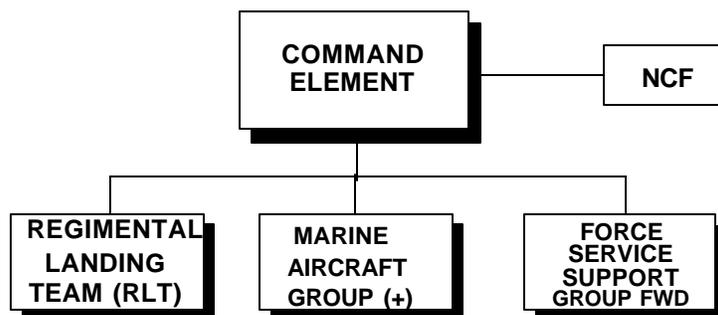
MT

5. Marine Expeditionary Force Forward - MEF (FWD). The MEF (FWD) is the forward echelon of a MEF and can remain forward deployed for an extended period. The MEF (FWD) can be configured for deployment as an Air Contingency Force (ACF), a maritime or geographical prepositioning force, or an amphibious force. Typical MEF (FWD) organizations include the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) MEF (FWD), Amphibious MEF (FWD), Norway Airlanded MEF (NALMEF), and the Air Contingency Force (ACF).



(*NOTE: The notional MEF (FWD) consists of the same structure and composition as the traditional Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). Should deployment of the MEF (FWD) be required, the staff would be drawn from MEF staff, under the command of the Deputy MEF Commander. Although new doctrine is in development to support the MEF (FWD) concept, the term MEB is still utilized in existing war plans, and is still the measure when discussing amphibious lift capabilities i.e. (MEB) equivalents).

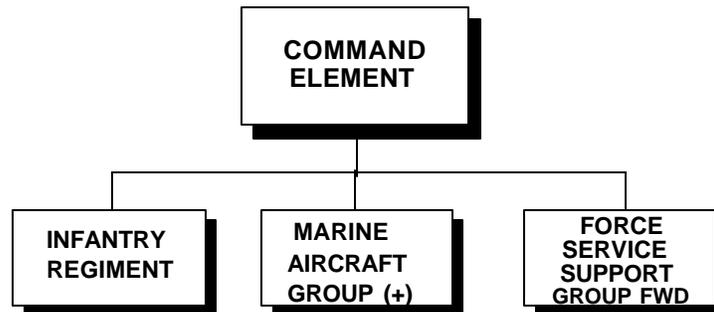
a. Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) MEF (FWD) MAGTF.
 The MPF MEF (FWD) is slightly larger than an amphibious MEF (FWD) and heavily equipped with armor and mechanized assets. It is capable of combat against a sophisticated mechanized force. The prepositioning of MPF equipment afloat reduces strategic airlift requirements and global response time. MPF squadrons are afloat until "married up" with the MPF MEF (FWD) MAGTF. The purpose of the MPF MEF (FWD) MAGTF is to rapidly project combat power into an area. Once established ashore, it can be operationally ready for combat within 7 to 10 days and capable of sustaining operations for 30 days. The MPF MEF (FWD) MAGTF is normally commanded by a brigadier general. MPF operations are a strategic deployment option.



(1) An MPF MEF (FWD) MAGTF is typically organized with the following elements:

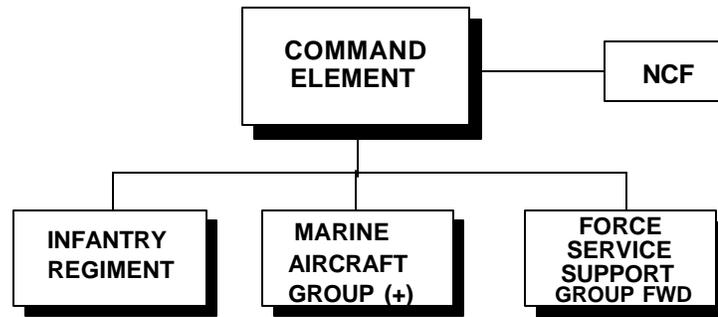
- (a) Command Element
- (b) Ground Combat Element
- (c) Aviation Combat Element
- (d) Combat Service Support Element
- (e) Naval Construction Force (NCF) Component

b. Amphibious MEF (FWD). The Amphibious MEF (FWD) is the mid sized MEF (FWD) level MAGTF. The CE, GCE, and selected units from the ACE and CSSE form the assault echelon of an amphibious MEF (FWD) and deploy aboard Navy amphibious shipping as a balanced force. The remaining forces of the amphibious MEF (FWD) deploy as an assault follow on echelon (AFOE). An amphibious MEF (FWD) is normally commanded by a brigadier general, and is comprised of the following elements:



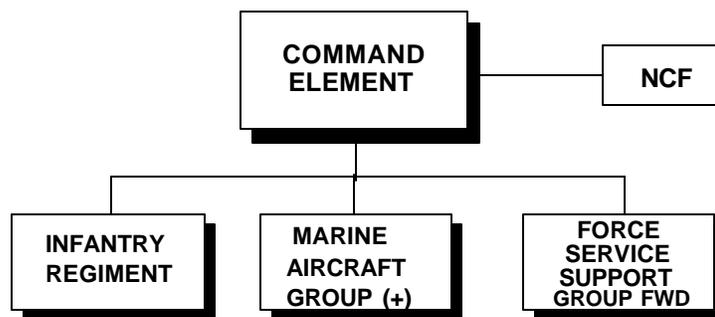
- (1) Command Element
- (2) Ground Combat Element
- (3) Aviation Combat Element
- (4) Combat Service Support Element
- (5) Naval Construction Force Component

c. **Norway Airlanded MEF (NALMEF)**. The smallest MEF (FWD) organization. The NALMEF is commanded by a brigadier general, and is composed of these elements:



- (1) Command Element
- (2) Ground Combat Element
- (3) Aviation Combat Element
- (4) Combat Service Support Element

d. Air Contingency Force (ACF) MEF (FWD). Each MEF has a resident air contingency force MEF (FWD). Organization depends on the mission assigned and the airlift assets available to the ACF. The naval construction force (NCF) component of an ACF is task-organized for the ACF's mission ashore and is normally built around the assets of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion.



6. Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) - MEU(SOC)

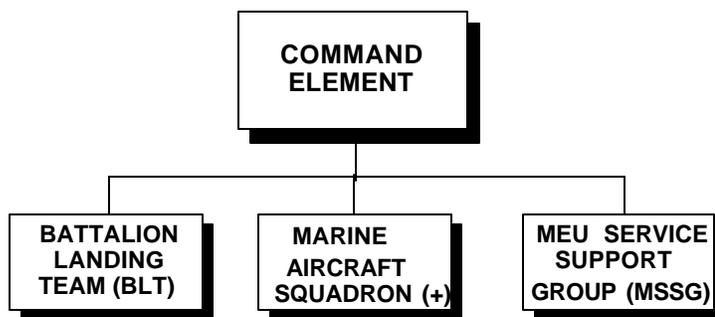
a. In 1983, the Secretary of Defense directed each military service and defense agency to review their existing special operations capabilities and develop a plan for achieving the level of capability required to combat both

current and future low intensity conflicts and terrorist threats. In response, the Marine Corps instituted an aggressive SOC training program to optimize the inherent capability of MEU's to conduct selected maritime special operations.

b. Progressive improvement in individual and unit skills attained through enhanced training and the addition of specialized equipment allow a MEU to execute a full range of conventional and selected maritime special operations. This is accomplished by a means of dedicated and intensive pre-deployment training program of about 26 weeks that emphasizes personnel stabilization coupled with focused, standardized and integrated Amphibious Ready Group (ARG)/MEU training. MEU's which have undergone this enhanced training program have been provided special equipment, and have successfully completed a thorough evaluation/certification under the cognizance of the Force Commander shall then be designated as a MEU(SOC). The primary goal is certification and designation as "SOC" prior to deployment.

c. The primary objective of the MEU(SOC) is to be organized and equipped to provide the theater CINC's with an effective means of dealing with the uncertainties of future threat, providing a forward deployed unit that is inherently balanced, sustainable, flexible, responsive, expandable and credible. "From the Sea" articulates the vision of MAGTF's participating in naval expeditionary forces of combined arms, which are task-organized, equipped and trained to conduct forward presence and crisis response missions while operating in littoral areas of the world.

d. Organization. The forward deployed MEU (SOC) is also organized and equipped to provide the joint force commander with rapidly deployable, sea-based capability with **15 days of sustainment** optimized for forward presence and crisis response missions. The MEU(SOC) may also serve as an enabling force for follow-on MAGTF's, or possibly by joint forces. The MEU is comprised of a command element (CE); a reinforced infantry battalion as the ground combat element (GCE); a composite helicopter (HMM) squadron (ACE); and a combat service support element (CSSE) designated the MEU Service Support Group (MSSG). Currently, there are 7 permanent MEU's. 11th, 13th, & 15th at Camp Pendleton, CA., 22d, 24th and 26th at Camp Lejeune, and the 31st MEU in Okinawa, Japan.



(1) COMMAND ELEMENT. The CE of the MEU (SOC) is a permanently established organization augmented to provide command and control (C2) functions and command, control, communications, computers and intelligence systems (C4I) necessary for effective planning and execution of all operations. In addition to permanently assigned Marines, the MEU CE is augmented with detachments from other units from within Fleet Marine Force units.

(a) MEU Staff consists of Headquarters Section, Administration Section (S-1) to include Staff Judge Advocate, Intelligence Section (S-2), Operations Section (S-3), Logistics Section (S-4), Communications Section (S-6). These staff sections are augmented from units within the MEF, and normally personnel will remain with the MEU for two consecutive deployments.

(b) **ATTACHMENTS** include: FORECON & RADBN.

1 Force Reconnaissance Company (FORECON) DET. Platoon sized unit used for preassault/deep post assault operations and performs as assault element of the Maritime Special Purpose Force. Specialized capabilities includes parachute, SCUBA, and close quarter battle skills.

2 Radio Battalion (RADBN) Detachment. Consists of a headquarters, processing and reporting element, sensitive information communication element, collection element and an electronic countermeasures element. Provides tactical signal intelligence and electronic warfare support to include limited direction finding, intercept and jamming to the MEU commander.

(2) GROUND COMBAT ELEMENT (GCE). The Ground Combat Element (GCE) is normally structured around a reinforced infantry battalion that forms a **BATTALION LANDING TEAM (BLT)**. Specific reinforcements vary, but generally include artillery,

reconnaissance, light armor, anti-armor, amphibious assault vehicles, and combat engineers. The battalion consists of an H&S company, four letter companies, and a weapons company. Two important things to note about the BLT; unlike a standard infantry battalion, the BLT when formed comes to full strength in personnel and equipment. Secondly, companies within the BLT become specialized. For example one company in the BLT specializes in mechanized operations, another company specializes in helo operations, while the third specializes in small boat operations. Attachments include:

(a) Artillery Battery: A company sized unit, provides the battalion with long range indirect fire support. They embark M105/155mm towed artillery and truck support.

(b) TOW Section: Attached to weapons company, provides battalion with long range anti-tank capability.

(c) Assault Amphibian Vehicle Platoon: Provides mechanized lift for a "mechanized company."

(d) Reconnaissance Platoon: This unit provides distant reconnaissance for the battalion. When a recon det is not available, a battalion usually increases the size of their organic Scout Sniper platoon to perform the same missions.

(e) Combat Engineer Battalion Detachment: Limited capability to construct obstacles and conduct demolitions. This CEB det is sourced from the division engineer battalion.

(3) Air Combat Element (ACE). The ACE, centered around a composite (HMM) helicopter squadron. It includes AV-8B Harrier attack aircraft. A shore based C-130 detachment is also kept on CONUS stand-by to support MEU SOC missions.

(a) Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM): (12) CH-46E Sea Knights used primarily for helicopter transport of an Infantry Rifle Company (Reinforced).

(b) Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron Detachment (HMH): (4) CH-53E Super Stallions used for long range troop transport, equipment transport and heavy lift.

(c) Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron Detachment (HMLA): (4) AH-1W Cobra attack Helicopters, and (3) UH-1 Huey Helicopters used for rotary wing close air support (CAS), escort, and Command and Control.

(4) Combat Service Support Element (CSSE). The CSSE provides a full range of combat service support functions including supply, maintenance, transportation, deliberate engineering, medical and dental, automated information processing, utilities, landing support (port/airfield support operations), disbursing, legal, and postal services, and **15 days of sustainability** (Class I, II, III (B), IV, V, VIII, IX) necessary to support MEU(SOC) operations.

(5) Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF). The MSPF is a unique task-organization drawn from the MEU major subordinate elements. The MSPF provides the enhanced operational capability to complement or enable conventional operations or to execute maritime special missions. The MSPF cannot operate independently of the MEU. It relies on the MEU for logistics, intelligence, communications, transportation and supporting fires. The MSPF is organized and trained to be rapidly tailored to the specific mission. It is notionally composed of a command element; a covering element consisting of one or more reinforced rifle companies; and assault element organized to conduct on-scene command, assault, security, and support functions; a reconnaissance and surveillance (R&S) element organized to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance, sniper control and support, counter-intelligence, human and signal intelligence, and electronic warfare; and an aviation support element to provide lift and assault support. The MSPF does not duplicate dedicated Special Operations Forces (SOF) capabilities.

e. Missions of a MEU(SOC). The MEU(SOC) is a self-sustained, amphibious, combined arms air-ground task force capable of conventional and selected maritime special operations of limited duration in support of a Combatant commander. The following is the mission statement from MCO 3120.9A:

"To provide the geographic combatant commander a forward-deployed, rapid crisis response capability by conducting conventional amphibious and selected maritime special operations under the following conditions: at night; under adverse weather conditions; from over the horizon; under emissions control; from the sea, by surface and/or by air;

commence execution within 6 hours of receipt of the warning order. To act as an enabling force for a follow-on MAGTF or joint and/or combined forces in support in support of various contingency requirements."

f. Capabilities. The inherent capabilities of a forward-deployed MEU(SOC) are divided into four broad categories:

(1) Amphibious Operations

- (a) Amphibious Assault
- (b) Amphibious Raid
- (c) Amphibious Demonstration
- (d) Amphibious Withdrawal

(2) Direct Action Operations

- (a) In-Extremis Hostage Recovery (IHR)
- (b) Seizure/Recovery of Offshore Energy Facilities.
- (c) Visit, Board, Search and Seizure Operations (VBSS)
- (d) Specialized Demolition Operations
- (e) Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP)
- (f) Seizure/Recovery of Selected Personnel or Material
- (g) Counterproliferation (CP) of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

(3) Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)

- (a) Peace Operations
 - 1 Peacekeeping
 - 2 Peace Enforcement

- (b) Security Operations
 - 1 Non-combatant Evacuation Operations
 - 2 Reinforcement Operations
- (c) Joint/Combined Training/Instruction Team
- (d) Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster relief
- (4) Supporting Operations
 - (a) Tactical Deception Operations
 - (b) Fire Support Planning, Coordination, and Control in a Joint/Multinational environment
 - (c) Signal Intelligence (SIGINT)/Electronic Warfare (EW)
 - (d) Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT)
 - (e) Reconnaissance and Surveillance (R&S)
 - (f) Initial Terminal Guidance (ITG)
 - (g) Counterintelligence (CI) Operations
 - (h) Airfield/Port Seizure
 - (i) Limited Expeditionary Airfield (EAF) Operations
 - (j) Show of Force Operations
 - (k) JTF Enabling Operations
 - (l) Sniping Operations

g. Special Purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF). SPMAGTF's are organized to accomplish missions which a standard MAGTF would not normally be assigned or appropriate for the mission. They are linked directly to a precise set of circumstances, limited in time and space, and organized to support the specific situation. SPMAGTF's fulfill a purpose by providing Marine capabilities for extreme circumstances such as disaster relief or unique instances such as an oil spill or forest fire.

7. Enabling Force. The MAGTF can be used as enabling forces or "the opening blow" for other forces because they are forward deployed, or rapidly deployed via airlift, they can be employable in combination by air and sea; they are a self sustained force which provide a special operations capability.

8. Deployment Options. Using a concept known as global sourcing, the Marine Corps has many deployment options which serve to make the force totally deployable with current strategic lift. Through a variety of means such as amphibious lift, Maritime Prepositioning Ships, strategic airlift, and commerical lift which facilitates strategic flexibility. This mobility and flexibility provides the right force that our nation requires. Moreover, this allows the Marine Corps to rapidly bring together various Marine forces (e.g., Amphibious, Air Contingency, and Maritime Prepositioning Forces) to develop a large, potent fighting force.

Additional References:

1. Joint Pub 1-02, Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms
2. Joint Pub 3-02, Doctrine for Amphibious Operations
3. OH-2, The Marine Air-Ground Task Force
4. FMFM 2, MAGTF Doctrine
5. FMFRP 2-12, Marine Air-Ground Task Force: A Global Capability
6. FMFRP 1-11, Fleet Marine Force Organization, 1992
7. MCO 3120.9A, Policy for MEU (SOC) Training and Certification Process (Draft)