

# RP 0102 - USMC Organizational Structure/Chain of Command

## TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Given the requirement, identify organizational structure and chain of command within the Marine Corps, per the references. (RP0102)
2. Given the requirement, identify the elements and generic employment missions of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), per the references. (RP0103)

## ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Without the aid of references, given a description or title, **identify the four broad categories within the Marine Corps**, per the student handout. (RP0102a)
2. Without the aid of references, given a description or title, **identify the chain of command within the Marine forces**, per the student handout. (RP0102b)
3. Without the aid of references, given a description or title, **identify the role of each element within a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF)**, per the student handout. (RP0103a)
4. Without the aid of references, given a description or title, identify the elements within a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), per the student handout. (RP0103b)

## 1. Introduction

The Marine Corps, is organized as a general purpose “force in readiness” to support national needs. Deploying for combat as a combined-arms Marine Air/Ground Task Force (MAGTF), the Marine Corps provides the National Command Authority (NCA) with a responsive force that can conduct operations across the spectrum of conflict. The Marine Corps’ most important responsibility is to win the nation’s battles.

### 1. MISSION OF THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

*The primary mission, as stated in the National Security Act of 1947, “...is to provide Fleet Marine Forces of combined arms together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet...” This act also states that the Marine Corps minimum peacetime structure shall consist of “...not less than three combat divisions and three aircraft wings, and such other land combat, aviation and other services as may be organic therein...” In addition, the Marine Corps maintains a fourth Marine division and aircraft wing in reserve.*



### 2. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

#### The Marine Corps is divided into four broad categories

Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC) consists of the Commandant of the Marine Corps and those staff agencies that

advise and assist him in discharging his responsibilities prescribed by law and higher authority. The Commandant is directly responsible to the Secretary of the Navy for the total performance of the Marine Corps. This includes the administration, discipline, internal organization, training requirements, efficiency, and readiness of the service.

Operating Forces: “The heart of the Marine Corps.” It comprises the forward presence, crisis response, and fighting power that the Corps makes available to U.S. unified combatant commanders. The Marine Corps has permanently established two combatant command level service components in support of Unified Commands with significant Marine forces assigned: U.S. Marine Corps Forces Command (MARFORCOM) and U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific (MARFORPAC).

### **MARFORCOM**

- **Headquarters at Norfolk, VA**
- Commands all Marine Corps operational and shore based commands in the CONUS (less I MEF forces) Region
- Dual hatted commanding all Marine forces in the Southern and European theater (MARFORSOUTH and MARFOREUR)

### **MARFORPAC**

- **Headquarters at Camp H.M. Smith, HI**
- Commands all Marine Corps operational and shore based commands in the Pacific theater

Marine Corps Reserve: The United States Marine Corps Reserve (MARFORRES) is responsible for providing trained units and qualified individuals to be mobilized for active duty in time of war, national emergency, or contingency operations, and provide personnel and operational tempo relief for active component forces in peacetime. MARFORRES, like the active forces, consists of a combined arms force with balanced ground, aviation, and combat service support units. MARFORRES is organized under the Commander, MARFORRES. Their headquarters is located in New Orleans, LA.

Supporting Establishments: The Marine Corps supporting establishments consists of those personnel, bases, and activities that support the Marine Corps Operating Forces. The supporting establishment also includes:

- Marine Corps Recruiting Command
- Marine Corps Combat Development Command
- Marine Corps Systems Command
- Training activities and formal schools

***As a student at Field Medical Training Battalion, you currently fall under The Supporting Establishment.***

### 3. **CHAINS OF COMMAND WITHIN THE MARINE CORPS**

There are two parallel chains of command within the Marine Corps. Depending on the issue or task, they will either fall under the Service Chain or the Operational Chain of Command.

The **Service Chain of Command** is used for things that are specifically inherent to the Marine Corps. Examples would include anything from purchasing new tanks to establishing rules for the use of tuition assistance. These topics, whether large or small, only affect the Marine Corps. The top portion of the service chain is listed below:

#### Service Chain of Command

- President
- Secretary of Defense
- Secretary of the Navy
- Commandant of the Marine Corps

The **Operational Chain of Command** is used to direct forces in conjunction with operational or functional missions. Often times this involves other services outside the Marine Corps. The Operational Chain of command break down is listed below:

#### Operational Chain of Command

- President
- Secretary of Defense
- Commanders of Combatant commands

#### **Authority for a USMC unit to move into Ramadi, Iraq in 2007 would have taken the following route:**

**President: George Bush (Civ)**  
**SecDef: Robert Gates (Civ)**  
**U.S. Central Command: Admiral William Fallon (USN)**  
**Multi-National Forces Iraq: General David Petraeus (USA)**  
**Multi-National Forces West: Major General Martin Post (USMC)**

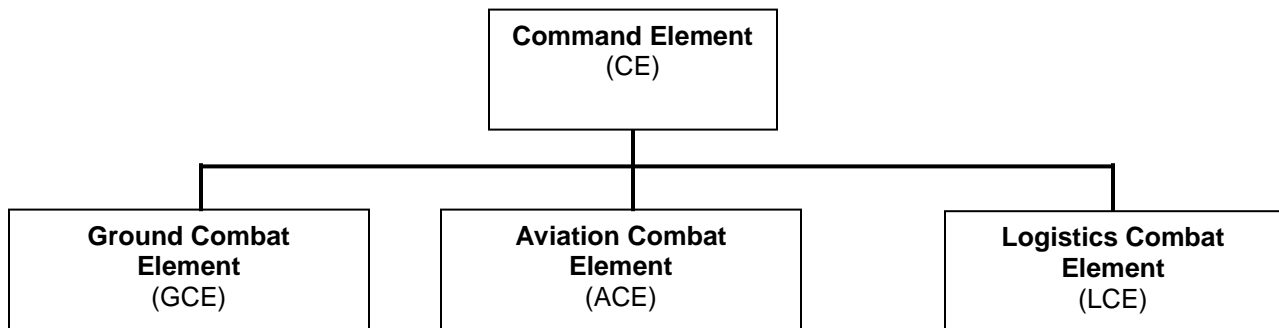
### 4. **MARINE AIR/GROUND TASK FORCE (MAGTF)** (see figure 1)

**Definition and Purpose** - the MAGTF is a balanced, air-ground combined arms task organization of Marine Corps forces under a single commander, structured to accomplish a specific mission. It is the Marine Corps' organization for missions across the range of military operations. It is designed to fight while having the ability to prevent conflicts and control crisis. MAGTFs are flexible, task-organized forces that are capable of responding rapidly to a broad range of crisis and conflict situations.

**Capability** - all MAGTFs are task organized and vary in size and capability according to the assigned mission, threat, and battle space environment. The MAGTF is primarily organized and equipped to conduct amphibious operations as part of naval expeditionary forces. MAGTFs are also capable of sustained combat operations ashore.

**Structure** - each MAGTF, regardless of size or mission has the same basic structure. A MAGTF consists of four core elements: Command, Aviation, Ground,

and Logistics Combat Element. As the Ground Combat Element grows in size, the Aviation, Logistics, and Command elements must also become larger.

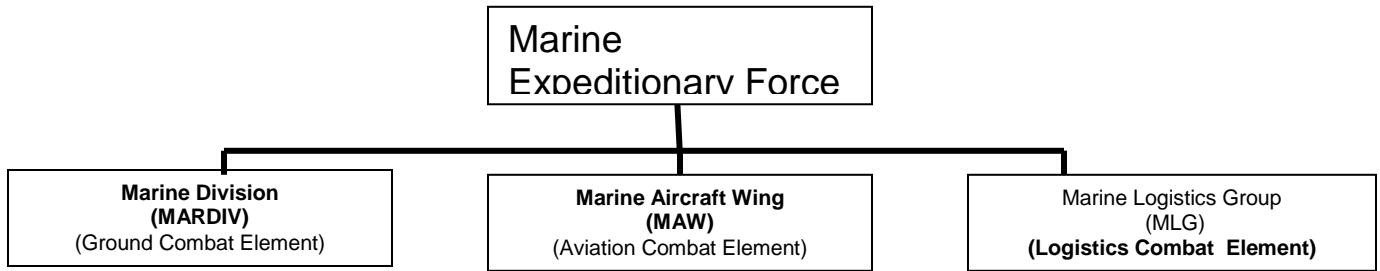


**Figure 1. Four Core Elements of all MAGTF's**

### **Four Core Elements of a MAGTF**

- a. Command Element (CE) - the CE contains the MAGTF headquarters and other units that provide intelligence, communication, and administrative support. The CE is scalable and task organized to provide the command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, and joint interoperability necessary for effective planning and execution of operations.
  - b. Ground Combat Element (GCE) - the GCE is task organized to conduct ground operations to support the MAGTF mission. This element includes infantry, artillery, reconnaissance, armor, light armor, assault amphibian, engineer, and other forces, as needed. The GCE can vary in size and composition.
  - c. Aviation Combat Element (ACE) - the ACE conducts offensive and defensive air operations and is task organized to perform those functions of Marine aviation required to support the MAGTF mission.
  - d. Logistics Combat Element (LCE) - the LCE is task organized to provide the full range of combat service support functions and capabilities necessary to maintain the continued readiness and sustainability of the MAGTF as a whole. The LCE may vary in size and composition.
5. **TYPES OF MAGTFS** - there are four basic MAGTF organizations: Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Marine Expeditionary Unit, and Special Purpose MAGTFs.

**Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)** (see figure 2)



**Figure 2. MEF**

Definition of Capabilities - the largest standing MAGTF. The MEF is the principal Marine Corps war fighting organization. It is capable of missions across the range of military operations, through amphibious assault and sustained operations ashore in any environment. Each MEF is comprised of a Command Element (CE), Marine Division (GCE), Marine Aircraft Wing (ACE), and a Marine Logistics Group (LCE). The three standing MEFs provide a reservoir of capabilities and combat power from which all smaller MAGTFs are formed. There are three standing MEFs:

I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) - elements located in California and Arizona:

- 1st Marine Division (1st MARDIV) - Camp Pendleton, CA
- 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (3rd MAW) - Miramar San Diego, CA
- 1st Marine Logistics Group (1st MLG) - Camp Pendleton, CA

II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) - elements located in North and South Carolina:

- 2nd Marine Division (2nd MARDIV) - Camp Lejeune, NC
- 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (2nd MAW) - Cherry Point, NC
- 2nd Marine Logistics Group (2nd MLG) - Camp Lejeune, NC

III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) - elements located in Hawaii and Japan:

- 3rd Marine Division (3rd MARDIV) - Okinawa, Japan
- 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW) - Okinawa, Japan
- 3rd Marine Logistics Group (3rd MLG) - Okinawa, Japan

Each MEF is commanded by either a Lieutenant General or Major General and consists of anywhere from 20,000 to 90,000 personnel. A MEF generally deploys on Amphibious Assault Ships with support from Military Sealift Command (MSC) and Maritime Pre-positioned Force (MPF) vessels and takes with it 60 days worth of supplies.

**Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) (see figure 3)**

Definition of Capabilities - this is a medium sized non-standing MAGTF that is task organized to respond to a full range of crises, from forcible entry to humanitarian assistance. MEBs are not standing forces, and are formed only in

times of need. An example is post 9/11, the 4<sup>th</sup> MEB and 2<sup>nd</sup> MEB were formed to respond to combat and peacekeeping contingencies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**A MEB is commanded by a Brigadier General or Major General and consists of anywhere from 3,000 to 20,000 personnel. It also generally deploys on Amphibious Assault Ships with support from Military Sealift Command (MSC) and Maritime Pre-positioned Force (MPF) vessels and takes with it 30 days worth of supplies.**

**Elements consist of:**

- Command Element (CE)
- Ground Combat Element (GCE) = Marine Regiment (MARREG)
- Aviation Combat Element (ACE) = Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)
- Logistics Combat Element (LCE) = Combat Logistics Regiment (CLR)

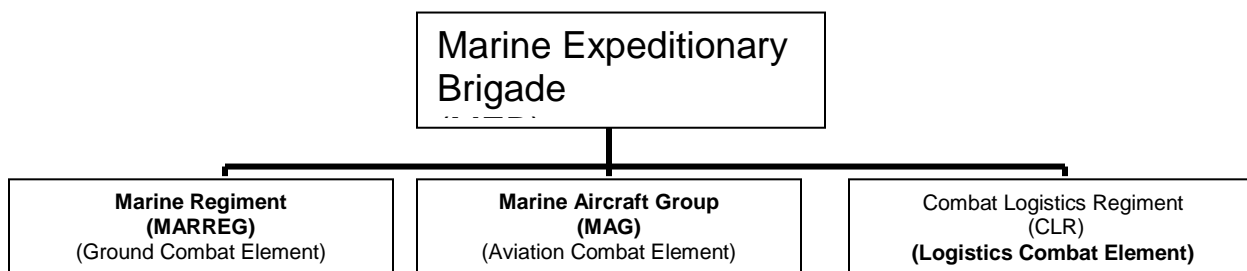


Figure 3. MEB

**Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable (MEU (SOC)) (see figure 4)**

Definition of Capabilities - the standard forward deployed Marine expeditionary organization. A MEU is task organized to be a forward deployed presence and designed to be the “First on the scene” force. A MEU is capable of a wide range of small scale contingencies, to include:

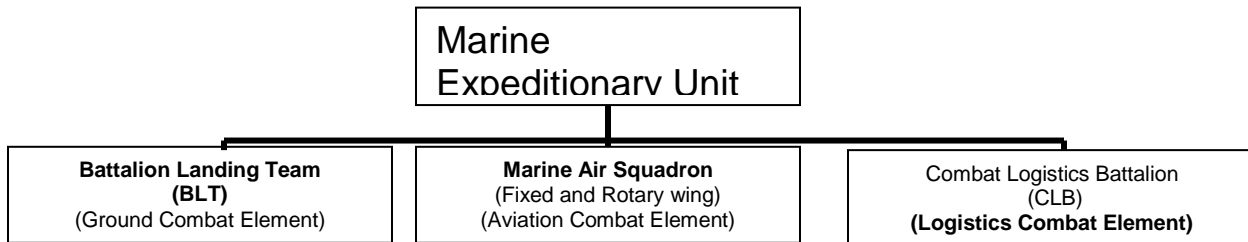
- Noncombatant evacuation
- Maritime interdictions
- Tactical recovery of aircraft and/or personnel
- Humanitarian/civic actions
- Military operations other than war.

Prior to deployment, a MEU undergoes an intensive six month training program, focusing on its conventional and selected maritime special operations missions. The training culminates with a thorough evaluation and certification as “Special Operations Capable (SOC).” In addition to possessing conventional capabilities, MEU (SOC)s are augmented with selected detachments to provide enhanced capabilities.

**A MEU is commanded by a Colonel and consists of anywhere from 1,500 to 3,000 personnel. It generally deploys on naval vessels and takes with it 15 days worth of supplies.**

**Elements consist of:**

- Command Element (CE)
- Ground Combat Element (GCE) = Marine Infantry Battalion Landing Team (BLT)
- Aviation Combat Element (ACE) = Composite Marine Squadrons (Rotary wing with a complement of fixed wing aircraft, depending on mission)
- Logistics Combat Element (LCE) = Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB)



**Figure 4. MEU**

**Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF)**

Definition of Capabilities - the SPMAGTF is a non-standing MAGTF temporarily formed to conduct a specific mission. It is normally formed when a standing MAGTF is unavailable or inappropriate. Their designation derives from the mission they are assigned, the location in which they will operate, or the name of the operation in which they will participate. (i.e., SPMAGTF Somalia, SPMAGTF Katrina etc.). These MAGTFs vary in size and composition based on the individual mission.

MAGTF SIZE (Largest to Smallest)	ELEMENT		
	GCE	ACE	LCE
<b>Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)</b>	Marine Division (MARDIV)	Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW)	Marine Logistics Group (MLG)
<b>Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)</b>	Marine Regiment (MARREG)	Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)	Combat Logistics Regiment (CLR)
<b>Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)</b>	Battalion Landing Team (BLT)	Reinforced Helicopter/Fixed Wing Squadron	Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB)
<b>Special Purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF)</b>	Elements of a MARDIV	Elements of a MAW	Elements of a MLG

**Figure 5. MAGTF Organization**

**REFERENCES**

- MCRP 5-12D, Organization of Marine Corps Forces: Ch 1, 2
- MCDP 1-0 Marine Corps Operations, Ch 3: Pgs 3-10 through 3-20
- U.S. Marine Corps Concepts and Programs 2007: Appendix A