

MARINE AIR-GROUND TASK FORCES

References:

- a) MCDP 1-0 w/Change 3, *Marine Corps Operations* (26 Jul 2017)
- b) MCRP 1-10.1, *Organization of the United States Marine Corps* (30 Mar 2019)
- c) MCO 3120.13, *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)* (29 October 2015)
- d) *Amphibious Ready Group and Marine Expeditionary Unit Overview*, U.S. Marine Corps (2012)
- e) *Marine Expeditionary Brigade Informational Overview*, U.S. Marine Corps (2012)
- f) *Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations* (February 2021)

1. Introduction

Task organized to meet geographic combatant commanders' (GCC) requirements, Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) balanced air-ground, combined arms formations under a single commander. They operate as an integrated force across the air, land, maritime, and cyberspace domains throughout the range of military operations (ROMO).

A key feature of the MAGTF is its expandability. The modular organization of the MAGTF makes reorganization a matter of routine. Crisis response may require a larger force than what can initially be brought to bear. Being able to expand the original force (rather than replacing it with a larger one) promotes continuity of operations. The MAGTF's modular structure facilitates rapid expansion into a larger force as a situation demands by simply adding forces as needed to the core units of each existing element. In addition to its Marine Corps units, a MAGTF may have attached forces from other Services and nations, such as naval construction battalions or infantry/armor brigades. Although MAGTFs differ in size and capabilities, standard procedures exist for organizing any MAGTF and for planning and executing its operations.

The naval character of MAGTFs enhances their global mobility, lethality, and staying power. Embarked aboard amphibious ships or deployed using other means, multi-mission capable MAGTFs provide U.S. civilian and military leaders with increased strategic and operational flexibility. As a warfighting organization, the MAGTF is capable of being employed from amphibious shipping. Such amphibious employment provides four strategic benefits:

- Freedom of Action: Amphibious forces can use the maritime domain as a base from which to conduct operations. They can loiter indefinitely in international waters and maneuver ashore at the time and place of their choosing.
- Deterrence: While a standoff strike is sometimes an adequate response, other situations require the rapid insertion of sustainable combat forces - "boots on the ground" - to underscore the nation's commitment to an ally or to protect our national security interests.
- Assured Access: Amphibious forces contribute unique and essential capabilities toward the nation's ability to take advantage of the freedom of the high seas to enter a region without regard to access constraints and impediments and to sustain sea-based operations almost indefinitely without need for in-theater host-government support.

- Uncertainty for Adversaries: A credible forcible entry capability compels potential adversaries to invest in a broad range of systems and spread their defenses over larger areas of concern.

a. Elements of a MAGTF

All MAGTFs consist of four core elements: a command element (CE), a ground combat element (GCE), an aviation combat element (ACE), and a logistics combat element (LCE).

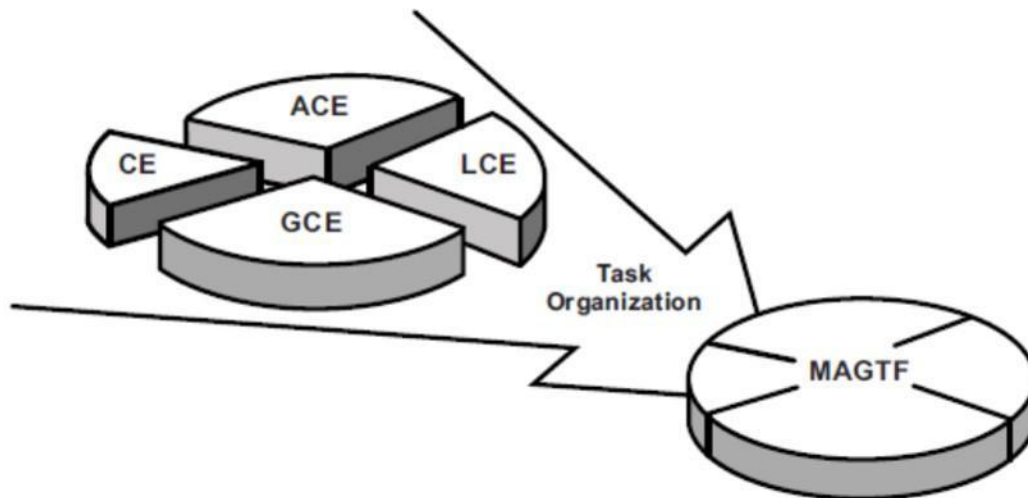


Figure 1: MAGTF Organization.

(1) Command Element

The command element is composed of a headquarters and other task-organized capabilities that provide the command and control capabilities necessary for effective planning, execution, and assessment of operations. The command element can exercise command and control within a joint force from the sea or ashore and act as a joint task force headquarters core element. A command element may include additional command and control and intelligence capabilities from national and theater assets, force reconnaissance assets, signals intelligence capabilities from the radio battalion, and a force fires coordination center. A command element can employ additional major subordinate commands, such as the force artillery headquarters, naval construction regiments, or Army maneuver or engineering units.

(2) Ground Combat Element

The GCE task-organizes to conduct ground operations in support of the MAGTF's mission. It usually forms around an infantry organization reinforced with artillery, reconnaissance, light armored reconnaissance, assault amphibian, and engineer forces. The GCE can vary in size and composition from a rifle platoon to one or more divisions. It is the only MAGTF element that can seize and occupy terrain.

(3) Aviation Combat Element

The ACE task-organizes to conduct air operations, project combat power, and contribute to battlespace dominance in support of the MAGTF's mission by performing some or all of the following functions of Marine aviation:

- Anti-air warfare.
- Assault support.
- Electronic warfare.
- Offensive air support.
- Air reconnaissance.
- Control of aircraft and missiles.

The ACE consists of an aviation headquarters with air control agencies, aircraft squadrons or groups, and logistic units. It can vary in size and composition from a small aviation detachment of specifically required aircraft to one or more Marine aircraft wings. The ACE may operate from ships or from austere expeditionary locations ashore and can readily transition between them without loss of capability. It exercises command and control throughout the battlespace.

(4) Logistics Combat Element

The LCE task-organizes to support the continued readiness and sustainability of the MAGTF by performing some or all of the following functions of tactical logistics:

- Supply.
- Maintenance.
- Transportation.
- Health services.
- General engineering.

The LCE may vary in size and composition from a support detachment up to one or more logistic groups. The LCE operates from sea bases or from expeditionary bases established ashore. It may be the main effort of the MAGTF during foreign humanitarian assistance missions or selected phases of maritime prepositioning operations.

b. Types of MAGTFs

There are four types of MAGTFs; they are the:

- Marine expeditionary force (MEF),
- Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB),
- Marine expeditionary unit (MEU), and
- Special purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF).

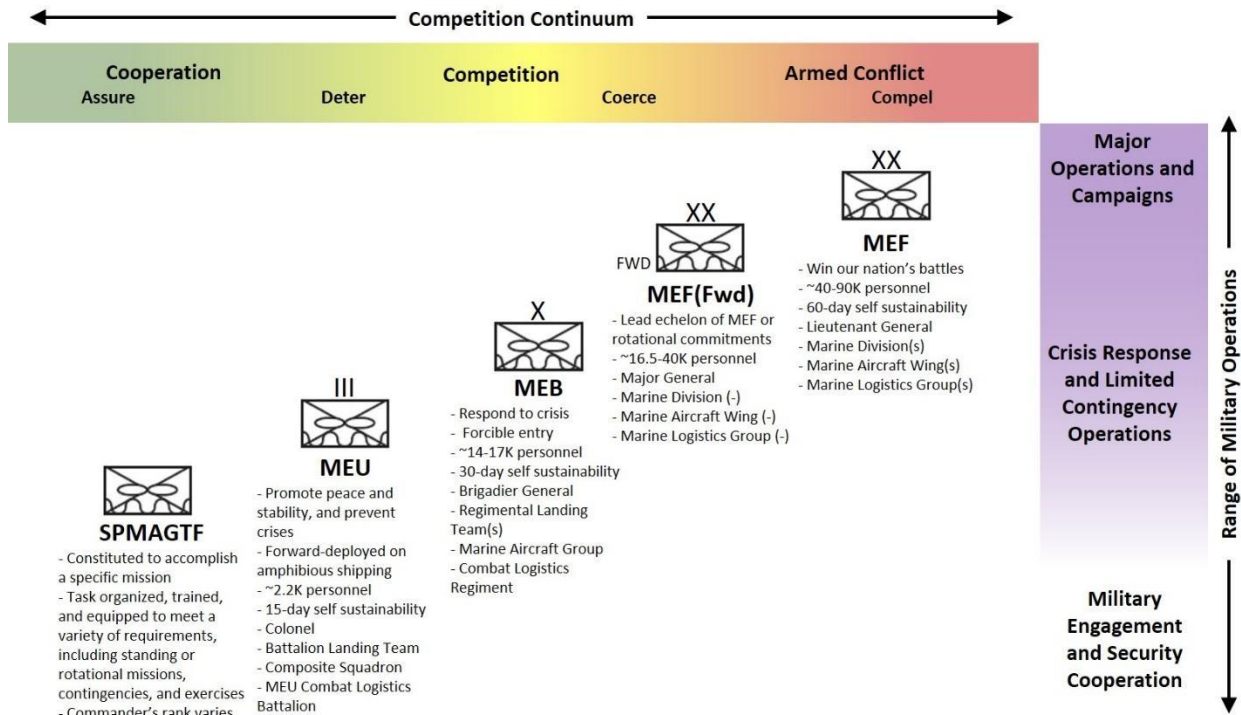


Figure 2: Continuum of MAGTFs.

2. Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)

The MEFs are the principal warfighting organizations of the U.S. Marine Corps. They are capable of conducting and sustaining expeditionary operations to include amphibious assault and sustained operations ashore in any geographic environment. Marine expeditionary forces may conduct sustained operations ashore upon completion of an amphibious operation or by deploying from the sea, land, or air and linking up with maritime prepositioning ships carrying equipment and supplies. You will recall from the previous lesson, that there are three standing MEFs. Each MEF is assigned a Marine Division (MARDIV), a Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), a Marine Logistics Group (MLG), and a MEF Information Group (MIG).

A deployed MEF, in addition to its normally assigned units, may command units from other MEFs, the Marine Corps Forces Reserve, other Services and nations, and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM). When augmented with forces from other MEFs, a deployed MEF can have multiple GCEs, such as I MEF during Operation DESERT STORM, which had both 1st and 2d MARDIVs as well as a U.S. Army armored brigade. Augmenting aviation units from other Marine sources normally operate within a single ACE. Additional Marine Corps, Navy, and Army logistic units may augment an LCE, as happened during Operation DESERT STORM. Allied or coalition units may attach to a MEF, as the United Kingdom's 3 Commando Brigade did during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Given the foregoing, MEFs have grown to more than 90,000 Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers.

A MEF typically deploys by echelon with 60 days of sustainment, which can be extended through external support from other Services or a host nation. The lead echelon of the MEF, tailored to meet the specific mission, is designated the MEF (Forward) and may be commanded

by the MEF commander personally or by a designated commander. The MEF (Forward) prepares for the subsequent arrival of the rest of the MEF or other joint or combined forces. The MEF and the commander's staff can form the nucleus for a joint task force, combined task force, or functional component headquarters. With appropriate augmentation, the MEF headquarters is capable of performing as a joint task force (JTF) headquarters.

When not deployed, the MEF headquarters performs regular staff functions; plans, trains, and prepares for scheduled deployment to various exercises; and maintains readiness for deployment in support of contingency response. In addition to their warfighting role, MEFs routinely task-organize subordinate units into smaller MAGTFs or other formations to support the geographic combatant commander's ongoing engagement and episodic crisis response and contingency requirements.

3. Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)

The MEB is the Marine Corps' "middle weight" MAGTF and is scalable based on the mission requirements of the GCC and the intensity of the operations. The MEB is a general officer led MAGTF built around a regimental landing team (RLT) as the GCE, a Marine aircraft group (MAG) as the ACE, and a combat logistics regiment (CLR) as the LCE. The MEB conducts planning and exercises command and control of forces conducting steady-state activities, responding to crises or contingencies, and forcible entry operations.

a. Mission and Regional Alignment

The mission of the MEB is to provide a rapidly deployable and combined joint task force (CJTF)-capable headquarters with task-organized air-ground forces that are composited from forward-deployed and/or rapidly deployable forces in order to fulfill GCC operational requirements.

The relevancy of the MEB is directly related to its ability to rapidly respond and meet the GCC's operational requirements with a special focus on crisis response. The MEB is organized and equipped to exercise command and control of joint and multi-national task forces, enable the MEF for larger combined joint task force (CJTF) operations, or integrate with the Navy to conduct amphibious operations. Whereas the MEU maintains a relatively consistent, fixed force structure, the scalability of the MEB allows it to be tailored to meet a wide variety of operational requirements, ranging from foreign humanitarian assistance (i.e., 3rd MEB's response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013) to kinetic forcible entry (i.e., Task Force 58's assault into Afghanistan in 2001). Because of the MEB's flexibility, no two MEBs will look alike. This concept of scalability (which will be discussed more later in this reading) can make the MEB's force structure seem somewhat nebulous. Fortunately, the Marine Corps has adopted the notion of a "baseline" MEB which defines the expected force structure to be utilized when the full capability of the MEB is required.

Only a few years ago, the Marine Corps did not retain standing MEB headquarters; rather a MEB headquarters staff was considered to be embedded within each of the three MEFs, to be "broken out" and employed as required. Currently, there are two standing MEB headquarters: 2d MEB at

Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; and 3d MEB at Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan. 1st MEB at Camp Pendleton, California remains integrated within the I MEF headquarters staff.

In addition to the establishment of standing MEB headquarters, in 2014 the Marine Corps aligned each of the MEBs with a particular operational region of the world (i.e., AOR). MEB headquarters maintain situational awareness within their designated AORs in close coordination with the respective regional Marine component (i.e., MARFOR), naval forces, special operation forces, and GCC staffs. MEB regional alignments are subject to change.

There are three regionally oriented MEBs: 1st MEB (embedded) aligned to I MEF (U.S. Indo-Pacific Command/U.S. Central Command), 2d MEB aligned to II MEF (U.S. European Command, U.S. Africa Command, and U.S. Central Command), and 3d MEB aligned to III MEF (U.S. Indo-Pacific Command).

b. Capabilities

When not deployed, a standing MEB headquarters consists of just the nucleus MAGTF headquarters staff, devoid of required augmentation for employment and without major subordinate commands (i.e., GCE, ACE, and LCE). MEBs are not subject to a consistent training and deployment schedule, and therefore, at any given moment in time, a MEB consists of only aligned units that are prepared to attach to the MEB headquarters in preparation for a short-notice deployment. A discussion of the deployment, integration, and employment of the MEB will be addressed later in this reading.

Due to its scalability, the MEB is capable of effectively operating across the ROMO. The standard MEB mission essential task list (METL) is listed below. Note that the crisis response and limited contingency operations such as NEO, humanitarian assistance, and stability operations would likely require something less than the capability of a full, baseline MEB. On the other hand, the tasks associated with maneuver and firepower reflect the requirement for the MEB to be able to conduct offensive/defensive operations and joint forcible entry (i.e., amphibious assault) at the high-end of the ROMO. The MEB METL includes:

- Conduct Prepositioning Operations
- Conduct Maneuver
- Employ Firepower
- Conduct Crisis Response
- Conduct Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO)
- Conduct Humanitarian Assistance
- Provide Security
- Conduct Joint and Combined Operations
- Conduct Stability Operations

Each MEB is aligned with a geographically proximate standing Navy Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) headquarters. For amphibious operations, the MEB commanding general serves in the role of the Commander Landing Force (CLF), while the ESG commander serves in the role of Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF). Their specific command relationship will be

defined by their common superior in the directives that initiate planning for an amphibious operation. Until that point, the two commands can be thought of as mutually supporting in training and preparation for possible deployment and employment. Lastly, in an amphibious operation, CATF and CLF are coequal for planning.

c. Force Structure, Organization and Equipment

The task organization of the “baseline” MEB consists of approximately ~15,200 Marines and sailors.

(1) Command Element (~1,150 personnel)

MEB headquarters are scalable based on the intensity of the operational requirement from an initial “suitcase staff” to a full MEB headquarters staff and enablers. They are capable of providing the headquarters for a CJTF or to be the initial headquarters of a full MEF deployment. An additional capability of MEB headquarters is that they can be sea-based with over-the-horizon communications and reach-back to the U.S., resulting in a smaller signature/footprint ashore that does not need to transition command ashore to execute missions.

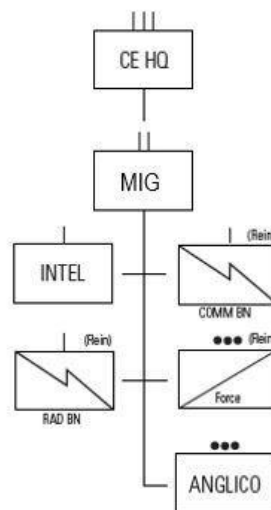


Figure 3: Baseline MEB Command Element.

(2) Ground Combat Element

The MEB’s ground element is the regimental landing team (RLT). An RLT usually includes an infantry regiment (with its three infantry battalions) reinforced with one reinforced artillery battalion and other combat support units (~5,800 total personnel). The artillery battalion notionally consists of three artillery batteries each with six M777 lightweight howitzers (i.e., 18 total), along with a HIMARs battery with six launchers. Two companies of ACVs provide the capability to mechanize two of the infantry battalions, with the third battalion gaining mobility via the assault support aircraft of the MEB’s ACE or MTVRs of the MEB’s LCE. Two LAR companies provide upwards of 50 LAV variants. Two combat engineer companies provide the RLT an armored breaching capability and a division reconnaissance company provides it an organic ground reconnaissance capability.

(3) Aviation Combat Element

The MEB's aviation element is a composite Marine aircraft group (MAG). A composite MAG is capable of conducting operations across all six functions of Marine aviation with up to seven rotary-wing/tiltrotor and five fixed-wing squadrons, with associated support capabilities (~5,500 total personnel). Unlike the ACE of the smaller MEU, the composite MAG is usually organized to operate forward and in close proximity to the objective area from expeditionary airfields, while also providing its own security. Accordingly, the composite MAG is capable of establishing a Tactical Air Command Center (TACC) ashore to exercise command and control of aviation when the situation warrants. In addition to the TACC, the composite MAG is also capable of fielding a Direct Air Support Center (DASC) to support the GCE employment of offensive air support (OAS).

A task-organized composite MAG supports the RLT in achieving higher operational tempo (OPTEMPO) by offering assault support at increased ranges with more reliance on organic fires and an increased role in combat service support. It should be noted that while an infantry regimental headquarters is manned, trained, and equipped to serve as the RLT headquarters, due to the functional organization of the MAW, the same cannot be said for a MAG headquarters to serve as a composite MAG headquarters. The MAG around which the MEB ACE is formed will require significant augmentation to support not only Marine Air Command and Control System (MACCS) functions, but also the employment and maintenance of air frames not organic to that particular MAG.

(4) Logistics Combat Element

The MEB's logistics element is a combat logistics regiment (CLR) that is task-organized from the organic battalions of an MLG and is able to provide its own security (~2,700 total personnel). The CLR is usually organized into two combat logistics battalions (CLB); one to provide direct support logistics to the RLT and the other in general support of the MEB. The organization and equipment of the CLR must be specifically tailored to the capabilities of the GCE in particular, as well as the nature of the particular contingency.

d. MEB Deployment, Integration, and Employment

With no fixed organization/force structure, and no consistent training and deployment cycle like the MEUs, the means by which a MEB can be constituted and employed are numerous. There is no fixed manner in which a MEB will deploy in response to a contingency; rather, each unique situation will be rapidly analyzed, and a decision reached, as to the best means to constitute the force for employment. The key to remember is that a baseline MEB (i.e., upwards of 15,000 personnel with associated equipment) will likely be constituted through a combination of means.

(1) The Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) MEB

A baseline MEB can be constituted through the utilization of MPF assets. In the event of a contingency, MPF shipping holding a large portion of required MEB equipment can sail to a secure port for offload. MEB personnel and other required non-MPF equipment can be deployed via strategic airlift from CONUS to an airfield in close proximity to the port facility. Over a period of weeks, deploying MEB units can integrate with their equipment and prepare for

subsequent operations. MPF operations tend to be time-consuming, so they are not always conducive to MEB operations. The MPF employment of a MEB requires significant strategic airlift, not only for personnel, but for the significant amount of non-MPF equipment that must be brought from CONUS. Finally, critical conditions must be met in terms of the adversary and environment for MPF operations to take place; particularly, the requirement for large, secure port and airfield facilities.

(2) The Amphibious MEB

Some consider the amphibious MEB the Marine Corps' *raison d'être* as it provides the GCC a robust forcible-entry capability from the sea. In 1990-91, the Marine Corps deployed two amphibious MEBs in support of Operation DESERT SHIELD: 4th MEB from the east coast and 5th MEB from the west coast. Combined, the two MEBs were embarked on over 30 amphibious ships. Currently, in its entirety, the United States Navy only has 32 operational amphibious ships, all of which are generally committed to the routine scheduled deployments of MEUs. To embark a baseline MEB, the Navy would have to simultaneously produce fifteen operational amphibious ships and associated landing craft (as depicted in the figure below). In other words, to support one amphibious MEB, the Navy must simultaneously produce the same amphibious shipping required to embark five MEUs.

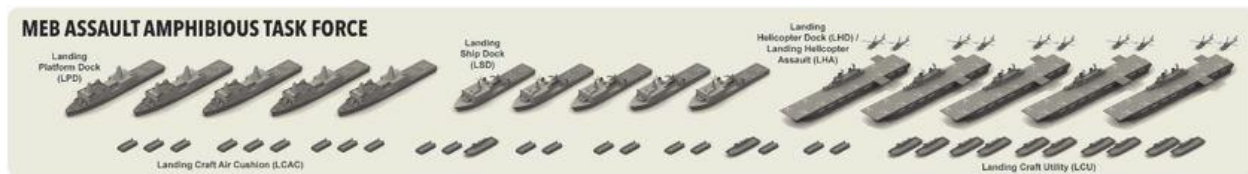


Figure 4: Shipping Requirements for a Baseline Amphibious MEB.

The idea of 15 ships simultaneously embarking a MEB in San Diego (as the Navy did in late-1990 with 5th MEB) seems generally unrealistic today; however, the concept of an amphibious MEB is not an impossibility. Through a combination of currently deployed MEUs (notionally three ARGs of three ships each) and available amphibious shipping (not in dry-dock) on both the east and west coast (notionally three ships per coast), fifteen amphibious ships could be generated to constitute a notional amphibious MEB in support of a critical contingency operation. The challenge of “compositing an amphibious MEB” from a combination of forward deployed and CONUS-based amphibious forces presents daunting challenges, the most important of which is the rapid integration of disparate forces into an effective combat formation. How does an RLT temporarily integrate the three BLTs of the three MEUs along with their associated artillery and engineer units, among others? How does the MAG temporarily integrate the squadrons of the three MEUs with the additional squadrons that will deploy from the U.S. or elsewhere? The term “temporarily” is used deliberately because MEUs remain national assets under combatant command of the GCC the MEU is allocated to; the GCC “lends” the MEU to the MEB. The alternative is to retain the MEU MAGTF structure within the MEB itself. This “MAGTF within a MAGTF approach” was employed in 2001 by then-Brigadier General James Mattis when he commanded Task Force 58’s amphibious assault into Afghanistan. With an allocated force centered on two well-integrated, forward deployed ARG/MEUs (i.e., the 15th and 26th MEUs), General Mattis decided to retain the MEU structure and exercise command of those

units, rather than to break them apart to reform in a traditional MAGTF structure. It is important to note that TF-58 did not constitute a baseline MEB; rather, it was on the lower-end of contemplated MEB force structure, i.e., 5-6,000 personnel.

(3) Compositing Forces to Form a MEB

The establishment of a full 15-ship amphibious MEB or an entirely MPF-based MEB seems to require a set of exceptional and relatively unlikely circumstances. The requirement to rapidly deploy a credible combat force in response to a crisis, within real-world lift constraints, will often drive the MEB to the formation and employment of composited forces. The figure below provides a visual depiction of such an approach. In this preferred approach, the MEB will composite forward-deployed MAGTFs (MEUs and SPMAGTFs) and augment them with U.S.-based forces as necessary. The specific combination of forces will depend on the mission, factors of time, distance, and available strategic mobility resources. While Marine Corps doctrine is based on forming a MEB with a MEB headquarters, RLT, composite aviation group, and CLR, alternative approaches to organization and command and control may be considered to composite a force based on the operational situation. Three methods of compositing are contemplated by the Marine Corps' MEB concept:

- The MEB headquarters forward deploys and composites the elements of the arriving forces (whether already forward deployed or from the U.S.) into a GCE, LCE, and ACE as they close with the AOR, in effect de-establishing the original units and creating a traditional MAGTF from the associated capabilities. This constitutes a doctrinal approach.
- The MEB headquarters deploys and forms the MEB with arriving units, leaving subordinate units intact with established command relationships. (An approach similar to TF-58 in 2001). This approach, although non-doctrinal, values existing organizational structure and organic unit capabilities over the need to standardize a MAGTF structure. Again, the particular operating environment and mission will help determine the viability of this approach.
- The MEB designates a MEU as the base MAGTF for forming the MEB and additional assets are established around that base unit as they arrive. The base MAGTF is designated as the MEB (Fwd), and its commander is the MEB (Fwd) commander. The MEB(Fwd) headquarters is subsumed by the MEB's commander and staff and the MEB(Fwd)'s commander becomes the MEB's deputy brigade commander. The remainder of the MEB force structure is organized as it arrives in the AOR.

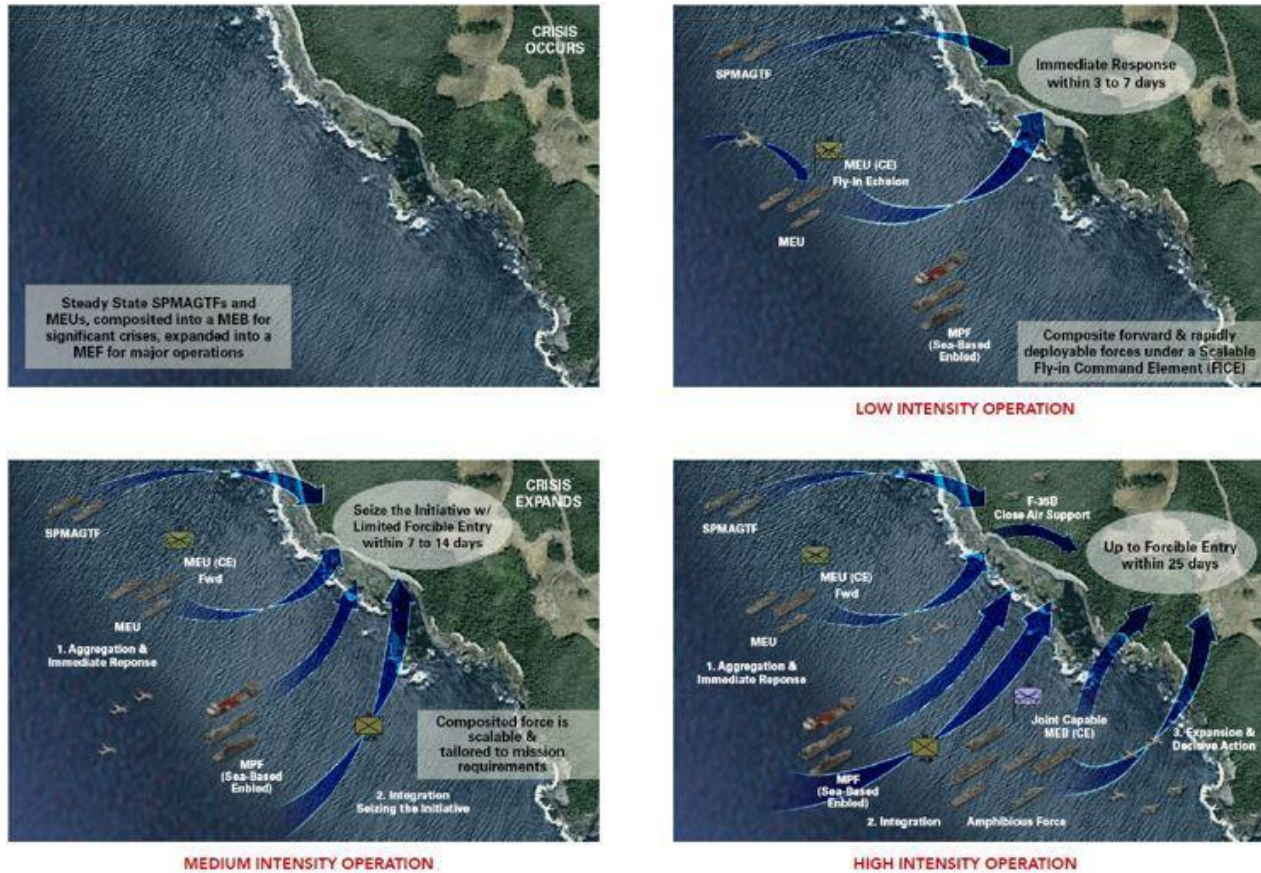


Figure 5: Compositing a MEB.

In summary, in order to provide the GCC with a rapidly deployable credible force, the Marine Corps recognizes that the MEB must be tailored based on the operating environment and assigned mission. In that tailoring, the MEB will be task organized based on forces available in both CONUS and forward deployed. Doctrinal MAGTF structure and approaches may be adapted to meet the imperative of rapid deployment and employment in crisis response.

4. Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)

The MEU is the standard forward-deployed Marine expeditionary organization. A MEU, embarked aboard a Navy amphibious ready group (ARG), form an ARG/MEU. The ARG/MEUs provide continuous, forward naval presence in key regions to conduct steady-state security cooperation, military engagement, and deterrence, as well as immediate response to episodic crises and contingencies. The ARG/MEUs may also be called upon to support major operations and campaigns in a variety of ways, such as enabling the introduction of other forces, acting as the lead echelon for expansion to a larger formation, or providing the geographic combatant commander an inherently mobile and flexible sea-based reserve.

There are seven standing MEU headquarters. Six of them are in a rotation cycle that provides continuous forward presence with two ARG/MEUs in key regions. The seventh is permanently forward-deployed in Pacific region. The seven MEU command elements are:

- 11th, 13th, and 15th MEU headquarters, which rotationally deploy with subordinate elements provided from I MEF.
- 22d, 24th, and 26th MEU headquarters, which rotationally deploy with subordinate elements provided from II MEF.
- 31st MEU headquarters, which is part of the forward-deployed naval force in the Pacific. It periodically cruises with subordinate elements provided from III MEF. These elements include units that are permanently assigned, and others temporarily provided to III MEF from the other MEFs through the unit deployment program.

a. Force Structure, Organization, and Equipment

The ARG/MEU is an amphibious force that integrates a generally standardized set of Navy and Marine Corps capabilities. The Navy contribution centers on an amphibious squadron (PHIBRON) that when trained and certified becomes an amphibious ready group (ARG). The ARG typically comprises three amphibious ships and is led by a Navy captain who carries the traditional title “Commodore.” The Marine Corps contribution centers on a MAGTF of ~2,200 personnel composed of a MEU headquarters staff (CE), a battalion landing team (GCE), a composite squadron built around a reinforced Marine medium tiltrotor squadron (ACE), and a MEU CLB (LCE). The MEU is commanded by a colonel who traditionally has either an infantry or aviation background. The force structure, organization, and equipment of both the ARG and the MEU will be presented in detail in the succeeding pages.

As an amphibious force, the ARG/MEU adheres to current amphibious doctrine in that the ARG commander fulfills the role of Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) and the MEU commander fulfills the role of Commander Landing Force (CLF). The two commanders maintain a typical amphibious command relationship; specifically, supported/supporting based on the nature of the assigned mission. The determination in a given situation whether the ARG is in support of the MEU, the MEU is in support of the ARG, or whether they are mutually supporting is left to the discretion and agreement of the two commanders. Regardless, by doctrine, CATF and CLF are coequal for planning amphibious operations, and any disagreements between the two can be forwarded to their common superior for adjudication (typically the commander of the naval component of a GCC).

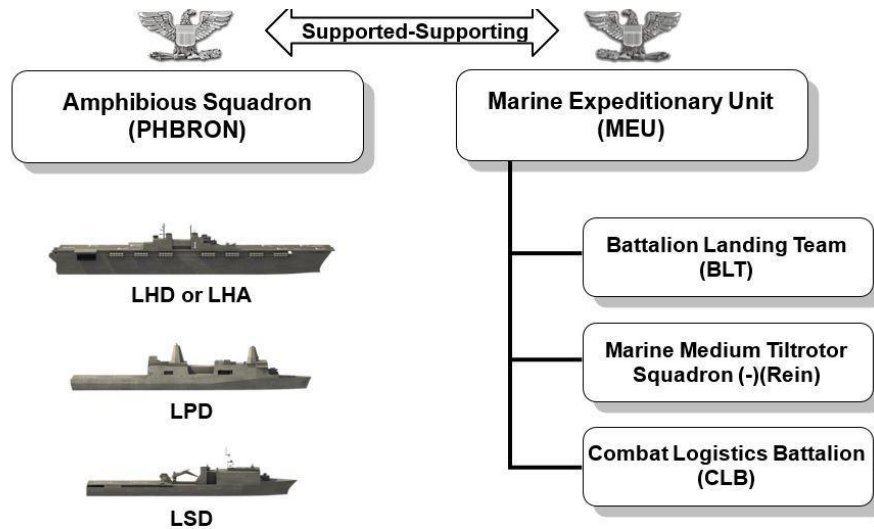


Figure 6: Notional ARG/MEU Organization.

(1) MEU Task Organization

(a) Command Element. The MEU command element is constructed around a standing MEU headquarters staff. The CE is scalable and task-organized to provide the command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, and joint interoperability necessary for the effective planning and execution of operations (~250 personnel). In preparation for pre-deployment training, the core MEU headquarters attaches units/detachments that largely provide additional intelligence, communications, and administrative support. Typical attachments to the MEU headquarters include:

- Imagery interpretation detachment
- Human exploitation team detachment
- Ground sensor detachment
- Topographic detachment
- Radio battalion detachment
- Communication detachment
- Law enforcement detachment
- Cyber/electronic warfare coordination cell (CEWCC)
- Force reconnaissance platoon
- Air naval gunfire detachment (ANGLICO)

Of particular note, is the attachment of the force reconnaissance platoon. Using it as a nucleus, the MEU headquarters task organizes select capability sets from its major subordinate commands (primarily, the BLT) to form what is known as the Maritime Raid Force (MRF). The MRF provides the capability for the MEU to conduct specialized missions such as reconnaissance and surveillance (R&S) and maritime interception operations (MIO)/visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS). (Of note, the employment of reconnaissance platoons with MEUs has continued to evolve in the recent past. Current initiatives have both the force reconnaissance platoon and the

BLT reconnaissance platoon organized under the MEU CE with a small reconnaissance company headquarters element.)

Other capabilities of the CE include:

- Rapid and deliberate planning.
- Command and control.
- Enable joint task force (JTF) and maritime prepositioning force operations.
- Human intelligence collection.
- Signals intelligence collection.
- Geospatial intelligence/analysis.
- Imagery intelligence collection.
- Ground sensor employment.
- Integrate and synchronize MEU, naval, joint, and combined fires.
- Military information support operations.
- Civil affairs operations.
- Law enforcement.

Finally, in order to better effect integration with special operations forces while forward deployed, in recent years MEU CE's have integrated a Special Operations Forces Liaison Element (SOFLE). Notionally, the SOFLE consists of five special operators from multiple services, led by a Marine lieutenant colonel (or other service O-5) and joins the MEU prior to deployment. The SOFLE enables the MEU to track, and support as appropriate, special operations missions planned or underway in the respective GCC area of responsibility (AOR). The utilization of SOFLE's by MEUs is expected to evolve in the coming years as the Marine Corps seeks greater integration and interoperability with special operations forces (SOF).

(b) Battalion Landing Team. The MEU GCE is a battalion landing team (BLT) which is formed using an infantry battalion as the foundation. The infantry battalion staff serves as the BLT staff with augmentation and functional expertise from attachments, as appropriate. The BLT forms ("composites") approximately six months prior to a scheduled deployment by accepting a series of attachments (as listed below). Although the organizational construct of the BLT is fairly standard, historically, MEU/BLT commanders have been afforded discretion in tailoring the force to best meet anticipated mission requirements while remaining within embarkation constraints. Trade-off decisions regarding GCE force structure typically have centered on the number/mix of indirect fire assets associated with the artillery battery and the number/mix of light armored vehicles (LAVs) in relation to other rolling stock. Standard attachments to form the BLT are:

- Artillery battery (6 x M777 lightweight howitzers)
- Amphibious combat vehicle (ACV) platoon (18-21 ACVs)
- Light armored reconnaissance platoon or company (6-25 LAV variants)
- Engineer platoon
- Reconnaissance platoon (may be organized directly under the MEU Headquarters instead of the BLT)

Once formed during training, the BLT internally task organizes to best align its capabilities to meet potential MEU missions. By creating such standing task organizations and aligning mission sets to subordinate units, the BLT facilitates the high degree of training and integration required to effectively execute MEU tasks in a compressed timeline. Typical BLT task organization decisions include:

- The alignment of the ACV platoon with one of the battalion's three rifle companies to form a "mechanized company" that can be augmented with the BLT's LAVs and engineer assets.
- The alignment of one of the battalion's three rifle companies with the assault support capabilities of the MEU ACE to form an "air assault company" to support a variety of mission essential tasks, to include amphibious assault, amphibious raids, and airfield seizure.
- The equipping and training of one of the battalion's three rifle companies to serve as a small boat raid company, providing the MEU with the capability to clandestinely insert a substantial combat force from over-the-horizon. (Note: Currently, only the 31st MEU in Okinawa retains the small boat raid mission essential task. U.S.-based MEUs have trended away from this capability over the last decade, although its return is under active consideration.)
- The alignment of one of the battalion's three rifle companies with wheeled mobility (e.g., HMMWVs and MTRVs) to serve as a "motorized company" capable of rapid ground movement in certain operational environments.

Finally, it must be remembered that the infantry battalion of the BLT retains an 81mm mortar platoon, as well as a combined anti-armor team (CAAT) capability using a combination of HMMWV and/or internally transportable vehicle-supported heavy machine guns, Javelins, and TOWs.

(c) Aviation Combat Element. The MEU ACE is a composite squadron which is formed by reinforcing a Marine medium tiltrotor squadron (VMM) as its nucleus (~550 personnel). The VMM staff serves as the composite squadron staff with augmentation and functional expertise from attachments, as appropriate. The squadron forms ("composites") approximately six months prior to a scheduled deployment by accepting a series of attachments to join the (10-12) MV-22 Ospreys organic to the VMM. The number and type of airframes deploying with a MEU is fairly standard with some modification for units deploying with the *USS America* (LHA-6), which is specially configured for aviation operations (i.e., increased aviation spaces through the elimination of the welldeck). The composite squadron traditionally deploys with the following mix of airframes and detachments:

- Medium tiltrotor (VMM) squadron (10-12 x MV-22s)
- Heavy helicopter squadron (HMH) detachment (4 x CH-53E/K)
- Light attack helicopter squadron (HMLA) detachment (4 x AH-1Z and 3 x UH-1Y)
- Marine attack squadron (VMA or VMFA) detachment (6 x AV-8B or F-35B)
- Aerial refueler transport squadron (VMGR) detachment (2 x KC-130s)
- Marine Air Control Group (MACG) detachment
- Marine Wing Support Squadron (MWSS) detachment

- Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) detachments

As of 2018, F-35Bs have started to replace AV-8Bs in MEU deployments. With the additional capabilities of the F-35B, the composite squadron is now able to provide all six functions of Marine aviation (i.e., offensive air support, anti-air warfare, assault support, control of aircraft and missiles, aerial reconnaissance, and electronic warfare).

The composite squadron has the capability of providing offensive air support (OAS), utilizing both fixed wing (i.e., AV-8B or F-35B) and rotary wing (i.e., AH-1Z and UH-1Y) aircraft. It is important to note that the relatively small number of composite squadron OAS-capable airframes (i.e., 13) places distinct limits on the extent and duration of strikes and close air support that can be provided. The same holds true for anti-air warfare, as only six F-35Bs are available to support that particular function. As a 5th generation fighter, the F-35B also provides the MEU the capability to conduct electronic warfare.

As can be seen in the list of aircraft, the MEU retains a substantial assault support capability. Notionally, the composite squadron is capable of providing simultaneous lift to two infantry rifle companies at near table of organization strength (i.e., ~175 personnel). The notional lift capacity of the MEU ACE in terms of personnel (PAX) can be found in the figure below. (Note: PAX per aircraft numbers are subject to change based on particular MEU SOP.)

Notional MEU ACE Lift Capacity		
Type of Aircraft	PAX per Aircraft	Total Lift Available
(12) MV-22	18	216 PAX
(4) CH-53	30	120 PAX
(3) UH-1	6	18 PAX
Total MEU Lift		354 PAX

Figure 7: Notional MEU ACE Lift Capacity.

The MEU ACE includes two KC-130J aircraft capable of providing aerial refueling and meeting other assault support requirements. These two aircraft remain land-based in support of the MEU, deploying and positioning in conjunction with MEU requirements and tasking.

The majority of the composite squadron is embarked aboard the LHD (or LHA). A detachment is also frequently embarked aboard the LPD to better support simultaneous aircraft employment and facilitate disaggregated operations. Historically, the LPD detachment has consisted of the light attack helicopters (i.e., 4 x AH-1Z and 3 x UH-1Y) or four MV-22s from the medium tiltrotor squadron. It is important to note that the third ship in the ARG, the LSD, is not capable of supporting embarked aviation platforms (although it possesses a flight deck).

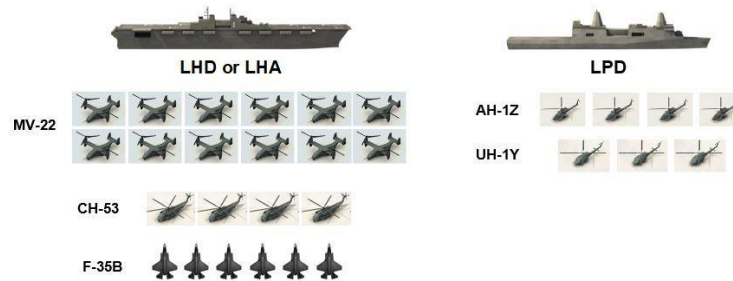


Figure 8: Notional MEU Aircraft Laydown.

Finally, in addition to operating from amphibious shipping, the composite squadron must be capable of operating from shore-based sites, to include expeditionary airfields and forward operating bases, consistent with the MEU's mission essential tasks.

(d) Logistics Combat Element. The MEU LCE is formed around a standing MEU CLB headquarters specifically associated with the particular MEU (e.g., CLB-11, CLB-22, etc.) (~300 personnel). Like the other elements of the MEU, the CLB forms in preparation for training at least six months prior to the scheduled deployment. The CLB is task organized to provide the six functions of logistics (i.e., supply, transportation, maintenance, engineering, health services, and services). The general organization of the CLB includes:

- Headquarters and service platoon
- Transportation support platoon (includes landing support and motor transport)
- Supply detachment
- Maintenance platoon
- Engineer platoon
- Health services platoon
- Communications platoon
- EOD detachment

Typical MEU LCE equipment includes:

- 15 MTRV
- 18 HMMWVs
- 2 M36 wreckers
- 2 D-7 bulldozers
- 3 forklifts/front-loaders
- 4 bulk fuel vehicles
- 2 water vehicles
- 1 recovery ACV (Future platform in support of MEU GCE ACV platoon)
- 1 noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) tracking system

The general capabilities of the MEU CLB by logistic function follow:

- Supply
 - Storage and distribution of up to 15 days of sustainment, to include bulk liquids
 - Limited salvage and disposal
- Maintenance

- o Intermediate level maintenance and repair of ground equipment
- o Recovery of ground equipment utilizing ACV recovery variant and two MK36 wreckers
- Transportation
 - o Movement of personal, equipment and supplies (to include bulk liquids) employing MTRVs and LVSRs
 - o Material handling employing various forklifts
 - o Support to amphibious operations via landing force support party (LFSP)
 - o Support to prepositioning operations, to include port and terminal operations
- Engineering
 - o Earth moving
 - o Limited horizontal and vertical construction
 - o Water production (i.e., purification) and storage
 - o Provision of electricity in an expeditionary environment, to include lighting and refrigeration
- Health Services
 - o Sustained health services support for at least 15 days
 - o Casualty treatment via a fleet resuscitative surgical system (FRSS)/shock trauma platoon (STP), to include the handling of mass casualties
 - o Preventive medicine
 - o Field dental treatment

The MEU CLB also retains operational and support capabilities in three other specific areas:

- Evacuation Control Center (ECC): The MEU LCE maintains the capability to establish multiple ECCs in support of a NEO.
- Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA): The MEU LCE maintains the capability to conduct FHA, to include the integration with government/non-government agencies and the distribution of relief supplies.
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD): The MEU LCE provides general EOD support to the MAGTF.

(2) Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) Task Organization

The ARG not only includes the amphibious ships that support the embarkation and deployment of the MEU, but other capability sets as well.

(a) Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON). Similar to the standing MEUs, the Navy maintains amphibious squadrons or PHIBRONs to serve as the centerpiece of the ARG. Like the MEU, the PHIBRON possesses a functionally based headquarters staff (e.g., personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, etc.). An ARG traditionally consists of three ships: an amphibious assault ship (LHD or LHA), an amphibious transport dock ship (LPD), and an amphibious dock landing ship (LSD). It is important to note that although the commanding officers of each ship report to the PHIBRON commander (Commodore), they retain significant inherent authority as ship's captains by naval regulations. The commanding officers of the LHD/LHA and LPD are typically Navy captains (i.e., O-6s), the same rank as the PHIBRON commander.

(b) Assault Craft Unit (ACU) Detachments. Landing craft are provided in support of MEU deployments by the assault craft units of the Navy Beach Group. Typically, the amphibious ships of the ARG embark two LCUs and five LCACs in support of a MEU deployment. These seven landing craft are positioned within the welldecks of the amphibious ships to provide ship-to-shore movement capability for the MEU. Given the constraints on embarkation space available for the MEU, the LCUs and LCACs are normally “pre-boated” prior to deployment, meaning they are loaded with the MEU vehicles and equipment that are expected to be first utilized in contingency or crisis response. Due to the very limited space available on fully embarked amphibious ships, changing pre-boat configurations once underway is a challenging undertaking.

(c) Beachmaster Unit (BMU) Detachment. A detachment of personnel and equipment from the beachmaster unit of the Naval Beach Group is attached to the ARG to form the beach party team that provides support to landing craft in the execution of ship-to-shore movement during an amphibious operation. Normally the ARG beach party team is pre-boated in an LCU or LCAC due to its likely employment early in an amphibious operation.

(d) Tactical Air Control Squadron (TACRON). The ARG is augmented by a TACRON to provide aviation/airspace control capabilities in support of MEU ACE operations. The TACRON mans designated spaces/equipment on the LHD (or LHA) of the ARG.

(e) Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Detachment. The ARG is augmented by a helicopter sea combat squadron detachment of two MH-60S Seahawks. The detachment is capable of providing airborne search and rescue, vertical replenishment, air/sea defense and limited assault support.

(f) Fleet Surgical Team. The ARG is augmented by a fleet surgical team to provide enhanced medical and surgical care to deployed forces and in support of mission requirements. The surgical team supplements the medical department aboard the LHD (or LHA).

(3) ARG/MEU Mission and Mission Essential Tasks

(a) MEU Mission. Provide a forward-deployed, flexible sea-based MAGTF capable of conducting amphibious operations, crisis response, and limited contingency operations, to include enabling the introduction of follow-on forces and designated special operations, in order to support the theater requirements of the GCC.

(b) Mission Essential Task List (METL). The ARG/MEU has the following METs:

- Amphibious assault: The establishment of a force on a hostile or potentially hostile shore.
- Amphibious raid: Short-duration, small scale deliberate attacks, from the sea, involving a swift penetration of hostile or denied battlespace. Amphibious raids end with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission.
- Maritime interception operations (MIO): Operations contained in this task include Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS), seizure of a static maritime platform (such as a gas/oil platform) and selected maritime security missions.

- Enabling operations: Those preparatory actions taken by on-scene or initial deploying forces to facilitate the introduction and effective employment of follow-on forces.
- Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO): Operations requested by the Department of State whereby noncombatants are evacuated from foreign countries when their lives are endangered by war, civil unrest, or natural disaster.
- Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA): Assistance to relieve or reduce the results of natural or man-made disasters or other endemic conditions such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or that can result in great damage to or loss of property.
- Integrate and Operate with Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) Organizations: Integration and coordination of units, capabilities, and efforts with combined forces and forces from other nations, intergovernmental and interagency organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and United Nations forces and capabilities required to generate decisive joint combat power. This task includes prepositioning operations.
- Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP): The rescue or extraction, by surface or air, of downed aircraft and/or personnel and equipment.
- Embassy Reinforcement: Operations to reinforce internal security services of U.S. embassies, legations, and consulates to protect U.S. personnel and prevent the compromise of classified material.
- Aviation operations from expeditionary shore-based sites: Marine aviation units maintain the capability to operate from amphibious shipping, forward operating bases (FOBs), expeditionary airfields (EAFs), forward arming and refueling points (FARPs), austere forward operating sites, tactical landing zones, etc., that are in line with platform and unit capabilities.
- Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) activities: TSC activities are non-combat activities conducted with other nations to create favorable geographical balances of power, advance mutual defense or security arrangements, and build allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations.
- Airfield/port seizure: The securing of an airfield, port, or other key facilities in order to support MAGTF missions, receive follow-on forces or enable the introduction of follow-on forces.
- Expeditionary Strike: The utilization of rapid intelligence, precision targeting, and weaponeering to attack assigned priority targets with lethal/non-lethal fires in support of theater-level objectives.
- Additional capabilities associated with 31st MEU:
- Maintain forces capable of conducting selected maritime contingency missions: The 31st MEU is the only permanently forward deployed MEU and has characteristics that are unique in mission and structure when compared to CONUS-based MEUs. Regional requirements in support of U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) mandate that 31st MEU maintain forces capable of conducting selected maritime contingency missions.
- Small boat raids: The utilization of combat rubber raiding craft (CRRC) to conduct the amphibious raid MET.

(4) ARG/MEU Capabilities and Limitations

(a) ARG/MEU Capabilities. The capabilities of the ARG/MEU include:

- The agility to maneuver and employ as an aggregate or disaggregated force
- Sea-based, strategic reach with inherent force protection
- Scalable levels of presence and visibility
- A wide range of response options
- Rapid response when tasked (i.e., plan and execute within six hours of notification)
- Operate across the range of military operations (ROMO)
- Enable follow-on joint, interagency, and coalition forces
- Provide combined arms integration of credible combat power
- Operate from over-the-horizon (i.e., outside of adversary visual detection)
- Integrate with SOF

In providing these capabilities, the ARG/MEU synchronizes and integrates across the warfighting functions. Of particular note are the intelligence and fires functions:

- Intelligence: The ARG and MEU form a cohesive intelligence team, operating from the LHD (or LHA) joint intelligence center (JIC). The team draws on strategic, operational, and tactical intelligence resources and, in certain circumstances, conducts intelligence operations for the operational and strategic levels. The effective execution of intelligence functions is critical to enable the rapid planning a MEU requires to execute a mission within six hours of notification.
- Fires: Each ARG/MEU conducts extensive supporting arms training, integration with naval surface fire support ships, and when available, carrier strike group (CSG) aviation and joint assets. MEUs deploy with the ability to plan, coordinate, and control lethal and non-lethal fires in the joint/combined environment both afloat and ashore.
- ARG/MEU limitations
- The limitations of the ARG/MEU include (among others):
- Limited ground combat arms force structure that constrains employment in higher threat situations (“only” a battalion reinforced).
- Limited organic fires capability that requires augmentation from external forces (i.e., carrier-based aviation, joint fires, etc.) in higher threat environments.
- Very limited capability to establish air/maritime superiority in support of an amphibious operations (requires augmentation from external naval/joint forces).
- Incapable of forcible entry (i.e., seizing and holding a lodgment in the face of armed opposition). A MEB is the smallest MAGTF capable of forcible entry.
- Disaggregated employment that will likely result in the limitation of individual ships/embarked forces to fulfill certain METs.
- Limited sustainment: 15 days of self-sustainment before augmentation required from theater-level capabilities.
- Command and control capabilities and joint integration constrained by limitations in shipboard C4I systems and bandwidth.

b. MEU Composite, Training, and Certification

(1) Compositing a MEU

MEUs execute a standing deployment rotation schedule that is subject to operational constraints but tends to be fairly predictable. As referenced earlier in the reading, the task organized forces that compose a deployable MEU are not all organic to the associated MEU headquarters, infantry battalion, VMM, and MEU CLB. Under the compositing process, each element of the MEU accepts and integrates required attachments at a notional six-month point prior to deployment. During the same timeframe and at a pre-selected point, command relationships between the BLT, composite squadron, and MEU CLB shift from their prior parent command to the particular MEU commander in preparation for an intensive pre-deployment training program (PTP). This event is frequently referred to as “chopping to the MEU” (where “CHOP” is an acronym for “change in operational control” - technically, MEUs do not CHOP until they deploy and enter another GCCs AOR).

(2) MEU Pre-deployment Training Program

The MEU commander is responsible for the training of the MEU headquarters and all subordinate elements in their assigned METs. This requirement is accomplished by means of a dedicated and intensive PTP which is focused, standardized, and follows a progressive building block approach to training. The PTP is designed to integrate the ARG/MEU, as well as other designated U.S. Navy forces (e.g., NSFS ships, CSGs when available, designated special operations forces, etc.) to optimize their inherent capabilities. The PTP includes embarked at-sea periods that are focused on ARG/MEU integration.

(3) MEU Certification

Prior to deployment, each ARG/MEU undergoes a certification exercise (CERTTEX) facilitated by the respective Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG) and evaluated by the particular MEF. The CERTTEX confirms the MEU is capable of executing the full range of the prescribed METs, to include simultaneous mission planning and execution. The appropriate Marine Forces Command must certify each MEU to Headquarters Marine Corps prior to deployment.

c. ARG/MEU Employment

Generally, forward-deployed MEUs provide the GCCs with credible deterrence and decision space across the ROMO. In day-to-day operations, the ARG/MEU provides the GCC:

- Forward presence to support engagement and theater security cooperation.
- A ready force to immediately respond to emergent crises.
- A credible and sustainable force projection capability, operating from the sea, over the horizon, at night, or during periods of reduced visibility.

The seven standing MEUs deploy on a rotational basis in accordance with Department of Defense (DoD) tasking. Such deployments are planned and coordinated to fulfill DoD prioritized GCC requirements. As current GCC requirements exceed ARG/MEU availability, there has been an increasing need for the employment of ARG/MEUs over wide geographic areas, oftentimes spanning the AORs of two or more GCCs. This necessity has led to tension between the employment of an ARG/MEU as an aggregate force (i.e., all three ships together) and the distribution of ARG/MEU forces by individual ship.

In the recent past, the Marine Corps has affirmed its belief that the ARG/MEU is best employed as it has been designed (i.e., as a single, cohesive entity). As such, it not only can conduct the full range of missions but can execute many of them simultaneously and/or in rapid succession in response to GCC tasking. Regardless, the Marine Corps acknowledges that operational necessity may demand that an ARG/MEU be divided into smaller, more geographically dispersed, or even completely separated/detached, formations. Such a decision is not without risk: specifically, the inability of the individual elements to perform the full range of assigned missions; the erosion of proficiency and interoperability of the aggregate ARG/MEU over time; and the challenge of fulfilling the maintenance requirements of dispersed equipment.

"Marines aboard L-Class ships as part of an ARG will remain the benchmark for our forward operating crisis response forces. We must increase the lethality of the ARG and must accept new employment models that will increase the relevance of ARG to the Fleet Commanders. There is no one-size fits-all solution to the operational challenges confronting the Fleets; thus, we should be willing to accept more than one tailored solution to ARG organization and employment. We must preserve those elements of our current organization that remain relevant and jettison those that do not. What served us well yesterday may not today and may not in the future. We must continually seek improvements with an eye toward the future – specifically changes in technology – and consider what adaptations we need to make."

Commandant's Planning Guidance
38th Commandant of the Marine Corps

Doctrinally, GCCs can employ ARG/MEUs in four general ways:

(1) Aggregated or Split-ARG

The ARG/MEU is employed under the operational or tactical control of a single GCC. This employment method is frequently thought of as the three ships of the ARG/MEU operating in close proximity to one another (i.e., fully aggregated); however, the critical issue is that command and control of the entire ARG/MEU is under a single GCC, regardless of dispersion. The term “split-ARG” operations is used to refer to aggregated situations where the individual ships of an ARG/MEU are separated beyond mutually supporting distance. In aggregated operations (either fully aggregated or split-ARG), the MEU commander exercises command and control over all MEU forces (and likewise, the Commodore over the ARG).

(2) Disaggregated

The ships/forces of an ARG/MEU operate simultaneously under two or more GCCs with separate, distinct chains of command. This employment method requires a chain of command from the particular ARG/MEU force (i.e., individual ship with embarked MEU elements) to the respective GCC in whose AOR it is operating. In disaggregated operations, the MEU commander exercises command and control over only a portion of their force (i.e., that which is in the same GCC AOR as he/she). Disaggregation comes with a corresponding degradation of ARG/MEU operational readiness, training, and maintenance. It is the least preferred employment construct.

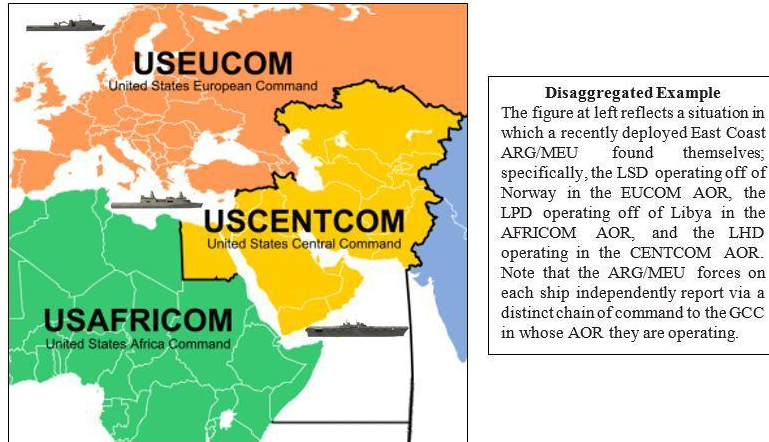


Figure 9: Example of ARG/MEU Disaggregated Operations.

(3) Distributed

The ships/forces of an ARG/MEU are partitioned to meet emergent requirements of two or more GCCs. The GCC who was originally allocated the ARG/MEU retains operational control of all ships/forces, while delegating tactical control of some portion of the ARG/MEU to another GCC. The MEU commander and Commodore exercise command and control of the entire ARG/MEU despite the two distinct chains of command. The GCC that has operational control can request re-aggregation at any time. The MEU and ARG commanders cannot change the allocation of forces between the GCCs without prior approval. Distributed operations are normally conducted when ARG/MEU forces are in relatively close proximity but operating within two different GCCs. It is the preferred method of employment when simultaneously supporting multiple GCCs.



Figure 10: Example of ARG/MEU Distributed Operations.

5. Special-Purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF)

When situations arise for which a MEU or other unit is either inappropriate or unavailable, a SPMAGTF is formed. A SPMAGTF may be of any size (but normally no larger than a MEU)

with tailored capabilities required to accomplish a particular mission. It may be task-organized from non-deployed Marine Corps forces or formed on a contingency basis from a portion of a deployed MAGTF. Regimental-level headquarters (to include “off-cycle” MEU headquarters) often assume the role as a SPMAGTF command element and may conduct training in anticipated mission skills prior to establishment. The SPMAGTF includes all four of the basic elements of a MAGTF. It is generally employed in the same manner as a MEU; however, under certain circumstances it may be deployed via commercial shipping or aircraft, inter-theater airlift, or organic Marine aviation.

Frequently, SPMAGTFs have conducted sea-based security cooperation activities, such as UNITAS (at-sea exercises and in-port training involving several countries in North, South and Central America, conducted by the U.S. since 1959), Southern Partnership Station, and Africa Partnership Station. Others have been formed to provide sea-based foreign humanitarian assistance or military support to civil authorities or participate in freedom of navigation operations.

An important type of SPMAGTF is an alert contingency MAGTF. Each of the MEFs usually maintain an alert contingency MAGTF as an on-call, rapid crisis response force. A MEF commander may prescribe that an alert contingency MAGTF be ready to initiate deployment to any location worldwide within a certain number of days or hours, depending on the indications and warnings associated with an emerging crisis. Because it may need to deploy so rapidly, readiness is paramount. Equipment and supplies intended for use as part of an alert contingency MAGTF are identified and, where appropriate, staged for immediate embarkation. The alert contingency MAGTF usually airlifts to a secure airfield and carries its initial sustainment. Deployment by air necessitates that the size and weight of an alert contingency MAGTF be kept to an absolute minimum. An alert contingency MAGTF may employ independently or in conjunction with amphibious, maritime prepositioning, or other expeditionary forces. The rapid deployment of the II MEF alert contingency MAGTF following the 23 October 1983 terrorist bombing of the Marine Corps barracks in Lebanon is an example of expeditionary agility by a SPMAGTF.

A SPMAGTF is named for the mission it is assigned, the location in which it will operate, or the name of the exercise in which it will participate (e.g., SPMAGTF Somalia, SPMAGTF UNITAS, SPMAGTF Andrew, etc.). Most recently, the Marine Corps maintained three SPMAGTFs that conducted “enduring” rotational deployments:

- SPMAGTF - Crisis Response – U.S. Africa Command (SPMAGTF-CR-AF).
- SPMAGTF - Crisis Response - U.S. Central Command (SPMAGTF-CR-CC).
- SPMAGTF - U.S. Southern Command (SPMAGTF-SC).

6. 2030 Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)

The *Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations* (EABO) proposes a conceptual organization of the future MEU. The 2030 MEU will provide the fleet a forward-deployed, all-domain MAGTF operating both from the sea and expeditionary advanced bases. It will be capable of enabling sea denial and conducting amphibious operations,

crisis-response operations, and designated special operations to support the requirements of multiple combatant commanders. It must be designed to:

- Conduct Maritime Interception Operations (MIO)
- Conduct sensitive site exploitation
- Plan and direct intelligence operations
- Integrate fire support with the scheme of maneuver
- Conduct battlespace-shaping operations
- Conduct Operations in the Information Environment (OIE)
- Plan and direct logistic operations
- Conduct embarkation support
- Integrate and operate with joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) organizations
- Exercise command and control of all-domain forces
- Plan and direct maritime operations

The only fixed element of the 2030 MEU will be the command element.

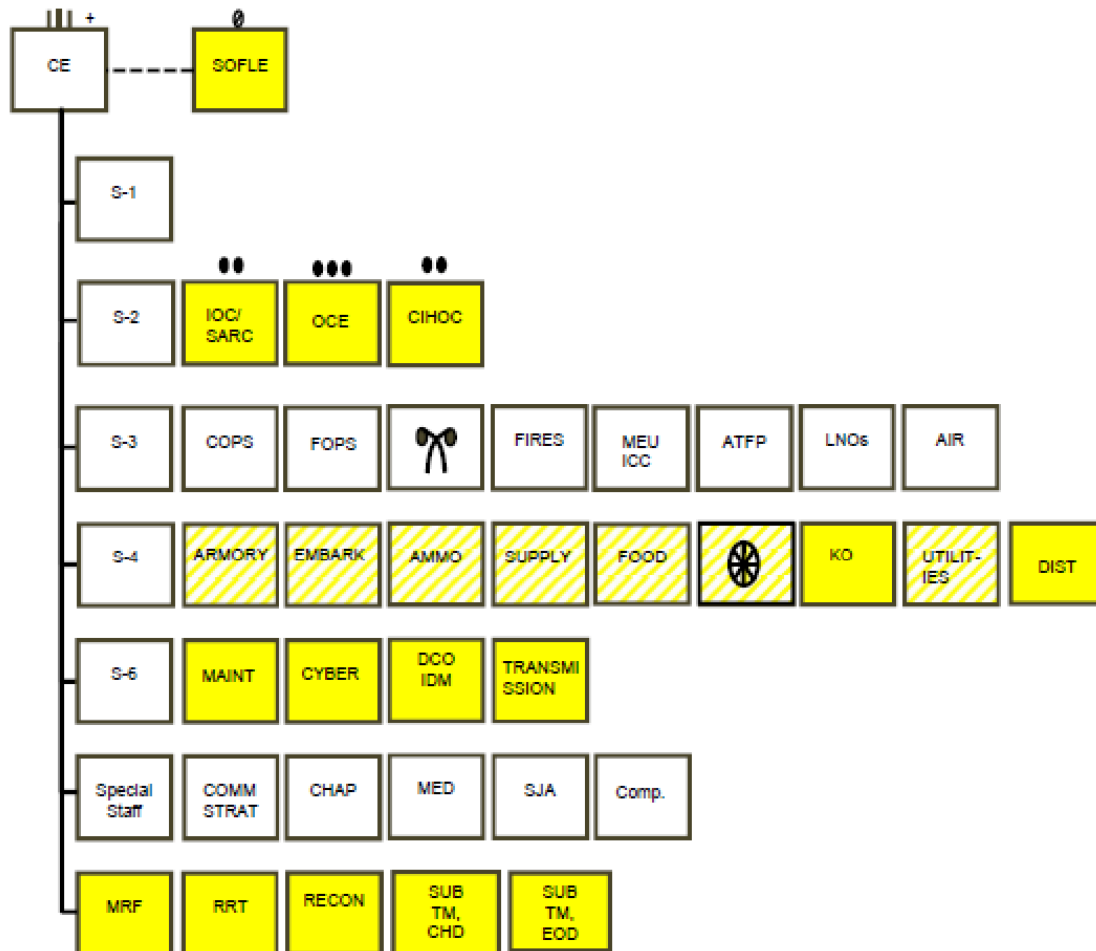


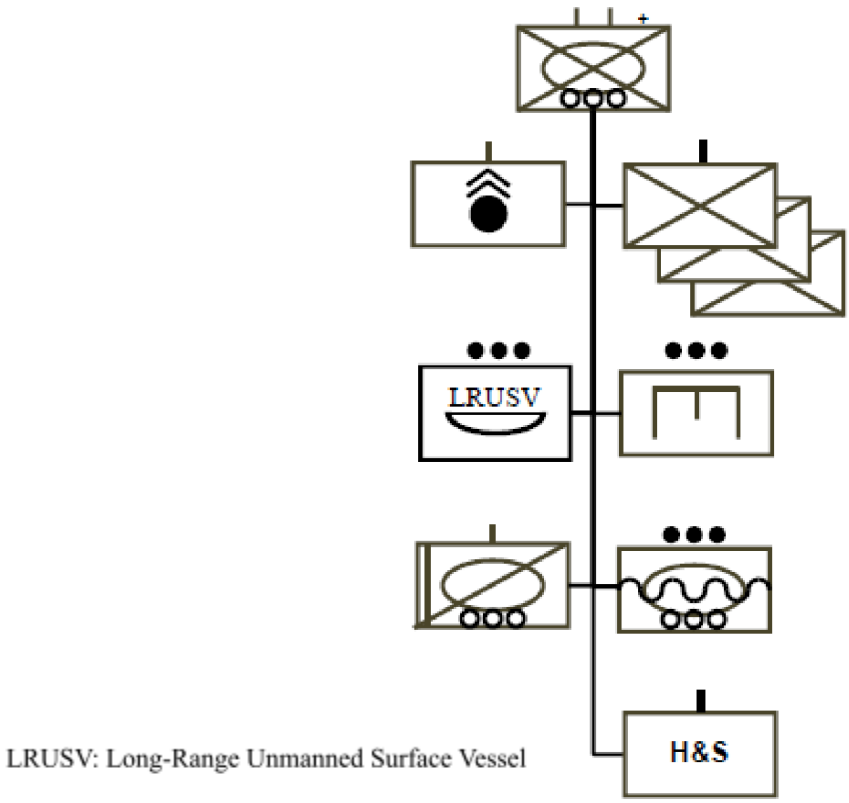
Figure 11: Organization of the 2030 MEU CE.

The 2030 MEU will operate from a combination of amphibious shipping, alternative platforms, and shore basing. It will not be exclusively tied to the three-ship ARG. However, the amphibious

shipping combination of landing helicopter assault/dock (LHA/D), landing platform dock (LPD), and LPD Flight II, plus shore basing, will remain the optimum configuration to accomplish the maximum number of METs and will represent the baseline 2030 ARG/MEU.

The embarkation footprint for each MEU will vary depending on the specific mix of amphibious shipping, alternative platforms, and shore basing. The MEU commander will make specific embarkation decisions under the guidance of the MEF commanding general, informed by the commanding generals of the MARDIV, MAW, and MLG.

Despite the dynamic nature of the 2030 MEU, its baseline elements *may* mirror or resemble the following:



ion of the 2030 MEU GCE.

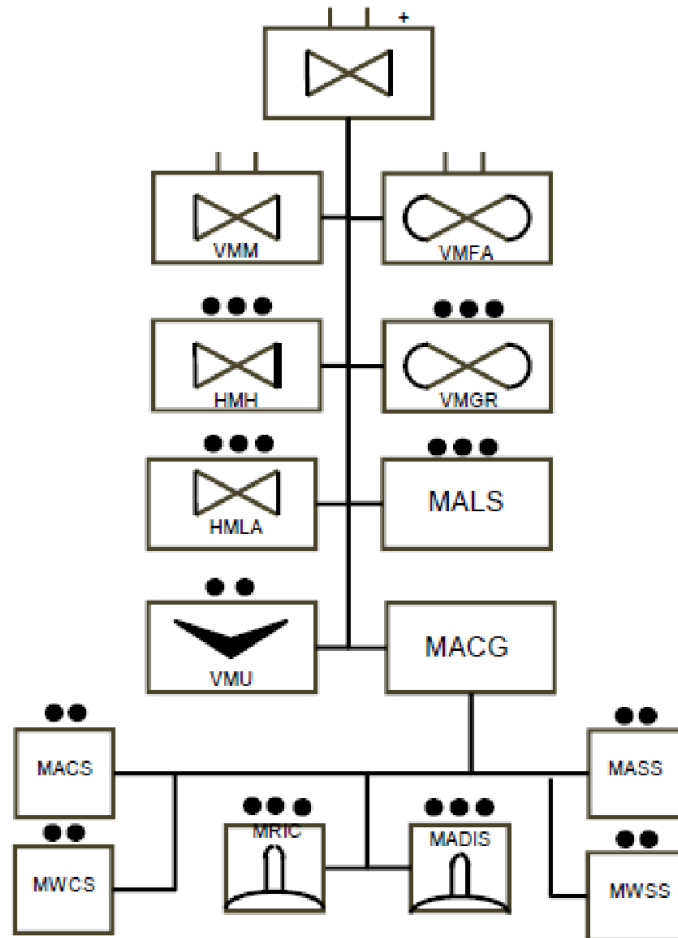


Figure 13: Organization of the 2030 MEU ACE.

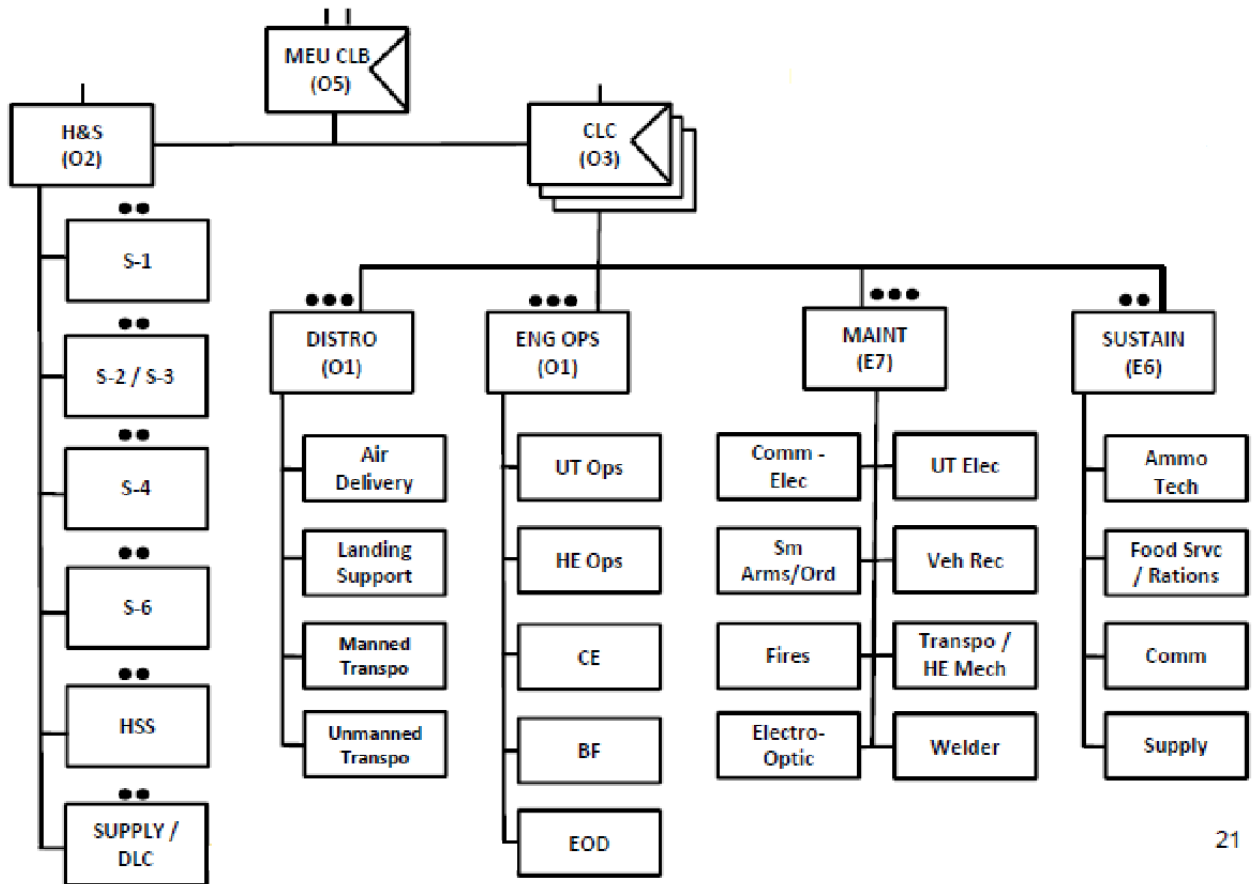


Figure 14: Organization of the 2030 MEU LCE.