





Message from the Commanding Officer

As the commander of 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit, let me extend my warmest regards. Please use this guide as a source of accurate information about the Marines and sailors who are training to deploy with the Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group in the fall.

A Marine Expeditionary Unit is a sea-based quick-reaction force, ready to respond to any crisis that occurs in its area of operations. At any time, we are prepared to conduct a wide range of missions from full scale combat to humanitarian assistance operations.

Our job is to deploy to troubled areas of the world and employ the appropriate level of force or assistance required. We may find ourselves in a bitter fight against a determined enemy one week, then building schools and homes for displaced civilians the next.

The MEU is based on a Marine Air Ground Task Force concept. This means that we are entirely self-sufficient and need no external support to conduct the many missions assigned to us. Because we have all our warfighting assets under a single commander, we can leverage an incredible amount of combat power against the enemy at the time of our choosing.

Over the next year, my Marines will have their knowledge and ingenuity tested time and time again. Through realistic training, they will hone the skills necessary to make this deployment a true success.

Thank you for your interest in the 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark J. Desens".

Mark J. Desens
Colonel, United States Marine Corps



Background Information



Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF)

Since World War II, in nearly every crisis, the United States Marine Corps has deployed projection forces with the ability to move ashore with sufficient sustainability for prolonged operations. These forces have been organized into Marine Air Ground Task Forces, a combination of air, ground and logistical support assets.

MAGTFs are established for specific missions, or in anticipation of a wide range of possible missions. Combining air, ground, and logistical assets maximizes the combat power of each of the war-fighting elements.

MAGTFs have long provided the United States with a broad spectrum of response options when U.S. and allied interests have been threatened in both combat and non-combat situations. Selective, timely and credible commitment of air and ground units have, on many occasions, helped bring stability to a region and sent signals worldwide to aggressors that the United States is willing to defend those in need and is able to do so with a significantly powerful force on extremely short notice.

Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)

The MEU is the smallest of the permanent MAGTFs and is comprised of about 2,200 Marines and Sailors. The MEU's major elements are the Command Element (CE), the Ground Combat Element (GCE), the Aviation Combat Element (ACE), and the Logistics Combat Element (LCE).

The size and composition of the MEU make it well suited for a number of operations: amphibious, security, noncombatant evacuation, humanitarian assistance and other specialized missions.

There are seven MEUs in the Marine Corps, three on each coast of the United States and one in Okinawa, Japan.

The East Coast MEUs maintain a near-constant presence in the Mediterranean region. Each MEU rotates through three cycles: the pre-deployed, deployment, stand-down.

The MEU Cycle

Pre-deployment Period

Prior to deployment, each MEU is thoroughly trained in a wide variety of unique capabilities during a fast-paced, six-month work-up cycle that includes three to five at-sea training periods. Training during the six-month work-up period is often referred to as "crawl, walk, run." The Marines and Sailors progress through curriculum and exercises that teach individual, small unit, and unit tactics while integrating the separate MEU elements into a cohesive, flexible and powerful force.



The work-up period includes training in amphibious operations, mechanized and helicopter-borne raids, noncombatant evacuation operations, humanitarian assistance, and urban operations.

The Deployment

Following the work-up, the MEU deploys for at least six months to U.S. European and Central Commands' areas of responsibility.

During this time, the MEU is a forward-deployed, self-sustaining force that the combatant commanders can direct to accomplish a variety of special operations and conventional missions in their areas of responsibility. The missions may include, but are not limited to:

- Conventional Operations (Amphibious Assaults and Raids)
- Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP)
- Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR)
- Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO)
- Security Operations
- Peace Enforcement
- Reconnaissance and Surveillance
- Airfield/Port Seizure

Stand-down Period

Upon completion of a deployment, the Marine Expeditionary Unit remains in a stand-by status for approximately one month, prepared to respond to events around the world. Following this period, the MEU "stands down," releasing its Major Subordinate Elements and retaining only its Command Element.

The stand-down period provides the Command Element a chance to rotate select personnel and begin planning for the addition of newly assigned MSEs and the next round of work-up training. When the MSEs are received, the stand-down ends and the six-months of intense pre-deployment training begins anew.



Command Element

Command Element

The Command Element (CE) is the headquarters for the Marine Expeditionary Unit. Its staff and assets provide the MEU commander the ability to exercise command and control over the subordinate elements.

The Command Element is comprised of sections and specialized detachments that provide support. The primary sections include: administration, intelligence, operations, logistics and communications.

Other specialized sub-sections within the CE are the chaplain's office, staff judge advocate, public affairs, and headquarters commandant.

A Forward Command Element, comprised of select personnel and equipment, may be deployed as a liaison element to countries in which the MEU will operate. The FCE provides the MEU a direct link to U.S. ambassadors and Department of State representatives.



Leading the Command Element are:



Commanding Officer
Col. Mark J. Desens



Executive Officer
Lt. Col. Michael C. Starling



Sergeant Major
Sgt. Maj. Allen L. Tanner

Major Subordinate Elements



Aviation Combat Element

Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 266 (Reinforced)

The Aviation Combat Element (ACE) provides the air combat power for the MEU. Its arsenal includes the newest addition to the Marine Corps' fleet, the MV-22 Osprey, as well as CH-53E Super Stallion Helicopters, AH-1W Super Cobras and UH-1N Hueys.



Logistics Combat Element

Combat Logistics Battalion 26

The Logistics Combat Element (LCE) is augmented by detachments from a variety of units that include a Transportation Support Detachment, Supply Detachment, Maintenance Detachment, Engineer Support Detachment, Health Services Detachment, Military Police Detachment and a Communications Detachment.



The Ground Combat Element

Battalion Landing Team 3/8

The Ground Combat Element (GCE) provides the ground combat power for 26 MEU. It is structured around a conventional infantry battalion reinforced with light armored vehicles, tanks, artillery, combat engineers and amphibious assault vehicles.





Historical Timeline



1975 -- 36th Marine Amphibious Unit participated in Exercise Staff Zügel in the Federal Republic of Germany. This marked the first time since World War I that Marines took a combined arms force ashore in Germany.



1982 -- The unit was redesignated as 26th Marine Amphibious Unit.

1985 -- The Marine Corps initiated a rotation cycle of the three East Coast MAUs.

1985 -- 26th MAU became the first unit to undergo Special Operations Capability training and earned the SOC qualification.

1985 -- 26th MAU became the first unit to have AV-8B Harrier aircraft.

1988 -- All Marine Amphibious Units were redesignated as Marine Expeditionary Units.

1991 -- 26th MEU supported Operation Desert Shield by providing a "Show of Force" in the Mediterranean, and participated in Operation Sharp Edge, a non-combatant evacuation operation of Liberia.

1992 -- 26th MEU participated in Operations Provide Promise, Deny Flight and Sharp Guard off the coast of Yugoslavia.

1994 -- 26th MEU participated in ceremonies which marked the 50th anniversary of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, France.

1995 -- 26th MEU became the first MEU to deploy with M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tanks.

1996 -- 26th MEU became the first MEU to deploy with the Joint Task Force Enabler communications package.

1997 -- 26th MEU launched Operation Silver Wake, which evacuated American citizens and third-country nationals from Albania.

1997 -- 26th MEU participated in Operation Guardian Retrieval, a staging of forces in the Congo for a possible evacuation of Zaire.

1998 -- 26th MEU served as the headquarters

Historical Timeline



for the Strategic Reserve Force during Exercise Dynamic Response in Bosnia. The SRF was a multinational force made up of forces from the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Romania, Poland, and the United States.

1998 -- 26th MEU participated in Operation Determined Falcon, a one-day NATO show-of-force in Kosovo.

April - May 1999 -- 26th MEU participated in Operations Noble Anvil and Shining Hope. The 26th MEU participated in the NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo with AV-8B Harrier Attack Aircraft while simultaneously providing security for Kosovar Refugees at Camps Hope and Eagle in Albania.

June - July 1999 -- 26th MEU participated in Operation Joint Guardian. The Marines and Sailors of the MEU provided stability in Kosovo as the first U.S. Peacekeepers to the embattled region.



Adriatic presence operations during the election crisis in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The MEU also participated in exercises Atlas Hinge in Tunisia and also the Croatian Phibex 2000, the first bilateral exercise between the Marine Corps and the Croatian Armed Forces.



August 1999 -- 26th MEU participated in Operation Avid Response, which provided humanitarian assistance to the people of Western Turkey left homeless by a devastating earthquake.

September 1999 -- The 26th MEU participated in Exercises Atlas Hinge in Tunisia and Northern Approach in Turkey.

September 2000 -- The 26th MEU conducted





Historical Timeline



October 2000 -- The 26th MEU supported diplomatic initiatives during unrest in Israel while simultaneously taking part in the NATO exercise Destined Glory.

November 2000 -- The 26th MEU continued to break new ground with the second bilateral exercise between the Marine Corps and the Croatian Armed Forces, Exercise Slunj 2000. During this exercise, the 26th MEU's Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, launched the first Javelin anti-tank missile fired by a deployed MEU.

February 2002 -- The 26th MEU (SOC) was among the first U.S. Forces into Afghanistan as

part of Operations Enduring Freedom and Swift Freedom. MEU (SOC) Marines participated in the 450 mile seizure of Camp Rhino and Kandahar Airport, and also constructed a



Historical Timeline



detainment facility that held more than 400 Taliban and Al Qaeda terrorists.

March 2003 -- The 26th MEU (SOC) added to its list of historic operations while afloat in the Mediterranean in 2003. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Marine Corps KC-130s travelled 1,100 miles and delivered MEU Marines directly to the battlefield in Mosul, Iraq - a feat never before attempted.

August - September 2003 -- The 26th MEU (SOC) served as the primary tactical Joint Task Force Liberia. The MEU capitalized on its extensive training in humanitarian assistance operations and U.S. Embassy relations to help bring peace to the war-torn nation.



April-August 2005 -- The 26th MEU conducted exercises and operations in eight countries to include Israel, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti and Iraq.

July-August 2005 -- Several hundred Marines and Sailors from the 26th MEU conducted Operation Sea Horse in Iraq, supporting British-led Multi-National Division Southeast with a mission to detect and deter illicit activity along the Iraqi border. The MEU maintained command and control of Operation Sea Horse from aboard ship in the Northern Arabian Gulf, while conducting training missions in Saudi Arabia and Djibouti.

January 2007 -- The 26th MEU was the first



MEU to deploy with a Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) detachment.

September 2008 -- Four CH-53 helicopters flew to Al Asad and joined with HMM-462 in support of operations in Iraq.

September 2008 - March 2009 -- The 26th MEU participated in several exercises in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

November 2009 -- The 26 MEU stood up as Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force 26 to participate in the commissioning of USS New York in New York.





Equipment Fact File

Aircraft



AV-8B Harrier II -- A vertical takeoff and landing-capable jet designed to attack surface targets under day and night conditions. It has a one-man crew and can carry an assortment of armaments. It is used for close and deep air support, armed reconnaissance and air interception.



AH-1W Super Cobra -- An attack helicopter designed to provide fire support, armed escort, air defense and reconnaissance support for land and sea-based operations. It can fly 169 mph and has a range of 294 miles with an attack configuration. It is armed with a 20mm turreted cannon and four external wing stations able to fire rockets and guided missiles.



UH-1N Huey -- A utility helicopter designed for airborne command and control, combat assault, medical evacuation, maritime special operations, fire support and security. Armament varies and can include M-240G machine guns, two 7- or 19-shot rocket pods, or a variety of other weapons.



CH-53E Super Stallion Helicopter -- It is designed to transport heavy equipment and supplies during ship-to-shore movement. It can fly 172 mph and is capable of lifting 16 tons. Compatible with most amphibious class ships.



V-22 Osprey -- tilt-rotor aircraft that combines the vertical flight capabilities of a helicopter with the speed and range of an airplane. Crew: 4; capacity: up to 32 troops or up to 15000 lbs.; speed: up to 351 mph; range: up to 1011 miles.



CH-46E Sea Knight -- A medium-lift assault helicopter designed to provide all-weather, day and night transport of troops, supplies and equipment during amphibious and subsequent operations ashore. It can fly 166 mph and has a range of 151 miles for an assault mission. In addition it can carry an external load of up to 4,000 pounds.



KC-130 Hercules -- A multi-role, multi-mission, tactical refueling tanker and transport aircraft. Can provide aerial refueling to tactical aircraft and helicopters. Missions include aerial delivery of troops and cargo, emergency resupply, medical evacuation and aerial support of special operations.

Equipment Fact File



Vehicles



M1A1 Main Battle Tank -- Carries a 120mm main gun, an M2 .50 caliber machine gun, and two M-240G 7.62mm machine guns. It can travel 42 mph and has a range of more than 270 miles.



M88A2 Hercules Recovery Vehicle -- Recovery vehicle for main battle tanks. Its boom capacity is 35 tons. Replaced the M88 and includes improvements such as an upgraded suspension, power-assisted brakes, and an improved hydraulic system.



M998 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle -- Provides a variety of wheeled vehicle platforms including: cargo/troop carrier, armament carrier, TOW missile system carrier, shelter carrier and two ambulance variants. It is designed for use on all types of roads in all weather conditions.



M23 7-ton truck -- A medium tactical transport vehicle. It can carry a 7-ton load cross-country and a 15-ton load on paved roads. It is able to carry 15 people and can travel 65 mph with a range of 300 miles.



MK48 Logistics Vehicle System -- A front power unit with interchangeable rear-body transport units. The front provides all automotive and hydraulic power for the LVS combinations. The LVS can be configured for container transport, recovery/wrecker operations, and includes a self-loading capability.



Extended Boom Forklift -- The EBF has a 10,000 pound maximum lift capacity. It is utilized mainly for moving ammunition, cargo and supplies. It can horizontally extend the fork boom for loading and unloading cargo. It is able to operate on even and uneven surfaces, as well as soft surfaces such as sand and mud.



Tractor, Rubber tired, Articulated steering, Multipurpose 644E vehicle -- A 35,790 pound hydraulic, rough terrain forklift and loader. It can travel a maximum speed of 24 mph and lift up to 10,000 pounds. It is used to load and unload palletized and containerized cargo to and from trucks, trailers, ships and aircraft.



Equipment Fact File



Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle -- "high-speed" combat vehicle to carry Marines from amphibious ships offshore to the beach and, once ashore, operate as an armored personnel carrier; carries up to 17 combat-loaded Marines; crew: 3; range: 325 miles land, 74 miles water; speed: 45 mph road, 28 mph water.

Weapons



Beretta M9 Pistol -- A light weight, semiautomatic pistol designed to replace the M1911A1 .45 caliber pistol and .38 caliber revolvers. The M9 pistol has a 15-round magazine, and may be fired without a magazine inserted.



M1911A1 pistol -- The .45 has largely been replaced by the M9 in most circumstances. However, it is still used by some Special Operations and Reconnaissance Marines.



12 gauge shotgun -- A manually operated (pump), repeating shotgun, with a seven-round tubular magazine, a modified choke barrel, ghost ring sights, and equipped with a bayonet attachment. This special purpose individual weapon is used for situations which require the use of armed personnel with inherent limited range and ammunition penetration.



Joint Service Combat Shotgun -- A compact, lightweight, semi-automatic, 12 gauge weapon. The Combat Shotgun is capable of firing 12 gauge 3.0 inch magnum ammunition and is interoperable with standard 2 3/4 inch ammunition. It is constructed of lightweight polymer materials and corrosion resistant metal components.



M16A2/M16A4 Service Rifle -- The M16A2 and its improved version, the A4, are lightweight, air-cooled, gas-operated, magazine-fed, shoulder-fired weapons designed for either semi-automatic or three-round burst fire.



M4 Carbine Rifle -- A shorter and lighter version of the M16 Service Rifle, the M4 features a collapsible buttstock and a shorter muzzle length. It fires a 5.56mm round.

Equipment Fact File



M203 Grenade Launcher -- The M203 is a lightweight, compact, breech loading, pump action, single shot launcher which attaches to the underside of an M16A2, M16A4, or M4 rifle. It can fire a variety of low velocity 40mm ammunition.



Squad Advanced Marksmanship Rifle -- Essentially a modified M16A4, the SAM-R is a 5.56mm rifle with an attached bipod and scope. It can provide precision fire in support of the rifle squad and aid in observation and adjustment of supporting arms.



MK-11 Sniper Rifle -- The MK-11 is a semi-automatic sniper rifle firing 7.62mm rounds. The system includes a sound and flash suppressor to aid in concealment.



M40A3 Sniper Rifle -- A heavy-barrel, bolt-action, magazine-fed 7.62mm rifle. The M40A3 is an updated version of the M40A1.



M107 Special Application Scoped Rifle -- A semi-automatic, long-range rifle that fires .50 caliber rounds. Can fire ball, incendiary, and armor-piercing rounds. The SASR can be used for anti-personnel, anti-materiel, or anti-armor roles.



M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) -- an individually portable, gas operated, magazine or disintegrating metallic link-belt fed, light machine gun with fixed headspace and quick change barrel feature. The M249 fires the improved NATO standard 5.56mm cartridge.



M240G Medium Machine Gun -- The original M240/M240E1, 7.62mm medium class weapon designed as a coaxial/pintle mounted machine gun for tanks and light armored vehicles. The G is modified by the installation of a flash suppressor, front sight, carrying handle for the barrel, a buttstock, infantry length pistol grip, bipod, and rear sight assembly.



Browning M2 .50 Caliber Machine Gun, Heavy barrel -- An automatic, recoil operated, air-cooled machine gun with adjustable headspace. A disintegrating metallic link-belt is used to feed the ammunition into the weapon. May be mounted on ground mounts and most vehicles as an anti-personnel and anti-aircraft weapon.



Equipment Fact File



MK19 machine gun, MOD 3 -- An air-cooled, disintegrating metallic link-belt fed, blowback operated, fully automatic weapon. It can fire a variety of 40mm grenades. The M430 HEDP 40mm grenade will pierce armor up to 2 inches thick.



Expeditionary Fire Support System -- Expeditionary Fire Support System; rifled-towed 120mm mortar, designated XM326, plus prime mover based on the Internally Transportable Vehicle (ITV). The entire mortar/vehicle combination can be internally transported aboard MV-22 and CH-53E aircraft.



M224 Lightweight Mortar -- A smooth bore, muzzle loading, high-angle-of-fire weapon. The cannon assembly is composed of the barrel, combination base cap, and firing mechanism. It has a spring-type shock absorber to absorb the shock of recoil in firing. It can fire at a sustained rate of 20 rounds-per-minute.



M252 Medium Extended Range Mortar -- a crew-served, medium weight mortar. The cannon has a crew-removable breech plug and firing pin. The muzzle end has a short tapered lead-in which acts as a blast attenuator device. The breech end is finned for better cooling.



M777 Lightweight Howitzer, Towed -- The M777 provides field artillery fire support for all Marine Air Ground Task Forces. Capable of firing conventional artillery rounds as well as rocket-assisted GPS-guided Excalibur rounds. It can fire up to five rounds-per-minute.

Equipment Fact File



M136 AT4 -- A shoulder-launched, anti-armor weapon designed to defeat modern main battle tanks. Its shaped-charge warhead can penetrate 400 millimeters of rolled homogenous armor.



Shoulder-Launched, Multipurpose Assault Weapon -- The SMAW is an 83mm man-portable weapon system designed to destroy bunkers and other fortifications during assault operations and to destroy main battle tanks with the High Explosive Anti-Armor rocket.



Stinger -- The Stinger is a man-portable, shoulder-fired guided missile system which enables the Marine to effectively engage low-altitude jet, propeller-driven and helicopter aircraft. The system is a "fire-and-forget" weapon employing a passive infrared seeker and proportional navigation system.



M98A1 Javelin Surface Attack Guided Missile System -- A fire-and-forget, man-portable, anti-tank missile system. It can vary its angle of attack to defeat armor during both daytime and nighttime operations.



Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-guided Missile -- The TOW is a wire-guided missile system designed primarily to attack and defeat tanks and armored vehicles. The system can be tripod-mounted, but is generally employed from the HMMWV.



Contacting PAO or more MEU information

The 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit Public Affairs Office is here to help you. Please feel free to contact us at 910-451-0050. If we do not answer, it is probably because we are training so, please contact our e-mail.

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You can also find MEU information on one of our Web sites.

Official MEU Web site

www.marines.mil/unit/26thmeu

Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/26thMeu>

Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/26MEU>

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