

A Corps of Marines for the Future: Relevant, Ready, Capable

by MajGen Charles C. Krulak

A major challenge in recent months has been determining the shape of tomorrow's forces—determining how to meet imposed constraints while ensuring that the Marine Corps' Total Force is able to contribute its unique and essential capabilities to future joint operations.

What follows is an overview of how the Corps approached this challenge and where it goes from here.



The rapidly changing world environment that has emerged in the wake of the Cold War, combined with increasing pressure to reduce defense expenditures, presents unprecedented challenges to the Armed Services. All of the Services must restructure their forces to be even more efficient, but we no longer have the luxury of being able to quantify the capabilities of our potential foes. For the Marine Corps, the problem is not to redefine our essential purpose in the new era of uncertainty; our long-standing role as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness is just as important in the new international security environment as it was during the Cold War. Instead, the challenge is to redefine our force structure to accomplish our role as effectively as possible within the constraints imposed by shrinking defense budgets.

To meet this challenge, the Commandant of the Marine Corps designed a four-phase campaign plan. Phase One of the plan convened a meeting of the Marine Corps' senior leadership to discuss methods of meeting the challenge. Phase Two commissioned both Active and Reserve Force Structure Planning Groups (FSPG) to design the Corps of the future. Phase Three involved briefing the resulting FSPG plans to our senior military and civilian leaders, and Phase Four, which is still on-going, is to improve the understanding of our unique contributions to our national security among a wide audience, both in Washington and across the country.

This article describes the different phases of the campaign and provides a summary of the future structure of the Marine Corps.

Phase One—The Executive Retreat

Last August, the Commandant met with the senior leadership of the Corps at Camp Lejeune. The purpose of the 3-day retreat was to set the course for the Marine Corps as it refined its capabilities in light of the new security environment and declining resources. Their challenge was to find a course of action that would allow the Corps to remain the relevant, ready, and capable force that it was created to be, while at the same time complying with the need to become even leaner and more efficient in the future.

During the retreat, the generals considered the results of earlier manpower/structure studies, the emerging new National Military Strategy, and the Unified Command Plan. It became readily apparent that some difficult decisions were going to be necessary. The consensus was that, before those decisions could be made, a new in-depth review of Marine force structure and a clear plan for a Total Force Marine Corps needed to be developed. Thus, two groups, one Active and one Reserve, were chartered to build an Active and Reserve force structure.

Phase Two—The Force Structure Planning Groups

During Phase Two, the two FSPGs went to work. The Commandant needed a clear-eyed, no-holds-barred look at

the entire Marine Corps, and he needed it done quickly. The two planning groups were tasked to develop recommendations for a future Marine Corps sized, trained, and equipped to accomplish its mandated roles and functions. The Commandant issued the following specific guidance:

- . . . define the most effective and capable structure for the Corps at the current Department of Defense programmed manning level of 159,100.
- . . . structure a Marine Corps that is the most effective and economical force-in-readiness we can obtain against the backdrop of fiscal austerity and a rapidly changing world scene. While there is little that is sacrosanct, we must maintain the provisions of Title 10 . . . and must be able to continue to perform those special commitments required by the Department of State and Presidential/national support. . . .
- . . . maintain our Title 10 structure of three wings and three divisions in the active structure. . . . however, each one need not be identical. . . .
- . . . Marine air-ground task forces [MAGTFs] organization and doctrine must be maintained.
- . . . we should be able to field a joint task force headquarters if called upon, as well as provide an expeditionary Marine force component headquarters. . . .

The FSPG used an innovative and imaginative approach to arrive at its conclusions and recommendations. During the course of the study, the group kept commanders and general officers informed on its progress through daily, electronically transmitted reports to the field. This process proved invaluable because the recipients of these reports were immediately able to validate and comment on certain concepts and to make appropriate recommendations. This also supported the Commandant's intent that the planning effort be done with maximum participation by Marines throughout the Corps.

To ensure that the restructured Corps could effectively meet the requirements levied against it in the new national strategy, the FSPG based its work on national-level source documents such as Defense Intelligence Agency threat analyses and the National Military Strategy, which was then in draft form. These documents confirmed that in spite of revolutionary changes in the world order resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States must still be able to manage instability and counter uncertainty. The FSPG concluded that the requirement for versatile, expeditionary

combined arms forces like the Marine Corps has diminished very little in the new world environment. To put it another way, the strategic concept for the Corps—its essential purpose in the larger scheme of national defense—remains valid. The problem for the FSPG was thus to refine and enhance the enduring strengths of the Corps rather than to transform it for a fundamentally new role.

After 8 weeks of intense work, the FSPG briefed its initial findings to 65 of the total 70 Marine general officers who attended the October General Officers' Symposium. This was not a "decision" briefing, but rather an information briefing that gave all of the generals in attendance the opportuni-

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ty to review the proposals the group had made and to validate its recommendations. This allowed subsequent course and speed corrections based on the input of the generals.

In conjunction with the Active force structure plan, it was also necessary to develop a Reserve force structure plan. To do this, a Reserve FSPG was formed under the leadership of MajGen John F. Cronin, USMCR. This group was tasked to define, within the same guidance as the Active FSPG, a Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) force structure that would complement the Active force and maintain the range of capabilities required of the Total Force.

The important point to understand about the work of both FSPGs is that the focus was not to create a Marine Corps based on a fiscally driven end-strength. The goal was a concept-based, bottoms-up restructuring of the Corps—a restructuring intent upon providing the Marine Corps with the capabilities necessary to carry out its role in the new national military strategy. Every action taken was to ensure that when the Nation calls upon its

Marine Corps, it will be able to respond with a relevant, ready, and capable force.

Phase Three—Briefing the Plan

During this phase, a series of briefings was prepared to present clearly to the national leadership not only the results of the planning effort, but more importantly, the resulting capabilities of the Marine Corps to meet the new National Military Strategy.

The Commandant briefed the Secretary and Undersecretary of the Navy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. In addition to these principals, senior members of the respective staffs of the Department of the Navy, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Office of the Secretary of Defense were also briefed.

These briefings provided a comprehensive presentation on the structure and capabilities of the smaller Corps. They emphasized both the enhancements of the force and the impact of reductions in size. The briefings were well received by our national leaders. These leaders recognized that we cannot maintain the level of commitments we have supported in the past with reduced forces without a significant increase in operating tempo. They are committed to finding solutions that will preclude excessive optempo for deployed Marines.

Phase Four—"Articulating" the Corps

The fourth phase of the campaign articulates how the Marine Corps contributes to the security of the Nation. This means explaining clearly, and in layman's terms, why the Corps exists, why it is structured as it is, and what it is able to do for the Nation—not just when called forth to war, but during all the times in between.

This is an essential part of the campaign, and it is more challenging than it might seem at first. Marines are admired and respected by the great majority of Americans for our military professionalism and our fighting abilities. Nevertheless, there are many Americans who don't understand our role and, with the end of the Cold War, our relevance to the Nation's defense needs.

In this era of declining defense budgets, it is increasingly important for Marines to explain our unique contributions to the family of military capabilities. We need to explain the unique

advantages of versatile expeditionary forces that are forged from the ground up to operate jointly in all three mediums—air, land, and sea. We need to explain why Marine aviation is not “just a fourth air force” as some critics suggest, but rather is a unique combat system whose capabilities cannot be provided by the other Services. We need to explain the value of forward-deployed, self-sustainable naval forces that

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can deter crises, influence friends and foes, provide humanitarian assistance, and fight if required.

In brief, we have a challenging task of describing our capabilities and of explaining why those capabilities will continue to be extremely useful to the

Nation in the New World Order. Phase four of the campaign plan focuses on that.

The FY92 Force Structure Plan

On 16 December 1991, the Commandant approved the plan developed by the two FSPGs and revised after the General Officers' Symposium as the FY92 Marine Corps Force Structure Plan. The Plan is a blueprint for change, which will undoubtedly be revised to some degree as it is implemented. It provides a common direction and timetable so that manpower, procurement, and training initiatives remain in step with each other and are mutually supporting. The timetable is defined in a plan of action and milestones that cover actions to be accomplished during the next 6 years, the period of the Future Year Defense Plan.

Make no mistake: The new Marine Corps will be different. It will be smaller; yet, in many ways it will be more efficient as a warfighting team—leaner, more mobile, more flexible, and more complementary in joint operations. Each element of the MAGTF has been given enhanced capabilities to meet the needs of the future.

The Corps will be reduced to an active duty end strength of 159,100 by FY97, a reduction of roughly 18 percent from today's force levels. End strength will be reduced by about 5,800 per year.

Non-FMF Manning

In restructuring the Corps, the FSPG looked closely at the organization of our non-Fleet Marine Force (FMF) forces in order to protect the Corps' warfighting “muscle.” Consequently, the plan reduces the supporting establishment as much as possible without degrading training or quality of life.

As indicated in Figure 1, several discrete elements constitute the current non-FMF structure of 50,000 Marines. Previous initiatives had already planned to reduce that number by 2,600. Of the remaining 47,400 billets, 13,500 are required to support commitments external to the Marine Corps, such as the

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Marine Security Guard Battalion that provides security for our Embassies, the Marine Support Battalion that provides national-level intelligence support, Naval Security Forces, Presidential support, and joint billets.

Since these external requirements cannot be readily reduced, there were only 33,900 spaces in the non-FMF available for restructuring. Scrubbing each of the remaining functions, the FSPG identified an additional 1,400 manning spaces for reduction. The bottom line is that no matter how the FSPG “squeezed the turnip,” it could only find reductions of 4,000 total spaces in the non-FMF.

In addition to the non-FMF structure, there is an unavoidable overhead cost represented by Marines who are unavailable because they are trainees, transients, prisoners, and patients. “T2P2,” as this category is called, usually takes up 16 percent to 18 percent of programmed manning. The plan pares this element to the bone, using the lower 16 percent figure as a baseline and then cutting it even further by reducing the entry-level training pipeline by one week. This does not mean that recruit training will be cut, but rather that we will trim the entire training program to shorten the time it

NON-FMF MANNING

Current manning.....	50,000
Previously directed reductions.....	- 2,600
FSPG starting point.....	47,400
CMC fenced elements -- (13,500)	
- Marine Security Guard Battalion (1,500)	
- Marine Corps Security Forces (7,000)	
- Marine Support Battalion (700)	
- Presidential and National Level Support (1,800)	
- External Billets (2,500)	
Training Establishment -- (13,400)	
Bases and Stations -- (10,000)	
HQMC, MCCDC, MCSYSCOM -- (3,000)	
Active Force with SMCR -- (4,000)	
Recruiting establishment -- (3,500)	
Less proposed reductions.....	- 1,400
Includes Additional Base Closures	
Total Non-FMF manning.....	46,000

Figure 1

takes to send a Marine to a military occupational specialty-producing school by 1 week.

With the non-FMF and T2P2 reduced to a minimum, the remainder of our structure reductions—about 17,000 or 70 percent—must come from the

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Fleet Marine Forces that make up the “core of the Corps.”

The Fleet Marine Forces

At a total active end strength of 159,100, the FMF will be reduced to about 89,000 Marines. Though smaller, the FMF will remain a balanced combined arms team with full sustainment capability and enhanced command and control. Rather than “peel the onion” by taking arbitrary horizontal cuts from each MAGTF element equally, the plan takes vertical cuts where possible and focuses on balanced capabilities.

“As with the ground divisions, there will not be three full notional aircraft wings in the active structure. If two full notional wings were committed, the residual aviation forces would be considerably smaller than a wing—with fewer squadrons and only about 3,500 Marines.”

The command element will be significantly enhanced. The Force commanders—FMF Atlantic/FMF Pacific—will have the ability to deploy a component headquarters that is fully capable of operating as a component headquarters at the theater level. In addition, each Marine expeditionary force (MEF) command element will have the ability to operate as a joint task force headquarters. The capabili-

THE NEW NOTIONAL DIVISION

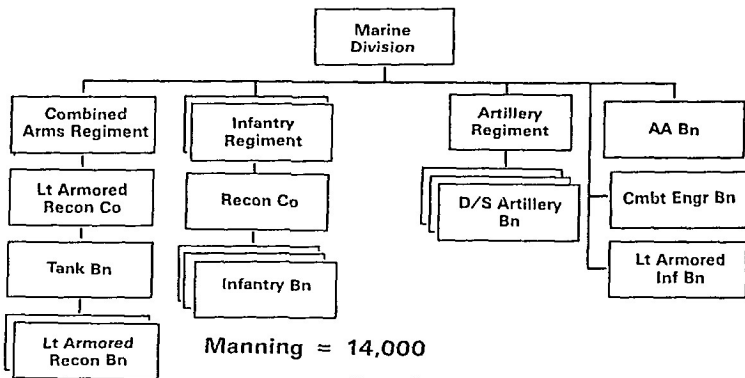


Figure 2

ty of the MEFs to operate in the joint environment will be notably strengthened by their improved ability to collect and disseminate intelligence, improved communications, and the addition of a joint force air component commander coordination node. In all, the FY92 Force Structure Plan will add 650 structure spaces—one of the few growth areas within the operating forces—to support these various enhancements to the command element.

At the same time, the six standing Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB) command elements have been eliminated. MEB-size force packages will continue to be deployed when required, but their command elements will be sourced from the command element of the MEF. Six standing Marine expeditionary unit command elements will be retained, with three on each coast.

The ground combat element, though smaller, will feature enhanced mobility through increased use of the light armored vehicle (LAV), more reconnaissance assets, and increased lethality with the eventual addition of the multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) as the Marine Corps' general support artillery of the future. The structure of our future notional divisions will be as shown in Figure 2. The manning for each division will be about 14,000 Marines.

One of the major changes in the future notional division is the establishment of a combined arms regiment as a means of providing greater lethality, mobility, and combat flexibility for the division commander in the smaller division. The combined arms regiment will be formed by assigning existing tank and light armored infantry bat-

talions to a regimental headquarters. In addition, the combined arms regiment will have a light armored reconnaissance company.

Future adoption of the MLRS as the Corps' general support artillery provides a technological substitution for manpower-intensive artillery battalions; this will provide superior lethality over existing equipment and a reduced manpower structure. The current concept of future general support artillery includes one MLRS battalion within the Marine Corps that can be assigned to any committed MAGTF as needed.

Reconnaissance enhancements within the future division organization involve both the reconnaissance battalion and the infantry regiments. The division's reconnaissance battalion will be

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reconfigured as a light armored reconnaissance battalion comprised of three LAV-mounted companies and a deep reconnaissance company. In addition, both the combined arms and infantry regiments will include a reconnais-

THE NEW NOTIONAL AIRCRAFT WING

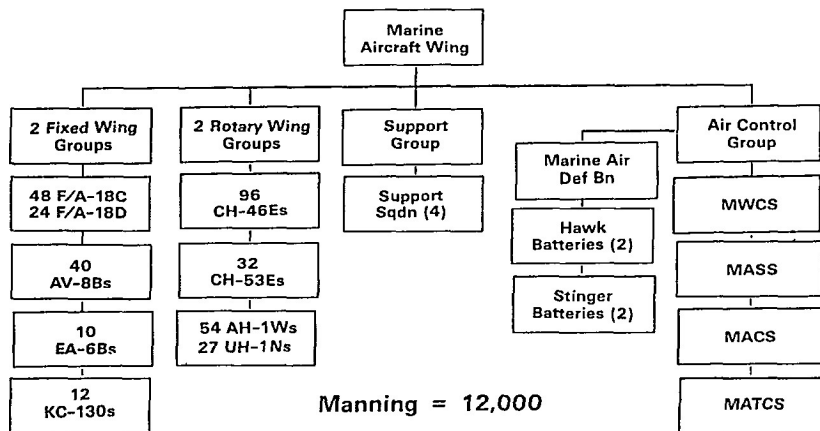


Figure 3

sance company.

The third division, comprised of the remaining ground combat units, will be substantially smaller in size than a full notional division—only about 7,000 Marines. But because of the way we structure and deploy MAGTFs from the reservoir of capabilities provided by the entire FMF, all three Active divisions and the Reserve component provide the command and control and expansion base necessary to field appropriate-sized MAGTFs.

The aviation combat element, also smaller, retains its unique expeditionary characteristics and its full range of functions. It remains a complete combat system that provides heavy fire support, battlefield mobility, and the ability to serve as a maneuver element. The structure of the new notional aircraft wing will be as shown in Figure 3. It will be smaller by 3,000 Marines than the notional Marine aircraft wing (MAW) we have today.

The plan maintains our helicopter capabilities, but reduces the number of tactical aircraft we have by 26 percent. The OV-10D Bronco will be eliminated from the force. Its functions will be assumed by the UH-1N, AH-1J, and F/A-18D squadrons.

As with the ground divisions, there will not be three full notional aircraft wings in the active structure. If two full notional wings were committed, the residual aviation forces would be considerably smaller than a wing—with fewer squadrons and only about 3,500 Marines.

However, this residual aviation force is not the 1st MAW that is currently deployed in the Western Pacific, nor is it the third aircraft wing we would send to a major contingency. Rather, it provides the essential command and control and core capabilities for a MAW that would be fleshed out with appropriate units from the reservoir of capabilities in the FMF.


This structure is extremely versatile,

capable of supporting the full range of functions provided by Marine aircraft within the expeditionary MAGTF. The key to its versatility and deployability is the Marine aviation logistics support squadron (MALS), which serves as the core of the Marine air group (MAG). The MALS has the people, parts, equipment, and expeditionary shelters to provide intermediate maintenance on all types of Marine aircraft. Tactical aircraft squadrons can be added to the core interchangeably, depending on mission requirements. This organization makes MAGs highly versatile, expeditionary, deployable, and sustainable.

Our combat service support elements have also been reduced, but not disproportionately. It is critically important that the MAGTF remain a balanced combined arms team with full sustainability, so the force service support groups (FSSGs) will retain all the functions of combat service support. This ensures the same flexibility exhibited by these forces during DESERT SHIELD/STORM.

Figure 4 shows the organization of the notional FSSG. To continue to support a robust capability in the Western Pacific, the two FSSGs in the United States will be slightly smaller than the notional structure. The 3d FSSG on Okinawa will retain all functions of combat service support, but they will be accomplished by company-sized units rather than battalions.

Conclusion

The Commandant has set in motion a plan to ensure that the Marine Corps remains relevant, ready, and capable as we head towards the next century. The plan is defined in the FY92 Force Structure Plan, which provides a systematic plan of action and milestones for implementing structure changes. Modifications and adjustments will be made as necessary to accommodate new circumstances, funding levels, and enhancements as identified. Most important, the new structure, while smaller, will be extremely potent and capable on any foreseeable future battlefield, and will continue to fulfill the Corps' role as the Nation's premier force-in-readiness. 

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TWO COMBAT READY FSSGs AT 89K

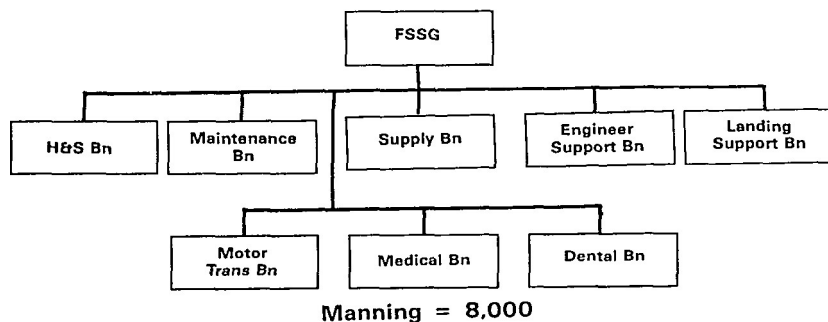


Figure 4