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Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
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# ***MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES***

**The MEF Command Element: Vestige of Attrition Warfare, or Golden Child of Maneuver Warfare?**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** The MEF Command Element: Vestige of Attrition Warfare, or Golden Child of Maneuver Warfare?

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**Thesis:** The development of “corps” level staff organizations in the Marine Corps has occurred in a haphazard manner and resulted in a current Marine Expeditionary Force Command Element (MEF CE) structure that is inconsistent with contemporary Marine Corps Command and Control (C2) doctrine.

**Discussion:** Effective command and control in war demands that the commander have access to timely, relevant and accurate information continuously. The purpose of a staff is to assist the commander in performing his duties and command responsibilities. In this capacity, the staff’s primary functions include gathering, processing, presenting and distributing information for the commander. It serves as an information clearinghouse. The fundamental problem that a commander faces in wartime is uncertainty resulting from insufficient or inaccurate information. To cope with insufficient information, an armed force has three organizational options; create an organization with increased information processing capacity, drastically simplify the whole organization, or divide the tasks into parts and establish semi-independent organizations that can deal with each task. Taking the first approach is the quickest and simplest.

For large and complex organizations, expanding the size of staffs is much easier than changing the entire structure of the organizations. Increasing staff size does increase

the capacity to gather more information, however, more information requires more analysis and coordination and these tasks increase the amount of time it takes to process the information. The result may be accurate but untimely information. The commander essentially may still not be receiving the information he needs and this can lead to the perceived need for larger staffs to do more processing, which starts the cycle over again. Current Marine Corps Command and Control doctrine provides guidance on the essential functions that a command and control system must perform. An effective staff organization must facilitate unity of effort among its elements, maintain reasonable spans of control internally and externally, promote the use of cohesive mission teams, and distribute information effectively.

The development of the current Marine Corps MEF staff structure occurred in an unsystematic manner. The use of “corps” level staffs in the Marine Corps began in World War II. Since then, the Amphibious Corps HQ, Marine Amphibious force command element and the Marine Expeditionary Force represent the only operational level Marine HQs that have participated in major campaigns. In each instance, the headquarters staffs were either non-existent or inadequate at the beginning of the conflict. These staffs formed in an ad hoc way, leading to inefficient command and control. The MEF staff in desert storm also overcame its initial organizational handicaps by quickly expanding in a haphazard manner. This resulted in a staff organization that is inconsistent with current Marine Corps command and control doctrine.

**Conclusion:** The development of the MEF command element staff has been driven by the necessities of the moment during crisis. In a crisis there is no time to redesign staffs

or organizations efficiently. The current MEF staff organization is a reflection of the Desert Storm era MEF staff. In order to remain an effective expeditionary force that can effectively command and control joint “corps” level operations, the Marine Corps must develop a higher level staff that is organized and operates on the principles found in its doctrine and ensure that proper experimentation, testing and evaluation of command element T/Os occurs before a crisis. This will ensure that when a crisis does occur, the commander has a staff that can support him effectively.

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## **The MEF Command Element: Vestige of Attrition Warfare, or Golden Child of Maneuver Warfare?**

*The staff system is created for this purpose: That the commander shall be the best informed person in the command, that he shall be free of all exacting, onerous and time consuming labors, all this to the end that he may devote himself exclusively to the making of sound, major decisions.*

NAVMC – 7411, Staff Organizations and Functions, 1955.

### **Developing Staffs, Marine Corps Style**

The development of the MEF command element staff has been driven by the necessities of the moment during crisis. In a crisis there is no time to redesign staffs or organizations efficiently. Commanders will seek to solve a problem, regardless of the manpower cost and will gladly accept unnecessary billets.<sup>1</sup> This undisciplined approach to higher level staff organization is susceptible to the danger of developing organizations that are based on principles that do not support the Marine Corps warfighting doctrine or are inconsistent with the doctrinal concepts of command and control. The development of the current Marine Expeditionary Force Command Element (MEF CE) organization occurred in this way and caused an inconsistency between the structure of the organization and contemporary Marine Corps Command and Control (C2) doctrine.

The MEF represents the premier warfighting organization in the Marine Corps. It brings to the battlefield all the capabilities inherent in the Corps and is organized and trained to act in accordance with the doctrine of Maneuver Warfare. This warfighting philosophy seeks to empower subordinate commanders with the authority to make necessary and timely decisions, within the parameters of the commander's intent, and

thus reduce the requirement for close coordination and constant control from the MEF commander. Current command and control (C2) doctrine also emphasizes the need to maintain as small a C2 influence as possible. Since the inception of corps level organizations the Marine Corps has followed a trend of increasing the size of the staff, during crisis, in an effort to increase the capability to process information. This trend has not resulted in an improvement in the C2 capabilities and, despite the standing doctrine and warfighting philosophy, the MEF CE of today represents the latest evolution of this trend. In order to determine if the existing MEF CE organization is consistent with the principles outlined in Marine Corps doctrine, this paper will review current C2 doctrine, explore some principles for organizing effective staffs, analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of previous wartime corps level staffs, and compare and contrast the current MEF CE organization with its predecessors.

## **Command and Control Doctrine and Effective Staffs**

One critical component for the effective employment of armed force in war is the commander. On the commander's shoulders rest the responsibility of effectively employ his forces to accomplish his assigned objectives. Commanding and controlling his forces is therefore a critical concern for the commander. Without an effective system to direct the actions of his forces, the commander is unable to translate his vision and plans into action. An effective command and control system contains three elements: the staff that the commander forms to support him, the procedures that are used to process information and the technical means used to communicate.<sup>2</sup> All three elements, employed together, allow the commander to effectively gather, process, and distribute critical information.

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<sup>1</sup> Marine Corps Research Center, B-2.

The focus of this paper will be on the organization of the staffs and doctrinal and historical influences on the structure of MEF level staffs.

### *The Quest for Certainty and Effective Staffs*

The purpose of a staff is to assist the commander in performing his duties and command responsibilities. One important duty of a commander is to make decisions based on his best judgment. To do this, a commander has to have information if he is to be able to make informed decisions. In this capacity, the staff's primary functions include gathering, processing, presenting and distributing information for the commander.<sup>3</sup> It serves as an information clearinghouse.

Decisions are only as good as the information upon which they are based. If a staff gathers, processes, presents and distributes incorrect or inappropriate information, then the resulting decisions of the commander may be flawed and possibly irrelevant. Effective command and control in war demands that the commander have access to timely, relevant and accurate information continuously. Martin VanCreveld notes, "The history of command in war consists essentially of an endless quest for certainty."<sup>4</sup> This quest has influenced the organization and evolution of staffs more than any other single concept. VanCreveld observed that two basic approaches have emerged to prevent uncertainty:

Confronted with a task, and having less information available than is needed to perform that task, an organization may react in either of two ways. One is to increase its information processing capacity, the other to design the organization, and indeed the task itself, in such a way as to enable it to operate on the basis of less information. These approaches are

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<sup>2</sup> Martin VanCreveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), 10.

<sup>3</sup> VanCreveld, *Command in War* 7.

<sup>4</sup> VanCreveld, *Command in War* 264.

exhaustive; no others are conceivable. A failure to adopt one or the other will automatically result in a drop in the level of performance.<sup>5</sup>

To cope with insufficient information, an armed force has three organizational options; create an organization with increased information processing capacity, drastically simplify the whole organization, or divide the tasks into parts and establish semi-independent organizations that can deal with each task.<sup>6</sup>

Taking the first approach is the quickest and simplest. Since the staff is the commander's primary information processing tool, expanding the capacity of the staff would seem to provide a simple and inexpensive solution. For large and complex organizations, expanding the size of staffs is much easier than changing the entire structure of the organizations. Increasing staff size does increase the capacity to gather more information, however, more information requires more analysis and coordination and these tasks increase the amount of time it takes to process the information. The result may be accurate but untimely information. The commander essentially may still not be receiving the information he needs and this can lead to the perceived need for larger staffs to do more processing, which starts the cycle over again. In the end, this can be a self-defeating approach and as the staff grows, its ability to satisfy the information needs of the commander, in a timely fashion, diminishes.<sup>7</sup>

The second organizational fix to the information-processing problem is to simplify the organization. Simplification reduces the amount of information needed for command and control. However, it usually leads to the inability to deal with complex situations as well. Simplification means elimination of specialized elements in an organization. These

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<sup>5</sup> VanCreveld, *Command in War* 269.

<sup>6</sup> VanCreveld, *Command in War* 269.

<sup>7</sup> VanCreveld, *Command in War* 269.

elements normally represent a capability to perform some task. Simple organizations often can deal only with simple tasks. While it is true that the information requirements for command and control of these organizations are manageable, there is the danger that in a complex, chaotic environment, the simplified organization will be unable to accomplish a complex task efficiently or effectively. Perhaps even worse, it will not be capable of adjusting to changing circumstances, exposing the organization to great danger.<sup>8</sup>

The third way to overcome the lack of information processing capacity on the battlefield offers the best model to follow.<sup>9</sup> The essence of this approach is to task organize the force for specific missions and make each element as self-sufficient as possible. This approach, like the simplification approach, seeks to reduce the amount of information a commander needs in order to command and control. The difference between the two approaches lies in the recognition that a complex task is divisible into smaller parts that are easier to manage. The commander must identify these parts and assign them as separate tasks to his subordinate organizations. These organizations must each be capable of accomplishing their tasks with minimal control or support from the commander. There is no need for constant control since the information requirements of the commander are minimal. The commander, freed from concern over all details, can reduce the information requirements to simply identifying the progress of each element towards accomplishing its assigned task. The need for the staff to perform its primary function still exists, although it can concentrate on the information that is critical for the commander.

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<sup>8</sup> VanCrevelde, *Command in War* 269.

<sup>9</sup> VanCrevelde, *Command in War* 269.

## ***Contemporary C2 Doctrine***

The concept of Maneuver Warfare is the basic warfighting doctrine of the Marine Corps today. This warfighting philosophy seeks to gain advantages over an opponent by applying strength against weakness, generating and exploiting a high operational tempo, gaining and maintaining an ability to react to changing circumstance faster than the enemy. Ultimately, Maneuver Warfare requires agility not only in the speed of movement of forces, but also in the ability to identify windows of opportunity on the battlefield and exploit them before they are lost. Possessing a command and control system that gives the commander the ability to identify and exploit these fleeting advantages on the battlefield is critical to employing forces in a manner consistent with our doctrine.

### **What does an Effective Command and Control System Look Like?**

MCDP-6, the Marine Corps doctrinal publication on Command and Control states:

The aim is not to increase our *capacity* to perform command and control. It is not more command and control that we are after. Instead, we seek to decrease the amount of command and control that we *need*.<sup>10</sup>

To achieve this reduction in the need for command and control, current Marine Corps Command and Control doctrine lays down the following characteristics of an effective system:

1. Use of mission command and control.
2. Fostering initiative down to the lowest levels.
3. Using the commander's intent to focus the actions of all elements.
4. Developing mutual trust among commanders and subordinates.
5. Developing an implicit understanding and communications among superiors and subordinates.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 6-1, *Command and Control* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, October 1996), 110.

<sup>11</sup> MCDP 6-1,109-115.

Our doctrine thus calls for a MAGTF command system that uses these characteristics to develop procedures that reduce the amount of command and control it needs to exert over its task organized, subordinate elements. The characteristics of an effective command and control system describe the relationships and types of communication that should exist among superior and subordinate organizations. They emphasize the human element and the development of relationships between individuals. They emphasize the concept of “trust tactics” that forms one of the foundations of Maneuver Warfare.<sup>12</sup> However, because they are subjective, they are not effective tools to evaluate the structural organization of a staff.

### **Measures of Effectiveness**

The characteristics of an effective command and control system, as defined by current Marine Corps doctrine, must form the basis around which the MAGTF command element is organized. The staff’s primary function is to allow the commander to effectively command and control by developing, maintaining and using the relationships and methods of communications that are a necessity to operate in accordance with Maneuver Warfare doctrine. The organization of the staff must facilitate and encourage the use of these relationships and forms of communication and control. To do this, an effective staff organization must facilitate unity of effort among its elements, maintain reasonable spans of control internally and externally, promote the use of cohesive mission teams, and distribute information effectively. These traits of an effective staff offer a means to evaluate staffs and determine how effective they are as command and

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<sup>12</sup> Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, *Warfighting* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, June 1997), 72-76.

control systems.<sup>13</sup> In order to understand the capabilities and limitations of a MEF level command and control system, it is useful to examine the development and evolution of the corps level staff in the Marine Corps.

## **The Development of Corps Level Staffs in the Marine Corps**

Generally, a MEF is an organization comparable to an Army corps. Both of these organizations can control several division-sized units, are self-sustaining and are capable of independent operations for relatively long periods. The history of “corps” level Marine staffs begins in World War II. Before 1940, the only Marine Corps experience with higher-level staffs was in World War I.

### ***The Great War***

During World War I, the American Expeditionary Force adopted the French staff system for its own use. This system proved to be an effective and efficient command and control tool and became the standard staff system down to battalion level for the U.S. Army and Marine Corps.<sup>14</sup> In July 1918, Marine Major General John A. LeJeune, assumed command of the U.S. Army’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and became the first Marine to command a division sized organization in combat.<sup>15</sup> To assist him in command and control of the division, LeJeune employed a staff patterned on the U.S. Army’s model for staff organization. The Marine Corps gained valuable higher-level staff experience during this time; however, this experience remained at the tactical level.

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<sup>13</sup> MCDP 6-1, 133.

<sup>14</sup> Lieutenant Colonel J.D. Hittle, *The Military Staff* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Telegraph Press, 1949), 188.

<sup>15</sup> Robert D. Heinl, Jr., *Soldiers of the Sea* (Annapolis, Md.: United States Naval Institute, 1962), 207.

## ***The Inter War Period***

With the end of the war in 1918, the United States promptly and vigorously began the task of demobilizing its armed forces. The Marine Corps followed suit. During this period, the largest standard tactical unit was the Marine Regiment. With the formation of Fleet Marine Forces in 1933, the Marine Corps established two Brigades, each composed of infantry, artillery and support troops. Division sized organizations did not appear until 1940.<sup>16</sup> However, the Marine Corps frequently formed provisional brigades in the late 1930s. These organizations were non-permanent, ad-hoc arrangements established to conduct specific experiments and exercises to test and refine the amphibious assault concepts and techniques developed at Quantico by Marine Corps planners. The basic staff model for Marine Corps Brigades, Regiments and Battalions during this period continued to be the French organizational model.

## ***World War II***

The outbreak of War in Europe sparked a massive buildup of America's armed forces. Beginning in 1940, the Marine Corps expanded to assume a role in the looming war against Japan. War plans drawn up in the late 1930s envisioned a large-scale naval campaign across the Central Pacific to secure key advanced naval bases to protect the Philippines from Japanese invasion.<sup>17</sup>

The Marine Corps prepared for these operations by developing practical yet complex doctrine for large-scale amphibious operations. The complexity of these operations, combined with the nature of the area of operations and enemy threat, called for the

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<sup>16</sup> James A. Donovan, Jr., *The United States Marine Corps* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, Pub., 1967), 77.

Marine Corps to have the capability to conduct Division and Corps-sized amphibious operations. In February 1941, as the nation prepared for war and the Marine Corps expanded, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Divisions were formed. In 1942 the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Amphibious Corps came into existence. The Marine Corps now stepped into the “corps” level command and control arena.<sup>18</sup>

The Marine Amphibious Corps (MAC) was the first multi-division organization in the Marine Corps. In the space of less than one year, the Corps expanded from having Brigades as its largest standing organizations to establishing Corps level organizations and deploying them into combat. The learning curve under these conditions proved to be steep. A pool of corporate knowledge and experience for conducting operations on such a large tactical and operational level simply did not exist. In fact, many top Army leaders harbored serious doubts about the ability of senior Marine leaders to conduct operations on this scale.<sup>19</sup>

During World War II, the Marine Corps dispelled any doubts about its ability to conduct “Corps” level operations. By the conclusion of the war in the Pacific, the Corps had established two MAC headquarters that controlled six divisions and five Air Wings.<sup>20</sup> These organizations participated in over eight highly successful joint campaigns and validated the efficacy of the MAC staff organization as a “corps” level headquarters. This performance demonstrated that the Marine Corps could effectively command and control multi-division, joint operations in major wars. The concept of a higher-level

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<sup>17</sup> Philip A. Crowl, *United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific, Campaign in the Marianas* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1989), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Donovan, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and others, *Central Pacific Drive: History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Historical branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966), 42-43.

<sup>20</sup> Donovan, 79-80.

Marine tactical staff was thus here to stay. Not surprisingly, the staff model used to organize the MAC headquarters continued to be the French staff system.

### ***The Cold War and Vietnam***

The post war period again heralded drastic cuts in personnel and structure for the Marine Corps. The Marines abandoned the concept of the amphibious corps as a standing organization and re-established the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) as the command authority over divisions and wings. The FMF's role was primarily administrative and it served as a type command for the Navy Fleets.<sup>21</sup> The "corps" level headquarters became a temporary wartime tactical organization. The Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) assumed the responsibility of organizing and manning either an Amphibious Corps or a Marine Expeditionary Force during contingencies, and planned to accomplish the task by drawing personnel and equipment from peacetime organic organizations. In late 1965, the rapid commitment and build up of Marine forces in Vietnam led to the establishment of III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) as the senior Marine headquarters in Vietnam.<sup>22</sup> For the first time since the end of World War II, a Marine higher-level tactical headquarters would exercise command and control over joint, multi-division operations.<sup>23</sup>

The staff organization and structure of the MAF command element looked very similar to the MAC. The major difference between each of these staffs was a significant increase in personnel for the MAF. The basic staff doctrine remained unchanged, and overall the MAF in Vietnam exercised command and control in much the same way as a

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<sup>21</sup> Donovan, 82-83.

<sup>22</sup> Major General George S. Eckhardt, *Vietnam Studies: Command and Control, 1950-1969* (Washington, D.C., Department of the Army, 1974), 55.

<sup>23</sup> Originally called III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), the name of this organization was changed to III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) in 1965.

MAC in World War II. The situation in Vietnam, however, was significantly different. Great differences existed in the III MAF scope of responsibilities, the complexity of the situation it faced, the size of the area of operations, and the operational environment. Again, the ability of the MAF to effectively command and control a large joint operational level force came into question. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), the senior U.S. headquarters in Vietnam, eventually imposed a command structure that allowed it to maintain closer supervision of MAF operations and reduced the MAF's span of control over tactical forces.

### ***Post Vietnam to the Present***

After the Vietnam War, the idea of the MAF as the premier operational warfighter began to develop. Despite this, the likelihood of the employment of a MAF in a major war grew less and less toward the end of the cold war. The MAF staff's capability to command and control diminished as the Marine Corps fell into an operational routine emphasizing small Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) deployments and operations. Large-scale conflicts requiring the operational employment of a MAF-sized organization seemed less likely to force planners.

The gradual atrophy of the MAF staff, combined with the additional component functions mandated by the defense establishment's reorganization and focus on joint operations in the mid 1980s, drastically diminished the effectiveness of higher-level tactical and operational level command and control in the Marine Corps. These shortcomings became readily apparent in 1990 during Operation Desert Shield.<sup>24</sup> In response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States conducted the largest

deployment of American troops since the Vietnam War. Among the forces deployed was I MEF.<sup>25</sup>

The pre-war I MEF peacetime staff totaled 152 personnel. Soon after arriving in Saudi Arabia the inadequacy of this MEF staff organization became apparent. The pre-war table of organization could not satisfy the personnel requirements to operate the MEF command post on a 24-hour basis. Lieutenant General Boomer, the MEF commander, realizing the urgent need to augment his staff, absorbed the staff of the 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Brigade into the MEF staff. This brought the total strength of the I MEF command element to 477 by 1 December 1990. Despite this increase, the MEF staff, saddled with tactical, operational and component responsibilities, continued to struggle. General Boomer eventually solved the problem by appealing personally to the Commandant for more personnel. By the end of the war, the I MEF staff totaled over 1300 personnel, a growth of over 850 % from the pre-war table of organization (T/O). Despite the early problems, when adequately manned, the MEF performed effectively as a higher-level tactical and operational staff.<sup>26</sup> The current MEF T/O is a direct outgrowth of the Marine Corps experience in Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This conflict demonstrated that the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) remains the premier warfighting organization in the Marine Corps. As such, the MEF staff plays a critical role as the Marine Corps' premier high-level tactical staff.

This brief survey of the history of Marine "corps" level command and control reveals that only on three occasions has the Marine Corps had the opportunity to operate at that

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<sup>24</sup> Marine Corps Research Center, *Marine Expeditionary Force Command and Control: A research Paper* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Research Center, 1991), B-1.

<sup>25</sup> In 1989, the MAF was re-designated as a MEF.

<sup>26</sup> Marine Corps Research Center, B-1.

level: World War II, Vietnam, and Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Using World War II and Vietnam as case studies we can analyze the effectiveness of the respective staffs and identify similarities and differences with today's MEF staff organization.

### **The MAC and MAF; C2 Capabilities and Limitations**

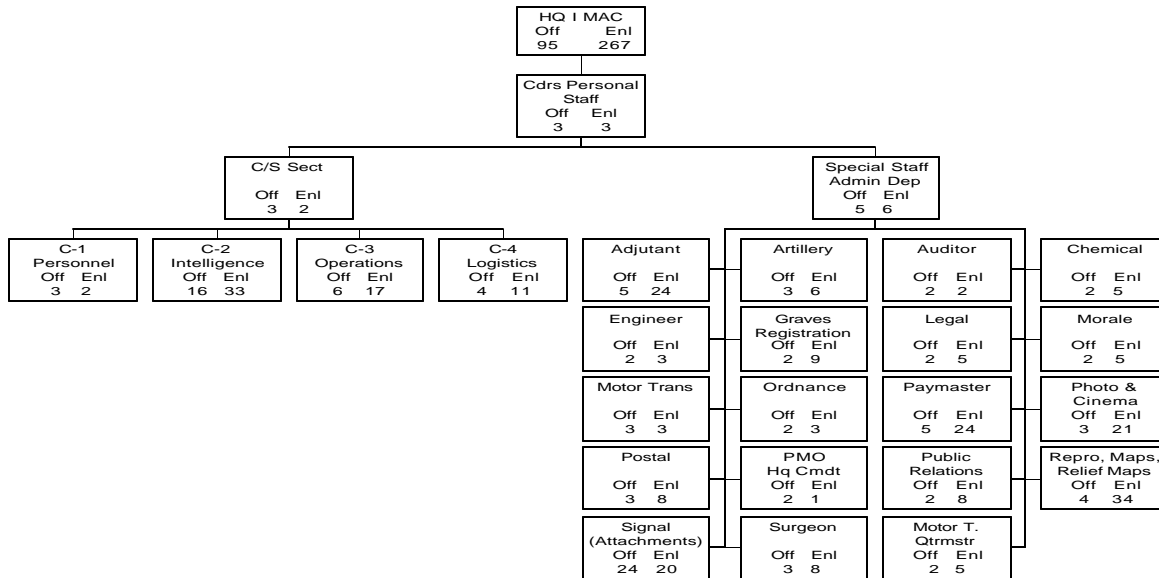
The MAC of World War II represents an example of a successful higher-level command and control structure and the MAF in Vietnam an example of failure. Each of these staff organizations evolved from generally accepted organizational principles and both shared a common origin that dated to the World War I French staff model. Despite this common heritage, each organization employed different staff organizations reflecting different approaches to the fundamental problem of managing information, and each achieved different results. Studying these organizations and evaluating their performance during combat operations offers some insights into the possible capabilities and limitations of the current MEF CE organization and provides a useful tool to identify some trends in the development of MEF level command and control.

#### ***The Marine Amphibious Corps Command Element***

The Marine Amphibious Corps was the first "Corps" level Marine command and control system (see Figure 1).<sup>27</sup> Organized on the French World War I staff model, it contained; the commander's personal staff, a command section (headed by a Brigadier General as the Chief of Staff), a personnel section (C-1), an intelligence section (C-2), an operations section (C-3), and a logistics section (C-4).

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<sup>27</sup> NAVMC-DPP, *Marine Corps Table of Organization (T/O)E-847, E-848, E-849* (Washington D.C.:1943).



**Figure 1. I Marine Amphibious Corps Command Element as of 1 Sept. 1943.**

Each section had a Colonel as the section chief. The personnel assigned to the “principal” staff totaled 98 officers and enlisted personnel. Separate from the principal staff, the MAC HQ contained a 263 man special staff. This special staff section, under the direction of the “Administrative Deputy” (a Brigadier General), included 20 Special staff sections that provided expertise in various fields and assisted in the administration of the staff. The large size of the special staff, the diversity of their functions and their primarily administrative nature highlight the significant administrative support functions the special staff fulfilled.

### ***The MAC in Operation FORAGER***

As stated above, the Marine Amphibious Corps was the first major corps level headquarters in the Marine Corps. It represents the beginning of Marine Corps command and control development at this level and serves as a benchmark from which to evaluate the development of staff organizations. Operation FORAGER provides a good case

study for an analysis of the combat performance of the MAC headquarters. Previous Marine operations, while organized and executed under the control of Amphibious Corps, were essentially division-sized operations conducted over limited land areas. By contrast, in Operation FORAGER, each Corps played an active role as a tactical headquarters. This operation was a joint, amphibious, multi-division operation conducted by two Marine Amphibious Corps. It remains the largest Marine led ground operation in history and provides an example of effective command and control. <sup>28</sup>

The area of operations for FORAGER was the Marianas Island chain. This area extended over 160 miles from north to south and encompassed several islands. The objectives for the operation were the capture of three islands, Saipan, Tinian and Guam. All three islands are large landmasses, ranging in size from 50<sup>29</sup> to 225<sup>30</sup> square miles.

No prior Marine organizations had conducted extended independent operations over such large areas. The V Amphibious Corps (VAC) had the tasks of capturing Saipan and Tinian, and the III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC) the capture of Guam. Each MAC operated on frontages as small as 4 kilometers to over 22 kilometers and conducted conventional operations against a tough but essentially conventional enemy.<sup>31</sup> The character of the battlefield was very conventional and linear and well suited for the command and control system developed to conduct operations of this nature in World War I.

VAC, having the task of commanding the largest force and seizing the toughest objective, Saipan, offers some interesting examples of the effectiveness of command and control during FORAGER. In order to arrive at a useful conclusion about the capabilities

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<sup>28</sup> Crowl, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Shaw, 356.

<sup>30</sup> Shaw, 439.

<sup>31</sup> Crowl, 340

of the MAC command element we will use the measures of effectiveness outlined previously to analyze the performance of this organization in the seizure of Saipan.

### **Common Objectives**

The VAC command element, through its detailed planning and exercise of command functions during the battle, maintained a unity of effort among its subordinate elements. The nature of the operation simplified the attainment of that unity of effort. The corps had a single objective that never changed, namely, securing Saipan, and its subordinate elements understood this. The operation also proved to be of relatively short duration and this allowed the focus on the objective to remain paramount. Another factor that facilitated establishing and maintaining unity of effort was the enemy's inability to maneuver openly and significantly disrupt operations. This was primarily due to U.S. control of the air and the isolation of the objective by the Navy.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the capture of Saipan was essentially a tactical level action. Commanders and their staffs were able to concentrate on the military tasks at hand, avoiding distractions of a political nature. Both the MAC staff its subordinates never lost sight of the ultimate objective.

### **Forces Assigned and Span of Control**

VAC, the largest corps in operation FORAGER, controlled 3 infantry divisions, and 1 corps artillery unit, totaling 66,779 personnel.<sup>33</sup> This was a joint organization with the Army providing one infantry division and the corps artillery. Throughout the campaign, the VAC command element operated with a self-imposed personnel shortage. Gen Smith had divided the VAC HQ in to two planning elements, one to act as the VAC staff, the other to be the Expeditionary Troops Headquarters, the "army" level headquarters.

Despite the use of Army personnel to augment each staff, the VAC headquarters was still under strength.<sup>34</sup> This arrangement seems to have had little significant effect on the ability of VAC to command and control a force of this size effectively, despite claims by the Army after the operation that the VAC staff's lack of personnel led to critical command and control problems.<sup>35</sup> In fact, when compared to a typical Army Corps staff of the same period, the MAC headquarters T/O was 176 personnel larger.<sup>36</sup>

The structure of the MAC staff contributed to maintaining a reasonable span of control within the command. The staff organizations outlined above clearly identified two major subdivisions based on two types of functions, operational and administrative.<sup>37</sup> Control of these functions was divided between the Chief of Staff, who handled the operational side, and the Administrative Deputy, who oversaw the administrative side. The Chief of Staff controlled and coordinated the actions of only four small sections totaling 92 personnel.<sup>38</sup> Careful management and coordination was easy to achieve with an organization this small. The special staff, or administrative sections, while important to the daily operations of the headquarters, was not crucial to the actual command and control of subordinate forces. The span of control, within the staff and with subordinate organizations, was relatively small and manageable, facilitating the execution of command and control throughout the campaign.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Crowl, 131.

<sup>33</sup> Crowl, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Crowl, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Crowl, 195.

<sup>36</sup> Kent R. Greenfield and others, *United States Army in World War I: The Army Ground Forces; The Organization of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1947), 361.

<sup>37</sup> MAC T/O NAVMC-DPP, *Marine Corps Table of Organization E-847, E-848, E-849*

<sup>38</sup> NAVMC –DPP, *(T/O)E-847, E-848, E-849*.

<sup>39</sup> Navy Marine Corps (NAVMC) – 1022-DPP, *Staff Manual, 1944* (Washington, D.C.: United States Marine Corps, 1944), 2.

### **Employing Cohesive Mission Teams**

The battle of Saipan highlights the use of subdividing tasks and assigning them to subordinate organizations. One feature of FORAGER was the independence given to each corps in conducting operations. This was due in part to the lack of an operational Army level HQ. Each Corps fought essentially its own battle with little influence from the other.<sup>40</sup> In effect, this was a sub-division of tasks and the creation of semi-independent organizations to accomplish each task. The arrangement reduced the need for constant C2 and consequently the need for large staffs as well.

The VAC also conducted operations in a decentralized manner. The primary means for controlling the land operations was the use of division zones of attack and setting limits of advance. These simple coordination measures reduced the need for constant control. Advancing methodically from a beachhead, the corps successfully controlled its three divisions over difficult and bitterly defended terrain. The VAC conducted the operation aggressively and successfully concluded the operation in 24 days.<sup>41</sup> The success of the VAC demonstrated that a three-division span of control was reasonable and confirmed that the MAC command element was up to the task of command and control of joint, multi-division operations.

### **Information Distribution**

The joint nature of this operation exacerbated communication problems. Each service perceived that there existed fundamental differences in tactics and warfighting philosophies. The Marine Commander, LtGen Holland M. Smith, questioned the performance of the Army Division under his command. The lack of a close working

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<sup>40</sup> Crowl, 39.

relationship that might have fostered mutual trust and confidence between the division commander and the MAC commander led to serious command and control problems, eventually resulting in the relief of the Army Division Commander. This unprecedented action sparked a long-lasting and bitter controversy between the Army and Marine Corps.<sup>42</sup> Some of this may have been avoidable with a mechanism that kept closer watch on subordinate organizations and kept the commander informed of impending problems. Despite these problems, the MAC staff was able to effectively transmit orders and control tactical operations in a joint environment.

#### **Assessment of the MAC CE as a Command and Control System**

Using the measures of effectiveness previously laid out, the MAC command element provides a good example of a simple and effective C2 apparatus that reduced the need to exercise constant control. The organization of forces employed by the MAC in Operation FORAGER is compatible with VanCreveld's model of an organization optimized for effective command and control; one that is task organized for specific missions, with each element as self-sufficient as possible.

#### ***The Marine Amphibious Force Command Element***

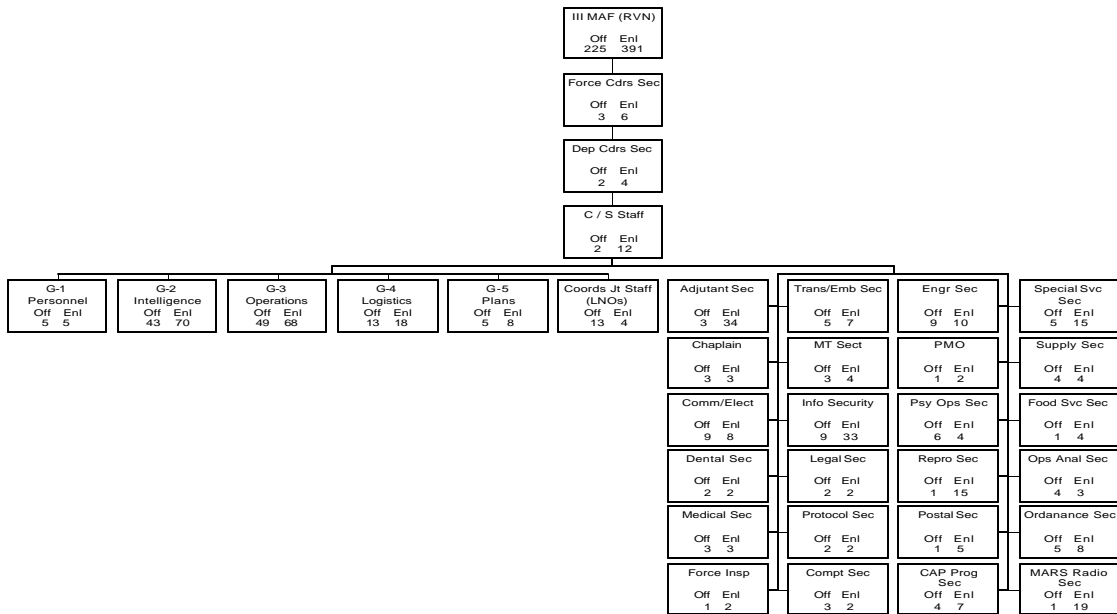
The war in Vietnam provided the Marine Corps the first opportunity since the Second World War to conduct combat operations at a corps level. In 1965, III MAF headquarters became operational and assumed command of all Marine forces in Vietnam. By the end of the year, the staff consisted of 80 officers and 122 Enlisted personnel. This structure soon proved inadequate and resulted in serious communications and

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<sup>41</sup> Crowl, 264.

<sup>42</sup> Crowl, 192

coordination problems with subordinate Division and Wing headquarters.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, throughout 1966 and 1967, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) revised the III MAF T/O and significantly increased the personnel requirements. In 1968, the size of the III MAF staff reached its wartime peak of 616 personnel (see figure 2).<sup>44</sup>



**Figure 2. III Marine Amphibious Force, (RVN) as of 9 July 1968.**

The basic organization of this staff followed the traditional French staff model. The commander (a LtGen) retained a personal staff, as did the Deputy MAF Commander (a MajGen), each in separate command groups. The Chief of Staff (a BGen), working directly for the MAF Commander, remained as the primary staff coordinator. These three sections formed the command element of the HQ. Below the command element were five primary staff sections (each headed by a Colonel): Personnel (G-1), Intelligence (G-2), Operations (G-3), Logistics (G-4) and Plans (G-5). The total personnel assigned to the command and primary staff sections totaled 332.

<sup>43</sup> Jack Schulimson and others, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The landing and Build Up, 1965* (Washington, D.C: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1978), 44.

Like the Marine Amphibious Corps, the MAF also had a large contingent of special staff sections consisting of twenty-four separate sections with 287 personnel. Unlike the MAC, the special staff sections did not fall under a separate administrative assistant, but reported directly to the Chief of Staff, thus burdening him with directly coordinating the actions of 29 sections.<sup>45</sup>

### ***The MAF in Vietnam***

Marine Corps command and control, at the “corps” level in Vietnam, was less than completely successful. The Marine Corps involvement in Vietnam began in March of 1965 with the deployment of the 9<sup>th</sup> MEB to DaNang.<sup>46</sup> This small force soon expanded and before the end of the year, the rest of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division was ashore and conducting operations. That same year, III MEF headquarters stood up in Vietnam but soon changed its name to III MAF. By 1968, III MAF was the senior U.S. headquarters in the I Corps area and commanded the largest force of any MEF level organization in the history of the Marine Corps.

The area of operations of III MAF constituted the largest single area assigned to a Marine Corps level headquarters. Extending from Da Nang in the south to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in the north, and 75 miles from the coast to the Cambodian border, this area covered 10,800 square miles.<sup>47</sup> The geography varied considerably, consisting of remote jungle-covered mountains along the western border, to highly populated costal plains and farmlands on the coast. Along the coastal area, where the

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<sup>44</sup> Department of the Navy, *Table of Organization, P-4931: Force Headquarters, III Marine Amphibious Force (RVN)* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1968)

<sup>45</sup> Department of the Navy, *Table of Organization, P-4931*.

<sup>46</sup> J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1987), 626.

<sup>47</sup> Jack Schulimson and others, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968* (Washington, D.C: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1997), 7.

majority of the population lived, a fairly well developed transportation infrastructure existed. This was not the case for the more remote and unpopulated areas. These characteristics created significant problems for the conduct of military operations and greatly increased the difficulty of operating and effectively commanding forces. The Marine Corps certainly had never faced the problem of commanding such a large joint force over such a great expanse of harsh territory.

### **Losing Focus**

From the beginning, the relationship between Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) and the senior Marine Headquarters in Vietnam was troubled. At the center of this trouble lay a fundamental difference over the correct approach to the conduct the war. MACV and the Joint Chiefs of Staffs (JCS) saw the war primarily as a conventional conflict and adopted a strategy designed to find the enemy, engage and destroy him with superior American firepower. Senior Marine Corps leaders saw the war as a guerilla war and sought unsuccessfully to adopt a strategy of pacification.<sup>48</sup> These two views were never entirely reconciled and resulted in a loss of unity of effort. In the end, III MAF ended up trying to follow both strategies at the same time and achieved limited results.

This situation resulted in III MAF trying to conduct two separate wars simultaneously, with a consequent lack of focus for the MAFs subordinate units. Even though III MAF pursued its pacification program aggressively, it only involved small units.<sup>49</sup> The larger units spent their time going from one engagement to another with large periods of inactivity in between. When III MAF did conduct large-scale operations,

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<sup>48</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, 13.

they were on the direct orders of MACV since III MAF did not actively seek opportunities to support the MACV strategy.<sup>50</sup> On these operations, III MAF units often fought for terrain and paid dearly for it, only to abandon it to the enemy.

Another factor contributing to a loss of unity of effort was that operations were continuous. Unlike previous conflicts, the Marines in Vietnam spent most of their time in the field. The search and destroy strategy required a continuous search for the enemy and eventually this became a routine, robbing operations of a sense of urgency. The only clearly understood objective was to kill as many of the enemy as possible.

### **Loss of Control**

Perhaps the most striking failure of Marine command and control in Vietnam was its inability to command the forces assigned to it effectively. III MAF was the senior U.S. headquarters in the I Corps sector of Northern South Vietnam. By January 1968, it commanded a joint force comprised of two Marine and one Army divisions, one Marine Air Wing and a Force Logistics Command. By the end of the year, it controlled two additional Army divisions. In total, this was a force of over 114,000 personnel.<sup>51</sup> In 1968 alone, more than 30 major operations and three major enemy offensives took place in the III MAF's area of responsibility (AOR). In any given month, three or more operations were ongoing simultaneously.<sup>52</sup> MACV grew skeptical that III MAF had the capability to effectively command and control such a large force. Consequently, in February 1968, it established a MACV forward (MACV-FWD) headquarters in the III MAF AOR, under General Creighton Abrams, to relieve some of the burden from III

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<sup>49</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, 609.

<sup>50</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, 722-727.

<sup>52</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, 722-727.

MAF.<sup>53</sup> During this time, the Tet offensive was still under way and the battle for Hue was in progress. The fact that MACV felt compelled to establish its influence at this time suggests that MACV lacked confidence in III MAF's ability to effectively control the forces assigned. One month later, MACV-FWD disbanded, but in its place, it established an additional corps HQ under III MAF to ease the C2 problems. XXIV Corps assumed command of three divisions in the southern area of III MAF's AOR. However, III MAF had operational control of XXIV Corps.<sup>54</sup>

### **The Failure to Task Organize**

While III MAF's subordinate organizations were divisions, reinforced battalions or under strength regiments conducted most operations. One reason for this was that the enemy never presented an opportunity that allowed large organizations to bring their full power to bear. Ad hoc organizations were put together quickly to engage the enemy before the opportunity vanished. Even deliberately planned operations followed the same pattern. Each division received an area of responsibility and operated within this area. The mission of III MAF called for the pacification of its AOR through the destruction of enemy forces. III MAF assigned the same mission to its divisions so there was no subdivision of the task into essential components. Each division essentially had the same task. III MAF never developed a coherent campaign plan to defeat the Vietnamese, at least not one that supported the MACV strategy.

### **Information Overload**

In Vietnam, the U.S. command and control system suffered from information overload. Improvements in communications technology and the use of automated data

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<sup>53</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, 237-238.

systems gave American commanders the ability to gather spectacular amounts of information. Command elements, burdened with this vast sea of data, became overloaded and unable to function effectively. The quick fix attempted was to increase the size of staffs.<sup>55</sup> III MAF, like all other U.S. staffs in Vietnam, followed this approach. Without the option of redefining tasks or reorganizing its forces to accomplish those tasks, III MAF turned to the only other way to quickly increase its information processing capacity. This growth, however, did not result in increased efficiency, and as stated earlier, MACV established another layer of command under III MAF.

### **Assessment of the MAF CE as a Command and Control System**

The structure changes that occurred to the Marine Corps MAF staff in Vietnam focused on the need to increase the information processing capacity of the MEF. One method chosen to do this was to increase the size of the MAF staff. This approach proved unsuccessful. When compared to the MAC staff, the MAF staff is large and unwieldy and fails to meet the criteria established by current doctrine for an effective command and control system.

## **The MEF Command Element Today**

### ***Structure of the Marine Expeditionary Force Command Element***

The current MEF command element appears similar to both the MAC and MAF in structure. Despite the cosmetic similarities, however, it represents a significant evolution of the “Corps” level C2 structure in the Marine Corps. In reality, there are two versions of the MEF command element today. I MEF, tasked with the responsibility of providing

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<sup>54</sup> Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, 238-239.

<sup>55</sup> VanCrevled, 249-260.

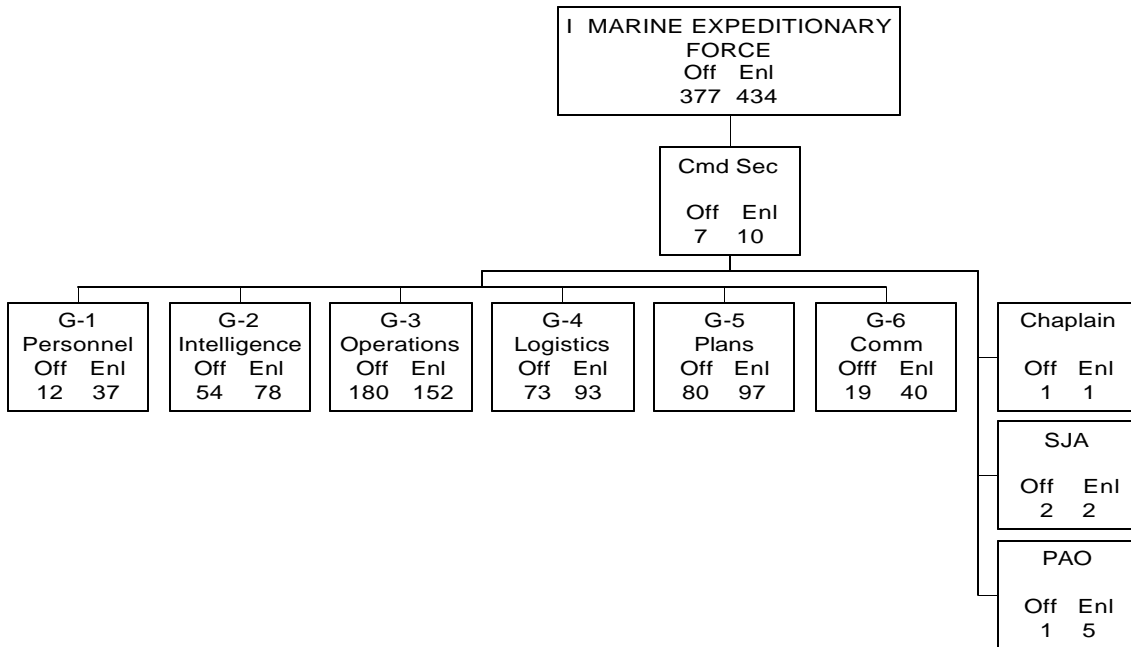
a corps level Marine headquarters for each Major Theater War, has developed a large command element with a robust tactical command and control capability. II and III MEF have different missions and rely on a less robust capability. Both of these MEFs use essentially the same T/O, although there are some minor differences.

### **I MEF - the “Imperial MEF”**

Tasked with unique Major Theater War plan responsibilities, I MEF is capable of bringing to the battlefield all the combat capabilities inherent in the Marine Corps. I MEF’s Command Element T/O provides the Marine Corps the ability to fulfill the requirement for sustained command and control of a large, multi-division force at the high end of the spectrum of conflict.

The basic organization remains based on the French staff model. However, when compared to the MAC and the MAF staffs, the modern MEF staff organization is highly streamlined. There is a Command Section comprised of the Commander’s Personal Staff and includes the Chief of Staff, who falls directly under the Commanding General. The Special Staff branches, composed of the Chaplain Branch, the Staff Judge Advocate Branch and the Public Affairs Office Branch, also fall under the Command Section. The command element retains the same functional division compartmentalization as the MAF: Personnel and Administration (G-1), Intelligence and Counterintelligence (G-2), Operations and Training (G-3), Logistics (G-4), and Plans (G-5). One additional principal staff division, Communications and Information Systems (G-6), exists.

The multiple special staff sections are no longer present, their functions taken over by the different special staff divisions or transferred to the MEF Headquarters Group



**Figure 3. I Marine Expeditionary Force Command Element as of 1 October 2000.**

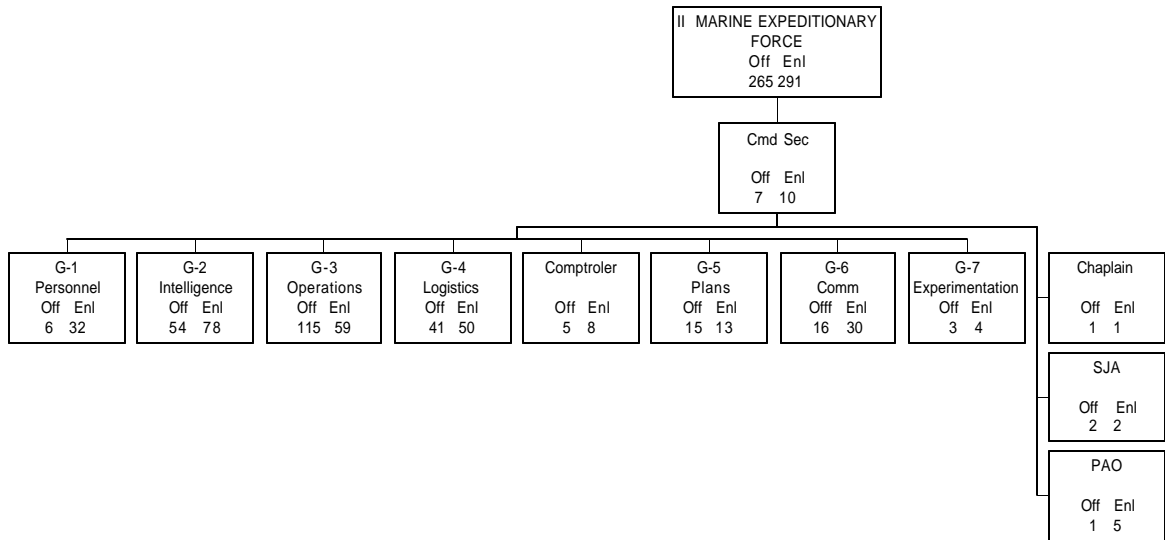
(MHG), which provides direct support to the staff. The wartime manpower requirement for I MEF’s Command Element is 359 officers and 424 enlisted, totaling 811 personnel.<sup>56</sup>

### II and III MEF

In terms of overall organization, the II and III MEF command elements are almost identical to I MEF. Each consists of a similar command section with the same special staff branches, and a G-1, G-2, G-3, G-4, G-5, and G-6. Unlike the other MEFs, II MEF contains a Comptrollers Division (this function is under the G-4 of I and III MEF) and G-7 that functions as the experimentation and exercise section.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> HQMC Code MPC-50, *Table of Organization for T/O 4918G, I MEF Command Element*, Report as of 00/10 (URL:< <http://www.mccdc.usmc.mil/tfs/current/ce/4918g.rtf> >, accessed 13 February 2001), 4747-4779.

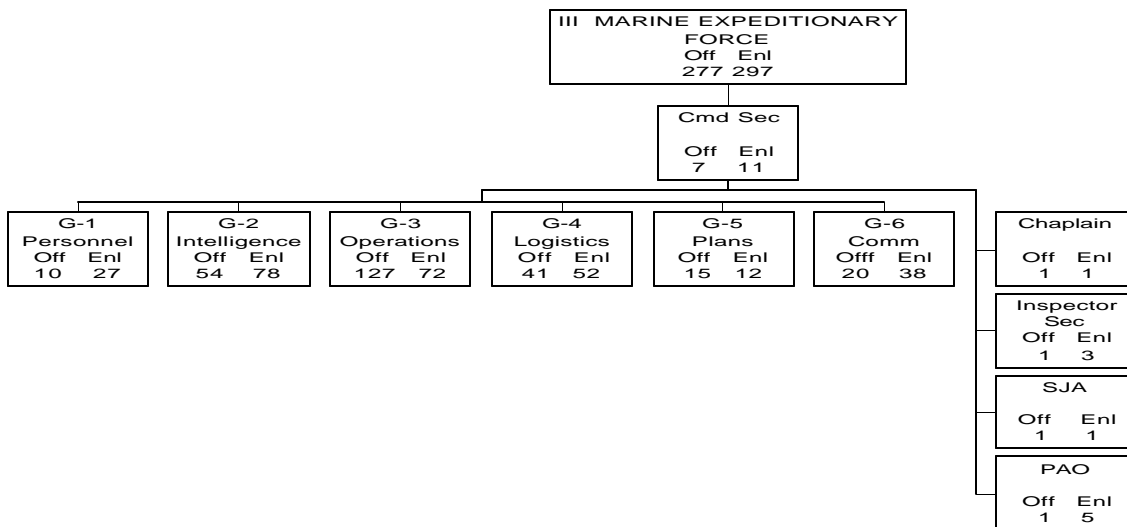
<sup>57</sup> HQMC Code MPC-50, *Table of Organization for T/O 4918L, II MEF Command Element*, Report as of 00/10 (URL :< <http://www.mccdc.usmc.mil/tfs/current/ce/4918l.rtf> >, accessed 13 February 2001), 4780-4806.



**Figure 4. II Marine Expeditionary Force Command Element as of 1 Oct 2000.**

III MEF has the same organization as II MEF with the exception of having an Inspectors

Branch as a special staff branch.<sup>58</sup>



**Figure 5. III Marine Expeditionary Force Command Element as of 1 October 2000.**

<sup>58</sup> HQMC Code MPC-50, *Table of Organization for T/O 4918M, III MEF Command Element*, Report as of 00/10(URL:< <http://www.mccdc.usmc.mil/tfs/current/ce/4918m.rtf> >, accessed 13 February 2001), 4807-4834.

Overall, the similarities between the II and III MEF command elements outweigh the differences. These leaner organizations represent the baseline for the modern Marine Corps higher-level staff and I MEF represents a staff with a special capability that its counterparts can not duplicate by without significant augmentation.

### ***Comparison and Contrast of Functional Divisions***

Understanding the overall organizational structure of each command element highlights the general differences in each organization. Analyzing the specific differences in the functional organizations, or primary staff divisions, also reveals some larger trends in the evolution of the staff and points to some of the capabilities and limitations of Marine Corps operational command and control.

### **Dominance of the Operations Division**

One way to measure the changes is to compare the number of personnel assigned to performing the tasks associated with each of the functional divisions. Before doing this however, the numbers for the MAC and MAF need to be adjusted to account for the extensive specialization in these staffs. A meaningful comparison of the resources devoted to each function can only be done if we count the special staff sections of the MAC and MAF within their respective functional area.

As noted previously, the MAC and MAF staffs contained large special staff sections. These sections performed important functions for the commander, functions that during their time were not recognized as the responsibilities of the personnel, intelligence, operations or logistics divisions, but today are categorized as falling within the functional responsibilities of the primary staff divisions. Today, the principal divisions have assimilated the special staff into their organizations. As an example, the Force engineer,

a separate section under the MAC and MAF, now falls under the G-4. The same is true for the ordnance, motor transport and medical sections. Table 1 below lists the total personnel performing duties of each functional area within each of the five staffs.

**Table 1. Personnel Strengths by Division.**

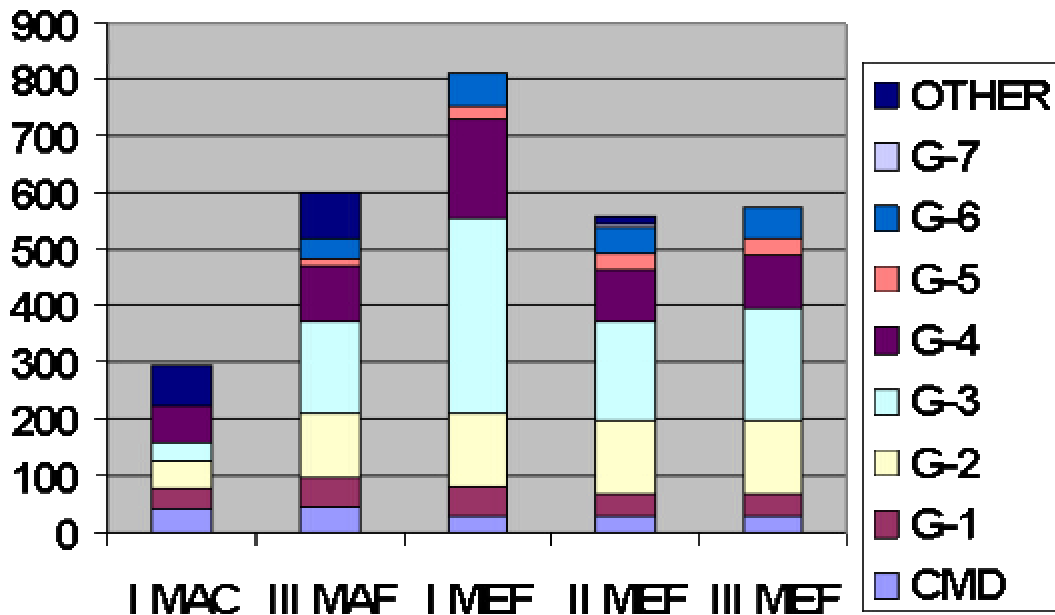
<b>Sec</b>	<b>Cmd</b>	<b>C/G-1</b>	<b>C/G-2</b>	<b>C/G-3</b>	<b>C/G-4</b>	<b>G-5</b>	<b>G-6</b>	<b>G-7</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>I MAC</b>	39	37	50	33	64				69	292*
<b>III MAF</b>	45	52	113	162	97	12			81	600*
<b>I MEF</b>	29	49	132	343	177	22	59			811
<b>II MEF</b>	29	38	132	174	91	28	46	7	13	556
<b>III MEF</b>	28	37	132	199	93	27	58			574

\*Total excludes personnel that perform only routine administrative tasks and would be part of the MHG today.

What appears is a trend showing a disproportionate growth of the operations branch. In 1944, the operations section had 11.3% of the total functional staff. In Vietnam, the number rose to 27%. II and III MEF today have 31.3% and 34.7%. I MEF however has 42.3% of all its personnel assigned to the operations division of the wartime staff. The growth in the G-3s, due primarily to a significant increase in liaison officers (and the establishment of an imbedded rear area command and control center in I MEF), is intended to satisfy the spiraling information processing requirements imposed by today's highly complex battlefield. Facilitating this expansion has been the establishment of the G-6.

The MAC and MAF had no standing Communications Division. Despite this, each staff did require substantial internal communications support. This usually came from attached communications units. This remains the case today and the G-6 performs communications planning not only for the MEF Command Element, but also for the MEF as a whole. It performs only minor administrative communications support for the command element.

The intelligence division has also shown an increase, rising from 17.1% in World War II to about 23% for II and III MEF today. All other divisions and sections have decreased in relative size as the G-3 expanded. Figure 7 depicts the relative proportion of personnel by function within each of the five staffs.



**Figure 6. Number of personnel by staff function.**

Another trend that is apparent is the lack of focus on the operational planning capability. The numbers of personnel assigned to the G-5s I, II and III MEF are 22, 28

and 27 respectively, only 2.2% to 5% of the total personnel. If this is any indication of the resources devoted to that function, then it is possible to conclude that the MEF's capability to conduct extensive operational planning is limited. Figure 6 demonstrates the relative composition of each staff by functional divisions. The II and III MEF staffs are remarkably similar to the III MAF staff.

The difference in the command element tables of organization between I MEF and the other MEFs reflects the difference in responsibilities and missions that each MEF has. I MEF, tasked as the primary MEF command element for both major theater war scenarios, developed a T/O based on the experience of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. II and III MEF, lacking similar missions, have developed smaller T/Os.

### **Span of Control and the Chief of Staff**

The final trend of note is the change in the span of control of the Chief of Staff (C/S). The MAC dealt with the coordination of multiple special staff sections by establishing two separate reporting chains. The C/S coordinated the actions of the functional divisions, C-1 through C-4, while an Administrative Deputy coordinate the actions of the 20 special staff sections. The C/S thus was primarily concerned with the command and control of operations while the Admin Deputy dealt with internal administrative matters. The advantage of this system was that it divided responsibilities and allowed the C/S and the Administrative Deputy to focus on manageable tasks. The obvious drawback was that many of the special staff sections advised the commander on operational matters and their input was crucial for command, control, and planning of operations.

Despite an increase in the special staff, III MAF in Vietnam did not use this dual staff system. The C/S was responsible for coordinating the efforts of all the staff sections

and divisions. The advantage of consolidating all sections under one Chief of Staff is that it allows for integration of the expertise of the special staff into operational planning. Despite this synergy, the burden on the C/S must have been difficult at best, requiring him to track and manage all operational and administrative details.

Today's MEF C/S remains the central coordinator for all staff activity. His span of control, however, is considerably less. The C/S now coordinates only three to four small special staff sections, and six or seven functional divisions. This streamlined organization reflects the absorption of most of the special staff by the functional divisions. The MEF Headquarters Group, which provides the full range of administrative support to the command element, performs most of the routine administrative functions of the staff. This arrangement allows the Commander, C/S, and the divisions to focus on planning and command and control functions.

## **Conclusion**

The keys to developing an effective C2 systems that are based on current doctrine are the ability to correctly identify the proper subdivisions of the tasks in an assigned mission and remaining flexible enough to quickly recognize the need to change and redefine tasks as the situation requires. The Marine Corps has embraced the concept of task organization and has developed the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) as the model of organization for combat operations. The MAGTF commander has great flexibility to tailor forces to missions. Each element of the MAGTF is a self-contained, self-supporting organization (albeit for short periods) that specializes in one particular type of combat operation. Each element can be task organized for specific tasks and, with

augmentation from the other elements, can act as an independent organization.<sup>59</sup> The Marine Corps has thus created an organization that lends itself to operating with a minimum need for information processing by staffs and has developed a warfighting and command and control doctrine that complements our basic warfighting organization.

The MEF CE has grown since World War II, yet the functions and potential missions remain similar. Our warfighting doctrine calls for decentralized operations and our C2 doctrine calls for minimizing staff size and the need for C2, yet the command element for our premier warfighter has grown almost 200% in the last 50 years. A large staff can reduce flexibility and the ability to recognize changes in the situation quickly. The typical MEF staff today has three layers of supervisors between the MEF Commander and the staff officer that collects and analyzes information. This can lead to delays in passing important information to the commander as it gets filtered and screened at each level, or a lack of understanding of the commanders information requirements by the information collector.<sup>60</sup>

However, size alone is not inherently bad. Each level of command requires a staff of some size. Any organization must have a minimum size, based on the number and types of tasks it must perform, to function effectively. As long as the tasks remain the same, the size should remain stable. Because the Marine Corps is the nation's force in readiness, it must be prepared to deploy and effectively operate in any location in the world on short notice. The operational environment runs the gamut from arctic conditions to deserts, jungles to mountains. It must be prepared to operate as part of a

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<sup>59</sup> Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 5-12D, *Organization of Marine Corps Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1998), 1-1 –1-3.

<sup>60</sup> T/O 4918G, 4754.

joint and combined force or independently. It must be prepared to conduct full combat operations or operations other than war. In short, the MEF must be prepared for any contingency. Like its predecessors, the MEF will most likely be part of a joint force, and just as likely, operate within a multi-national operation. It will encounter difficulties similar to those faced by the MAC and the MAF since the fundamental operational environment for the MEF still remains a multi-division operation on a large land mass.

A trend of increasing size, when the tasks or operating environments do not change significantly, indicates that the organization is following VanCreveld's first model for dealing with a lack of information. This approach, increasing the information processing capacity of the organization, is contrary to the Marine Corps command and control doctrine. Instead of creating mission command and control, it facilitates directive command and control. Instead of focusing on decentralized operations, it seeks to influence whatever it can. To maintain a viable MEF level command and control capability that is consistent with current doctrine, the Marine Corps must ensure that proper experimentation, testing and evaluation of command element T/Os occurs before a crisis. This will ensure that when a crisis does occur, the commander has a staff that can support him effectively.

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