MCWP 3-32/NTTP 3-02.3M

Maritime Prepositioning Force Operations

U.S. Marine Corps

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
Headquarters United States Marine Corps
Washington, DC 20308-1775

23 February 2004

FOREWORD

A maritime prepositioning force (MPF) operation is the rapid deployment and assembly of a Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) in a secure area using strategic airlift and forward-deployed maritime prepositioning ships (MPSs).

An MPF operation is a mission-tailored, strategic deployment option that is global in nature, naval in character, and suitable for various employment. Maritime prepositioning provides a combatant commander with deployment flexibility and an increased capability to respond rapidly to a crisis or contingency with a credible force. The essential purpose of an MPF operation is to establish a MAGTF fully prepared to execute an employment mission.

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-32/Navy Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (NTTP) 3-02.3M, *Maritime Prepositioning Force Operations*, provides doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures to plan and execute an MPF operation. It is intended for Marine Corps and Navy commanders, their staffs, and other Service commanders and staffs.

MCWP 3-32/NTTP 3-02.3M supersedes Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-5/NWP 3-02.3, *Maritime Prepositioning Force Operations*, September 1993.

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

EDWARD HANLON, JR.
Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding General
Marine Corps Combat Development Command

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JOHN M. KELLY

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CHAPTER 1
FUNDAMENTALS

The maritime prepositioning force (MPF) Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) can directly support our national maritime strategy of protecting key naval chokepoints and sea lines of communications (SLOCs). An MPF operation includes the airlift of MAGTF and Navy elements, the Navy support element (NSE), and naval coastal warfare (NCW) units with selected equipment into an arrival and assembly area (AAA) to join with equipment and supplies carried aboard maritime prepositioning ships (MPSs).

Echelon of Forces

Maritime prepositioning provides a combatant commander with deployment flexibility and an increased capability to respond rapidly to a crisis or contingency with a credible force. An MPF operation may consist of one ship interacting with a forward-deployed Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU); a maritime prepositioning ships squadron (MPSRON) and a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) fly-in echelon (FIE); or a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) falling in on all three MPSRONs. The MPF is one component of the Marine Corps' rapid response capability triad, which also includes the air contingency MAGTF (ACM) and forward-deployed amphibious forces (AFs).

Each triad component can be used separately or integrated to further enhance a combatant commander's options. An MPF operation is an economy of force measure that allows deployment of an appropriate force if a crisis arises. The MPF offers an augmentation capability for amphibious operations, but is not a substitute due to an inherent lack of forcible entry capability. An MPF operation provides a method to rapidly augment a forward-deployed MAGTF, an ongoing amphibious operation or other joint, multinational or combined force operations.

Concept

An MPF operation extends from marshalling through arrival and assembly of the MAGTF to reconstitution of the MPF. The geographic reach of the operation may vary, but the MPF is inherently a strategic or intertheater capability. Execution involves the following:

- Supporting forces such as the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), specifically the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) or the Air Mobility Command (AMC). The SDDC is formerly the Military Traffic Management Command.
- The host nation (HN) and supported/supporting combatant commander's organizations.
- Other deployment support agencies that the situation may demand.

While an MPF operation is conceptually simple, the strategic dimensions, the number of major commands involved as the force transits from theater to theater (from and to combatant commanders), and the intricacies of the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) make the operation extremely complex. The overlap of phases and geographic separations places heavy demands on command elements (CEs).

The scope of the operation may require activating Navy reserves to conduct the offload and Marine Corps reserves to conduct civil affairs and MAGTF operations. Conflicting demands of deployment and employment will dictate a dynamic planning process that must remain responsive to the current situation. Operational planning must begin with a risk/threat assessment to determine if an MPF operation is the appropriate force deployment option. Some planning factors will be determined late in the decisionmaking process because of the remoteness of the deployment area and uncertainty of the situation. Subsequent operations will impact significantly on

execution planning. Commanders must visualize their concept of operations (CONOPS) ashore to determine their arrival and assembly plans, which determine their deployment plans.

The Initiating Directive

An MPF operation begins with the decision to employ the MPF MAGTF. Typically, a combatant commander—in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and the subordinate component commanders, and as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense (SecDef)—initiates an MPF operation and subsequent MAGTF operations. An initiating directive provides essential information. It is issued by and at the discretion of the establishing authority, a common superior commander of the Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Force (CMPF), and MPF MAGTF commander (see ch. 3).

The CMPF; MPF MAGTF commander; and the commander, Navy support element (CNSE) must quickly determine the requirements and work with higher headquarters to ensure sufficient information and guidance is provided for rapid and efficient execution. If an MPF operation augments an amphibious operation, the MPF mission and appropriate command relationship guidance is included in the amphibious operation initiating directive.

Planning is continuous, but the execution phase actually begins with assigning a specific mission. Terminating the arrival and assembly phase occurs when all prerequisites in the initiating directive are met and the MAGTF is established ashore. The MAGTF is established ashore when adequate equipment and supplies are offloaded and issued to arriving units; the MAGTF's command and control (C2) capabilities are established; and the MAGTF commander is ready to execute the mission.

The MAGTF commander will report mission readiness to the establishing authority upon termination of the arrival and assembly phase. Subsequent MAGTF operations ashore are separate from an MPF operation. After the MAGTF mission is completed, the MPF focus shifts to the reconstitution of maritime prepositioning equipment and supplies (MPE/S) aboard the effected MPSRON.

If a separate initiating directive is not published; e.g., during crisis situations or if issued late in the planning process, naval commanders involved in MPF operations will have to act upon information given in alert/warning/execution orders. From this information an initiating directive may be formulated and recommended to the establishing authority for approval and promulgation. These orders often do not contain detailed information specific to the MPF. (App. A is a sample format that contains the "who, what, when, and where" guidance.)

Forward Presence and Crisis Response

Development of the naval force structure derives from the national military strategy (NMS), two tenets of which are forward presence and crisis response. Reinforcing US forward-deployed forces and multinational partners and projecting combat power across the range of military operations is an essential ingredient of the NMS.

MPSRONs are strategically based around the globe (see fig. 1-1). Naval forces can link-up with them in an operational area in a matter of days. This capability demonstrates commitment, reinforces alliances, enhances regional stability, promotes US influence and access, and is especially responsive to regional crises or natural disasters.

The MPF is designed to respond independently or with other forces to a variety of regional crises. The MPF provides a quick and credible response to deter an escalation in hostilities or engage decisively if deterrence fails.

The essential contribution of an MPF operation is mobility and flexibility, allowing a quick