

Training the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander: Making a MAGTF Officer.

CSC 1997

Subject Area – Training

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Title:** Training the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander: Making a MAGTF Officer.

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**Thesis:** Due to the myriad capabilities added to the MEU(SOC) ACE, its requirement to operate in the international arena, and the need to operate as an integral element within the MAGTF, additional means of training should be established to prepare an ACE Commander to effectively utilize the variety of assets he commands.

**Background:** The Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)) is an integral part of the National Security and Military Strategies of the United States, and its use has greatly increased over the past few years, not only unilaterally, but also in the Joint and Multinational arena. The Aviation Combat Element (ACE) is an integral part of the MEU(SOC), and it provides a myriad of detachments and capabilities to the MEU(SOC). The ACE Commander is therefore required to maintain extensive knowledge and understanding of ACE assets and employment considerations in unilateral, joint and multinational operations. The current process for training a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander is extremely limited, and relies mostly on previous experience the ACE Commander has gained. There are a variety of forums available that can provide valuable training for future ACE Commanders, ranging from the MEU(SOC)/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course, the Tactical Air Commander's Course, and MEU/ACE Training Course to the MAGTF Staff Training Program, Wing Battlestaff training, and the Air Ground Operations School. These forums and training programs all provide certain aspects that are useful toward training an ACE Commander; however, they do not provide a consolidated, focused means of training, nor are they effectively utilized. The ACE Commander requires training that assists him in achieving not just the ACE missions, but the MEU(SOC) missions as well. A training course can be developed that will assist the ACE Commander in leading the ACE. The training should augment the commander's individual experience, and should be used in addition to a fleet up process. Emphasis should be placed on developing an ACE Commander that is a MAGTF Officer. The training should not be a consolidation of those courses already available, but a course constructed specifically toward training the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander.

**Recommendation:** A MEU(SOC) ACE Commander's Course should be instituted that consists of instruction in each of the MEU(SOC) missions, employment of all the ACE detachments, command and control, Battle Group and external assets integration, and joint and multinational operations. The training should focus on utilizing the ACE as part of the MAGTF and it should be developed to augment the ACE Commander's experience prior to command.

# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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|   |                                    |                                     |   |   |                                 |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. REPORT DATE<br><b>1997</b>   |                                    | 2. REPORT TYPE                      |   | 3. DATES COVERED<br><b>00-00-1997 to 00-00-1997</b> |                                 |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE<br><b>Training the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander: Making a MAGTF Officer.</b>  |                                    |                                     |   | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER                                 |                                 |
|   |                                    |                                     |   | 5b. GRANT NUMBER                                    |                                 |
|   |                                    |                                     |   | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER                          |                                 |
| 6. AUTHOR(S)  |                                    |                                     |   | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER                                  |                                 |
|   |                                    |                                     |   | 5e. TASK NUMBER                                     |                                 |
|   |                                    |                                     |   | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER                                |                                 |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)<br><b>United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068</b> |                                    |                                     |   | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER            |                                 |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)   |                                    |                                     |   | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)                    |                                 |
|   |                                    |                                     |   | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)              |                                 |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT<br><b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>   |                                    |                                     |   |   |                                 |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES   |                                    |                                     |   |   |                                 |
| 14. ABSTRACT  |                                    |                                     |   |   |                                 |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS   |                                    |                                     |   |   |                                 |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:   |                                    |                                     | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT<br><b>Same as Report (SAR)</b> | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES<br><b>50</b>                    | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT<br><b>unclassified</b>  | b. ABSTRACT<br><b>unclassified</b> | c. THIS PAGE<br><b>unclassified</b> |   |   |                                 |

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# **TRAINING THE MEU(SOC) ACE COMMANDER: MAKING A MAGTF OFFICER**

## **Chapter 1: Training Concerns**

The Marine Corps is unique in the way it organizes for combat when compared to the other services, primarily due to the use of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Forces are task organized into MAGTFs, consisting of a Command Element (CE), Ground Combat Element (GCE), Aviation Combat Element (ACE), and Combat Service Support Element (CSSE). The size of a MAGTF can vary. The smallest standard sized MAGTF is a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), which consists of a CE, Marine Battalion Landing Team (BLT), Composite Helicopter Squadron, and a MEU Service Support Group. The MEU can undergo specific training that emphasizes Raids, Noncombatant Evacuation Operations, Direct Action, Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel, Security Operations, and Humanitarian Assistance, which makes the MEU Special Operations Capable (MEU(SOC)).<sup>1</sup> The ACE Commander of the MEU(SOC) must be well versed in all functions of Marine Aviation in order to effectively employ the ACE assets toward these MEU(SOC) missions. As part of a Special Operations Capable force, the ACE may also be utilized in missions to implement National Strategy.<sup>2</sup> This requires the ACE Commander to be versed in strategic aspects of the MEU(SOC). Due to the myriad capabilities added to the MEU(SOC) ACE, its requirement to operate in the

international arena, and the need to operate as an integral element within the MAGTF, additional means of training should be established to prepare an ACE Commander to effectively utilize the variety of assets he commands.

“Above a MEU, we will never go anywhere by ourselves anymore.”<sup>3</sup> The MEU(SOC) is a deployed, Forward Presence force which is an integral part of the National Security and Military Strategies of the United States.<sup>4</sup> It is the most commonly used MAGTF the Marine Corps employs. The chances of the MEU(SOC) being utilized have greatly increased over the past few years, since the end of the Cold War.<sup>5</sup> This has been demonstrated with operations in areas such as Northern Iraq, Rwanda, Liberia, and Bosnia. Although the Marine Corps trains to fight as a MEF, the majority of the real world contingencies the Corps is involved in are at the MEU(SOC) level. Although the MEU(SOC) is a forward presence force capable of limited combat operations, most of the operations in which it participates do not involve war; they are in the gray area between peace and war. These operations still require that the ACE Commander be prepared to lead his ACE in a combat environment, but the requirement to operate in “other than war” scenarios is prevalent as well. The chances of using the MEU(SOC) unilaterally are great, especially in such missions as Noncombatant Evacuation Operations, Raids, Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel, and Humanitarian Assistance.<sup>6</sup> For this reason the ACE Commander needs training in these aspects and in the joint arena.

The ACE for the MEU(SOC) is normally formed from a Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron, consisting of 12 CH-46 Helicopters, with detachments and support for four CH-53s, four AH-1Ws, three UH-1Ns, and six AV-8Bs. Different capabilities

exist not only between type aircraft but within each type as well. AV-8B detachments will consist of a mix of both night and radar aircraft. AH-1W detachments provide some airframes with the Night Targeting System, while some of the UH-1Ns incorporate the Night Eagle infrared targeting system and the ASC-26 command and control package. The CH-53E detachment provides a mix of airframes with Forward Looking Infrared, improved navigation systems, and ground refueling capabilities. The squadron also gains detachments from the Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron consisting of Intermediate Level Maintenance support, and from the Marine Wing Support Squadron, consisting of engineering, communication, and logistic support. The Marine Air Control Group (MACG) provides assets consisting of Air Traffic Control, Low Altitude Air Defense, and an Air Support Element. The MEU(SOC) ACE also maintains additional Low Altitude Air Defense assets and a two plane KC-130 detachment in the U.S. that is “on call” in case a contingency arises in which they are needed. All of these assets provide a strong and unique capability for the ACE Commander to perform the numerous missions that he may be assigned. The ACE Commander must be proficient in the employment of all of these assets toward completion of the MEU(SOC) mission. Due to the variety of detachments and the varying capabilities within the detachments, the ACE Commander is required to maintain extensive knowledge and understanding of a diverse and versatile ACE.

“The instruments of battle are only valuable if one knows how to use them.”<sup>7</sup>

Commanders must be afforded every opportunity to continue to improve their knowledge and ability to lead. In the current period of downsizing, training must be emphasized to insure capabilities are maintained. The Marine Corps has always relied on training and

education to keep its warfighting edge during periods of fiscal restraints.<sup>8</sup> One of the objectives of training and education is to insure units are prepared to operate within the MAGTF organization, whether independently or in joint or multinational operations.<sup>9</sup> With advances in technology and an increase in possible contingencies in which a MEU(SOC) may be employed, improved training will aid the Commander in preparing for the tasks he will undertake. As General Krulak, Commandant of the United States Marine Corps stated in his Commandant's Planning Guidance, "I link the two (training and education) under Preparing the Force to convey my vision that success in any mission undertaken by the Corps will flow directly from our ability both to train and educate every Marine."<sup>10</sup> Training in employment of the ACE will improve the ACE Commander's ability to use them in a real world contingency.

The need for training does not insinuate that the MEU(SOC) ACE has been unable to effectively perform its mission; improved training should be provided comparative to the advances in ACE assets and complexity of missions. With continual improvements in technology, such as the night systems on the AV-8B, AH-1W, UH-1N, and CH-53E, the optimum means of employing these assets will change. The ACE Commander must be aware of these changing capabilities and determine the most efficient and effective means of employment. This also requires knowledge in long range planning for these assets and being able to match the resources to the plan.<sup>11</sup> Numerous current and previous Wing Commanding Generals, Group Commanders, MEU(SOC) Commanders, and MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders strongly support the establishment of a training program to improve the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander's ability to effectively lead and employ his ACE.<sup>12</sup> Their support for MEU(SOC) ACE Commander training is

not because there have been any previous failures; their support is due to a need to improve and maximize the training and therefore the performance of future MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders. The mind-set for improving MEU(SOC) training is, “it's not that it's broken, but is it the best we can do?”<sup>13</sup>

In performing most missions while deployed, the MEU(SOC) will operate in a joint or multinational environment.<sup>14</sup> This will require the ACE Commander to be knowledgeable in joint and multinational operations. Since tactical operations performed by the MEU(SOC) ACE can have strategic implications, the ACE Commander must understand the nature of the theater in which the MEU(SOC) is operating, and the national implications of the missions the ACE will perform. The ACE Commander must also be capable of integrating his force with other assets in theater, and explaining the unique capabilities of the ACE (and MEU(SOC) ) to these other units. The MEU(SOC) Commander is actually responsible for integrating the entire MEU(SOC) in theater, but the ACE Commander must understand the implications as well to more effectively advise the MEU(SOC) Commander on the employment of the ACE. Although these aspects are currently being accomplished by the ACE Commander, they can be improved, providing a more efficient and effective means of utilizing the ACE and integrating it in the theater.

The current process for training a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander is extremely limited. Once an officer has been selected for command, he faces no other requirements in order to be a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander. Although Command Screening is designed to provide the best officers for command billets, there can still be disparities in regards to becoming a Squadron Commander or an ACE Commander. A Squadron Commander will lead a squadron consisting of a specific type aircraft, whereas an ACE



Commander will command a squadron of a variety of aircraft and supporting detachments. An ACE is also tailored to deploy as part of the MEU(SOC) as a forward presence. Although there is a great difference in the requirements of the two commands, Command Screening does not distinguish between them. Command screening provides competent, qualified leaders for command billets but an ACE Commander's course could provide a factor of improvement and additional training needed for a future ACE Commander. The primary means of preparing to take command of the MEU(SOC) ACE has been through fleet experience.<sup>15</sup> There is a MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course available at Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 (MAWTS-1); however, it is not required for ACE Commanders.<sup>16</sup> This causes a void in the training process for the ACE Commander, especially if the commander has been out of the fleet for any length of time or is not experienced in operating an ACE. In keeping with the Commandant's philosophy of training to insure success, the Marine Corps needs to fill this void to give the ACE Commander an advantage in leading the ACE.

The current process of relying on experience and "on the job training" to prepare ACE Commanders has worked, in that previous ACE Commanders have been successful. This is not the issue, however. A means of improving the possibility of success and providing for more effective and efficient use of the ACE can be instituted to keep up with the technological improvements and increased requirements of the ACE. There is no substitute for experience. This has been presented by numerous MEU(SOC) and MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders.<sup>17</sup> A problem can occur if the ACE Commander has not been afforded the opportunity for this experience. An officer could be of such exceptional quality that he is offered command, but he may lack fleet or MEU(SOC)

experience. This experience is not a prerequisite for Command Screening.<sup>18</sup> The time for an ACE Commander to gain this experience is not while in command. The commander requires the experience that prepares him to lead the ACE prior to taking command. The ability to “fleet up,” or function as the ACE Executive Officer for a tour prior to becoming the ACE Commander, provides extremely valuable experience, but it is not part of the training process of becoming an ACE Commander.<sup>19</sup> Like experience, the ability to fleet up is not always available, and the commander who has not been afforded this opportunity will be at a disadvantage.<sup>20</sup>

Another training aspect available to prepare the ACE Commander is Professional Military Education (PME). The Marine Corps Command and Staff College provides valuable training to prepare an officer for both command and staff duties. The resident school provides the training and knowledge to command, and to integrate in the joint arena.<sup>21</sup> The level of training and knowledge gained through this PME and the nonresident program is extremely valuable, but it is not a requirement to being a proficient ACE Commander. Additionally, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College is designed to prepare officers for command and staff duties with MAGTFs, and for assignment with joint, multinational and higher level service organizations.<sup>22</sup> Because of this, only 17 hours of formal MEU(SOC) instruction are provided. The instruction presents the overall MEU(SOC) training, employment, and Rapid Planning Process; however, due to the nature of the curriculum and diversity of the students, only a minor portion of the instruction deals directly with leading a MEU(SOC) ACE. Additionally, Command and Staff College is not a prerequisite for becoming an ACE Commander. Although PME is part of the training process for all Marines, only a small

number of officers (approximately 20%) are afforded the opportunity to attend the resident Command and Staff College. It is unrealistic to expect this to be part of the required training process for an ACE Commander, since some qualified officers are unable to attend the resident course due to their individual career pipelines. Making this 10 month course a prerequisite for selection to command an ACE would unnecessarily limit the qualified officers available for command. Portions of the curriculum, such as the Rapid Response Planning and the overall integration of the elements of the MEU(SOC), along with instruction on MAGTF/ Joint integration are valuable elements to be utilized in producing a training program, however.

With the increase in joint operations conducted by the MEU(SOC), the understanding of joint doctrine is vital to effective ACE employment. The training pipeline for an ACE Commander does not take into account joint training. The ability to operate easily in the joint environment is an asset to the ACE Commander, and has been noted as a weak area by commanders that did not have any joint training or joint staff experience.<sup>23</sup> The ability to integrate ACE assets into the joint arena is essential, and an understanding of the utilization of Marine Aviation as described in Joint Publication 0-2, Unified Action Armed Forces is required. This basic understanding of employing the aviation assets must be understood if operating in the joint arena; however, this is another aspect of training the ACE Commander that is normally learned through experience instead of training.<sup>24</sup> An understanding must be developed as to the relationship between the MEU(SOC) Commander and the Joint Task Force (JTF) Commander, the relationship between the ACE Commander and the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC), and what is expected of the MEU(SOC) and ACE Commanders when operating as the

forward elements of a JTF. These are all concerns that are not necessarily addressed prior to assuming command of an ACE.

Another concern with the training for MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders is the process in which the MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP) is training the MEF. Postwar analysis from Desert Storm determined the need for a training program for the MEF Commander and his staff, as well as the Major Subordinate Commands (MSC).<sup>25</sup> MSTP is providing this training, with emphasis on the ACE as a maneuver element and joint integration. The individual Marine Aircraft Wings (MAW) also provide quarterly training in regards to fighting the MEF ACE.<sup>26</sup> These efforts toward training the ACE are enhancing the warfighting capabilities of the MEF and insuring optimum performance of the ACE in any future contingency. The MEF ACE is improving its ability to perform in a joint or multinational environment with a JFACC. MSTP is providing exceptional training in regards to planning for the MEF and its MSCs; however, there is no training for the MEU(SOC) commands and their MSCs. The philosophy is that the Marine Corps fights as a MEF, so the training should be centered around this integral force; in this view the other MAGTFs should copy the means by which the MEF operates.<sup>27</sup> The process in which the MEF ACE will operate does not translate to the missions in which a MEU(SOC) ACE will actually be required to perform. The MEU(SOC) ACE Commander must be prepared to operate as part of the MAGTF not only in a combat environment, but also in a variety of other missions from Peacekeeping to Non Combatant Evacuation Operations. The methods of employing the ACE will vary depending on the complexity of the operation and will not necessarily follow the structure as presented by MSTP. The MEU(SOC) operation will probably

have strategic or national implications as well.<sup>28</sup> Just as the MEU(SOC) CE must be prepared for these situations, the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander needs the same, structured training to insure his ability to perform in this environment.

The final problem, which could become the most serious, is the lack of current fleet time prior to assuming command. It is not uncommon for an officer to work outside of the fleet for five to six years, only to return as an ACE Commander. Although in certain instances this could be an advantage, in some instances it could place the commander at a disadvantage. With improvements in weapons systems and employment options, the commander could be easily outdated. A lack of current fleet time also prohibits the time to prepare for command that a fleet up process would provide. Although officers benefit by higher level staff perspectives during this time, they still need to regain tactical expertise and the ability to employ the specific capabilities of the ACE.<sup>29</sup> Currently, no formalized process exists to provide this training, except for the MAWTS-1 ACE Commander's Course, which is severely insufficient in its current state.<sup>30</sup> This does not mean that tours outside the fleet are not important; the concern is that not all will directly influence the commander's ability to lead his ACE. The void that is left during this period out of the fleet can be filled with adequate training to prepare this commander.

## Chapter 2: Available Training

There are a variety of forums available that can provide valuable training for future ACE Commanders; however, they are not effectively utilized. MSTP is a valuable program that can provide training not only in the newest advances in aviation systems, but also in fighting the ACE in regards to mission orders and maneuver. MSTP presents joint and multinational operations as well. This program however is directed toward the MEF, with little provided toward the MEU(SOC). This focus on the MEF leaves little time to also provide training for the MEU(SOC), but there is still a lot that can be gained with some of this training. The MEU(SOC) ACE Commander cannot be expected to observe the MEF ACE Commander and tailor his command to the MEF ACE. With the current requirements and commitments of MSTP, it would be difficult to provide a dedicated training program for the MEU(SOC) Commander and his MSCs.<sup>31</sup> In order to effectively use MSTP for the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander, MSTP would need to focus training not solely toward the MEF but also the MEU(SOC). Training the MEFs and all of the MEU(SOC)s is not feasible simply because of time constraints and diversity of training. MSTP devotes the majority of their time to training the MEF, which does not leave adequate time to continuously train each MEU(SOC) prior to deployment. The diverse training required by the MEU(SOC) does not allow for simultaneous training of both the MEF and MEU(SOC).

The MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course offered at MAWTS-1 provides a good starting point for preparing the ACE Commander. The course was first designed

because of the lack of knowledge of ACE assets, and a need to train ACE Commanders in the employment of their detachments.<sup>32</sup> This three and a half day course touches on Command and Control, Joint Operations, and Naval Expeditionary Forces, as presented in Table 1. A large portion of the course consists of presentations on Offensive Air Support (OAS). Although this is important, especially since the future MEU(SOC) ACE

| <b>MEU/MAGTF ACE COMMANDER'S COURSE 1-97</b> |       |                                      |       |
|--|-------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Class  | Hours | Class                                | Hours |
| Aviation Intelligence                        | 2.5   | MEU C-3                              | 0.3   |
| LAAD/Stinger                                 | 1     | Air Support Element                  | 0.3   |
| Marine Air Traffic Control                   | 0.8   | Joint Overview                       | 1.8   |
| EA-6B Capabilities Employment                | 0.5   | KC-130 Capabilities/Integration      | 0.8   |
| MACG Integration                             | 0.8   | Offensive Air Support                | 3.3   |
| FAC(A) Employment                            | 0.7   | Escort Operations                    | 1     |
| Mission Load Allowance                       | 0.8   | MEU and ACE Commanders' Perspectives | 2.7   |
| AEW  | 1.5   | Special Operations Aviation          | 0.8   |
| SH/HH-60 Capabilities                        | 0.5   | CVBG Integration                     | 0.7   |
| TACRON                                       | 0.7   | EDATF                                | 0.7   |

Table 1. MAWTS-1 ACE Commander's Course<sup>33</sup>

Commander normally has little experience in OAS, the chances of the MEU(SOC) ACE performing OAS compared to the other functions of Marine Aviation do not warrant this large of an emphasis.<sup>34</sup> This OAS training reduces the amount of available training that could be directed toward the more probable contingencies that may occur. Command and Control training is minimal, as well as training in the utilization of the various detachments that join the ACE. Joint operations are not discussed in the degree of detail required either.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the national or strategic implications of the missions that the ACE could perform are not addressed. In order to provide this additional training, the course would obviously need to be much longer, possibly two weeks.<sup>36</sup> One other aspect

of this course which is instrumental is the use of previous MEU(SOC) Commanders and MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders briefings. This not only provides insight for the future commander from a contemporary's perspective and from one command level above, but it can also focus him in preparing his command for the challenges ahead.

Although the MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course does provide some formal training through informational briefings and seminars, it is not in depth, neither is it a required course of instruction. This takes away any means of standardization that could be developed in such a course, as well as forming a set foundation which all MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders would have, since not all future ACE Commanders attend the course. The course is also available to a wide variety of officers, not just current or future MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders. This diminishes the ability to focus the course toward the ACE Commander, and it also refocuses the discussions away from the MEU(SOC) ACE.

In addition to the MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course, MAWTS-1 previously provided a MEU/ACE Training Course (MATC). This course was provided by a Mobile Training Team from MAWTS-1 that would present courses and organize mission training, as depicted in Table 2, for the MEU(SOC) ACE upon the latter's request. Although this was valuable training for the entire ACE, and it helped focus them on the types of missions they may be required to perform while deployed, it was designed primarily toward the basic tactical employment of airframes in the ACE.<sup>37</sup> This training was valuable, but it did not directly address the aspects of leading the ACE. It



| <b>MEU/ACE TRAINING COURSE HMM-365, 20-23 May 1995</b> |       |                             |       |
|--|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Class  | Hours | Class                       | Hours |
| MEU(SOC) Overview                                      | 0.8   | Assault Support Key Players | 0.5   |
| NEO  | 1.2   | MACG Capabilities           | 0.7   |
| NTACS  | 0.8   | Rapid Response Planning     | 1     |
| Assault Support Mission Planning                       | 0.8   | Objective Area Planning     | 0.8   |
| Raid   | 0.7   | Escort                      | 0.8   |
| OAS  | 0.8   | MOUT                        | 1.8   |
| ACE Intelligence                                       | 1.7   | TRAP                        | 0.8   |
| Rapid Planning Exercise                                | 3.7   |                             |       |

Table 2. Typical MATC Syllabus<sup>38</sup>

could be tailored more toward those aspects of leading the ACE; however, the course is not MAWTS-1's preferred means of providing training.<sup>39</sup> The training that was presented by MAWTS-1 in the MATC can easily be taught by the ACE Weapons and Tactics Instructors (WTIs) and does not require dedicated assets from MAWTS-1.<sup>40</sup> MAWTS-1's position is that it should emphasize aviation training on the MEF level, since it has the assets and is currently structured to do this. MAWTS-1 is unique in this capability, and it is one that should be emphasized and continued; however, it is also the most capable unit to instruct the functions of Marine Aviation at the MEU(SOC) level, and it is capable of continuing to do so. Just as MAWTS-1 is the most capable of training and instructing on the MEF level, it is also the best at the MEU(SOC) level, which is evident in their current ACE Commander's Course. Initially, MAWTS-1 was the only unit providing aviation training at the MEF level. With MSTP now providing a large portion of this as well and with in-depth training annually at each MEF, MAWTS-1 is able to continue to focus on the MEU(SOC) level.<sup>41</sup>

MAWTS-1 also provides a Tactical Air Commander's (TAC) Course. This four day course, depicted in Table 3, is structured toward the MEF or MEF(Forward) level of

| <b>TACTICAL AIR COMMANDER'S COURSE</b> |              |                                    |              |
|--|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Class</b>                           | <b>Hours</b> | <b>Class</b>                       | <b>Hours</b> |
| Control of Aircraft and Missiles       | 2.7          | TACC                               | 1            |
| Marine ATC                             | 0.8          | Theater Missile Defense            | 0.8          |
| Intelligence Systems                   | 0.8          | JDISS Applications                 | 0.5          |
| ELINT Systems                          | 0.5          | Imagery Systems                    | 0.5          |
| Data Link Interoperability             | 0.8          | MACCS in Support of DAS/AAW        | 2.3          |
| CTAPS Overview/ Lab                    | 1.3          | Airborne Early Warning             | 0.8          |
| Joint Air Operations/C2                | 3.6          | Flight Evolution In brief          | 0.8          |
| Guest Speakers (USAF and Naval JFACCs) | 3            | Guest Speaker (ACE Commander/ TAC) | 1.5          |
| MACCS Tour                             | 6            |                                    |              |

Table 3. TAC Course 1-97 MEU(SOC)<sup>42</sup>

aviation integration and contains several classes that would benefit a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander.<sup>43</sup> The course was designed to fill a training void that was noted in preparing a TAC. This void was due to the use of personal experience and initiative as the primary means of training to be a TAC, instead of providing a formalized course of instruction.<sup>44</sup> Among the variety of classes provided, the TAC course contains specific training concerning Joint Operations/ Integration, the Marine Air Command and Control System (MACCS), Intelligence Systems, Imagery Systems and the Contingency Theater Automated Planning System (CTAPS). Instruction in these subjects would also benefit the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander in leading the ACE, since the MEU(SOC) is being utilized more in the joint environment, and the requirement for MACCS integration is a concern both internally and in the joint world.<sup>45</sup> Intelligence and Imagery systems are force multipliers and the ability to effectively understand and utilize them is an asset. CTAPS allows the ACE Commander to integrate aviation planning and scheduling into the joint world, and now that this capability is afforded to the MEU(SOC), the ACE Commander must understand how to exploit it. The TAC course is not a required course either; however, it is a valuable course for senior Marine aviators.<sup>46</sup> Although not all of

the courses should be required since they are not all tailored for the MEU(SOC) level, those mentioned would benefit a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander's training program.

In addition to the Joint Operations Training that is available through MAWTS-1 in both the TAC and ACE Commander's Courses, there are numerous courses concerning this topic presented by the Air Force at their Air Ground Operations School at Hurlburt Field, Florida. These courses range from a JFACC course to integrating various assets into the joint arena.<sup>47</sup> Although some Marine officers attend these courses, the curriculum is designed toward potential JFACCs and TACs. Portions of the courses have been provided in conjunction with Second MAW's quarterly TAC training and are depicted in Table 4. Attendance at the formal courses is beneficial; however, in their

| <b>JFACC AUGMENTATION CELL TRAINING 15-16 Mar 1995</b> |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| JFACC Historical Perspective                           | C2 of the Air Campaign |
| Planning and Execution of Joint Air Operations         | Combat Plans           |
| Joint Force Support Requirements                       | Combat Operations      |
| JFACC Staff Scenario (5.8 Hours)                       |                        |

Table 4. Air Force Air Ground School JFACC Training for 2D MAW Battlestaff<sup>48</sup>

present state most of this is overkill for a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander. A distinct course of instruction can be tailored from the Air Ground Operations School specifically for a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander, like that presented to the 2D MAW Battlestaff. The course could assist in integrating the ACE in the joint or multinational arena, such as Planning and Execution of Joint Air Operations, Combat Plans and Combat Operations. By instituting this into the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander's training, the commander can gain a better understanding of employing his assets with the other services. In addition,

this instruction will inject another service's perspective on employment of the MAGTF in Joint Operations. This in turn provides a better understanding of MAGTF employment in the international arena by the other services as well.<sup>49</sup>

The individual MAWs provide Battlestaff Training for their MEF ACE staff and watch officers.<sup>50</sup> This two day, quarterly training is conducted internally by each MAW staff, and provides training in such topics as joint operations, the ACE as a maneuver element, and MACCS, as described by a typical outline in Table 5. This course is presented at the MEF level, but it has some training, such as Command and Control, Air Tasking Order Planning Cycle, and Joint Doctrine, that could be useful at the

| <b>2D MAW BATTLESTAFF TRAINING 21-22 MAR 1995</b> |     |                      |     |
|---|-----|----------------------|-----|
| Concept of Command and Control                    | 0.8 | ACE Connectivity     | 0.8 |
| Airspace Control Authority                        | 0.8 | Joint Doctrine       | 0.8 |
| Area Air Defense Commander                        | 0.8 | CTAPS Overview       | 0.8 |
| Information Flow and Decision Making in the TACC  | 0.8 | Intelligence Support | 0.8 |
| Targeting   | 0.8 | ATO Planning Cycle   | 0.8 |
| 2d MAW ATO Process                                | 0.8 |                      |     |

Table 5. Typical MAW Battlestaff Training Schedule<sup>51</sup>

MEU(SOC) level as well. Training can be adapted from the course that the MAW already provides and presented to the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander and his staff. The training is currently required for the MAWs; however, there is no required training such as this at the MEU(SOC) ACE level.<sup>52</sup> This input into the training program could provide additional insight into the systems the ACE will have on the upcoming deployment; plus, it can provide specific training tailored for the theater in which the ACE will be conducting operations. This is important, since operations conducted by the different MEU(SOC)s vary greatly depending upon the theater.<sup>53</sup> The ACE Commander could then focus his upcoming squadron training toward the expected missions the ACE will

perform. Each MEU(SOC) could also work toward the same standard as the MEU(SOC) that it will replace by maintaining this standardized training.

The MEU(SOC) staff and MSC Commanders normally receive briefings from Headquarters Marine Corps prior to deployment. These briefings are conducted to present the latest information concerning possible contingencies in the theaters in which the MEU(SOC) will operate. This is important as it allows the ACE Commander to determine the types of missions he may have to perform, as well as the potential threats. The command structure in the particular area of operations is presented as well, so the commander will know the conditions under which he is operating and the relationship between the other assets in theater. The briefing will also present the other assets available in the theater, so the commander will know what is available to augment his forces, or what forces he may be required to support. This is fundamental as the ACE's capabilities will vary depending on the assets external to the MEU(SOC) that are available. These external assets have ranged from additional fixed wing support from the Carrier Battle Group to EP-3s, Air Force AC-130s and MH-53J Pavehows. The additional assets in theater and the operations they conduct will also assist in determining the possible missions the MEU(SOC) ACE will perform. These briefings can all be taken as part of the ACE Commander's training, as it will affect or refine the training process he institutes for his ACE. The training conducted in preparation for the deployment can then be tailored toward these possible contingencies, and playbooks can be established for the particular scenarios. The ACE will then be better prepared for any contingency that arises.<sup>54</sup> To insure this is effective, these briefings would need to be

conducted in concert with the other training of the ACE Commander and coordinated with the MEU(SOC) staff and other MSCs.

The various forums and training available that have been discussed each provide certain aspects that are useful toward training an ACE Commander; however, they do not provide a consolidated, focused means of training. These forums are all designed toward goals other than providing adequate, comprehensive MEU(SOC) ACE Commander training. Although portions of each would benefit an ACE Commander's course, the current forums and available training do not fill the requirement for training the ACE Commander. The requirement to attend all of these separate courses would also be difficult and still not provide training specifically for a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander. Instruction produced specifically for the ACE Commander could use certain aspects of each of these forums; however, the training must be developed independently to insure all aspects of the MEU(SOC) ACE are covered, and then select those portions of the other forums that support the objectives of the course. Additional instruction would then be produced that fills the gaps current training does not provide.

### **Chapter 3: The MAGTF Officer**

In producing a means of preparing an ACE Commander for command, it is difficult to separate the aviation aspect of training from the aspect of the MAGTF. The ACE Commander must not only understand how to employ the ACE, he must also understand how best to employ it as part of the MEU(SOC).<sup>55</sup> This requires the ACE Commander to think at the MEU(SOC) level, and how the MEU(SOC) may be employed in theater. The process of thinking one or two levels of command above one's own is not new for Marines; it is part of the leadership training process in the Marine Corps.<sup>56</sup> By continuing this process, the ACE Commander can ensure his command is employed effectively and efficiently. It does not mean the ACE Commander should not maintain a high level of training in ACE employment, but that he must be able to take this training and use it to achieve MEU(SOC) missions, not just the ACE mission. Parochial views of aviation must be put aside to achieve the higher objectives.<sup>57</sup> The ACE Commander must be prepared to accept a supporting role in the accomplishment of the MEU(SOC) mission, which may be a seemingly minor role such as providing a refueling capability for ground vehicles.<sup>58</sup> This also requires training in regards to aviation issues for the other MSCs. The ACE Commander should coordinate with the MEU(SOC) CE to involve the other MSCs in ACE training and planning evolutions, allowing the MSCs to gain a better insight into the ACE. This all builds on the MAGTF concept. It also reinforces the importance of the MAGTF vice the independent MSCs. The ACE is only one element of the MEU(SOC); the MEU(SOC) is the unit that will be employed in any contingency, regardless of what assets in the MEU(SOC) actually perform the operation.

## **Experience.**

The primary means of preparing an ACE Commander for command has been experience and on the job training.<sup>59</sup> Although this has provided for adequate training, which has been proven by previous MEU(SOC) ACE accomplishments, it has caused an unstandardized and random means of preparing for ACE command.<sup>60</sup> This experience can vary from years in a fleet squadron to tours with the GCE, and tours at Headquarters. Each of these various assignments has benefited the individual ACE Commanders, yet this experience has differed for all of them.<sup>61</sup> Higher level staffs have proven beneficial by providing insight into the theater perspective of employing the MEU(SOC). The squadron experience has provided the commander with an in-depth knowledge of his ACE assets and how best to employ them. Tours with the GCE have enlightened the commander in integrating the ACE with the other MSCs. All of this has proven useful, yet there are obviously gaps or differences in these experience levels. There are numerous opinions from current and former ACE Commanders concerning the best means of gaining this experience level. Most will agree, however, that diversification in previous billets is beneficial, but that diversification is gained at a cost.<sup>62</sup> Exposure to other staffs and assignments takes the prospective ACE Commander away from the ACE, where he will gain the most useful experience. The more exposure the commander gets to all aspects of the MAGTF, higher level commands, and joint/multinational operations, the better prepared he will be to perform certain aspects of his mission of leading the ACE. This rotation also weakens the commander in certain other areas, due to lack of exposure or familiarity. Although beneficial, experience in other assignments strongly reinforces the need for a program to fill the gaps in the varying levels of experience



among prospective ACE Commanders, and provide a standardized level of training. The program needs to cover all aspects of commanding the ACE, since those individuals receiving the training all have different backgrounds, and each will have varying levels of experience.

An additional aspect concerns the officer who has little experience directly related to MEU(SOC) operations. With the current process, an officer lacking this MEU(SOC) experience could become an ACE Commander.<sup>63</sup> Even if the ACE Commander is a capable officer and leader, a lack of in-depth knowledge of MEU(SOC) ACE operations could be disastrous.<sup>64</sup> The only means of avoiding this would be to require certain levels of experience or specific tours prior to screening for command. The resulting limitations are unfeasible, due to the number of billets not related to the MEU(SOC) that must be filled which would not fit this “pipeline.”<sup>65</sup> These requirements would also limit the number of officers eligible to command the ACE. The need for training in MEU(SOC) operations also supports the need for a standardized course to train the future ACE Commander.

### **Fleet Up.**

Another consideration is the process of fleet up, or the opportunity to serve a tour as the Executive Officer of a squadron prior to assuming command. This process provides invaluable experience for the commander, as it gives him the chance to gain familiarity in the squadron, observe the interactions of the squadron from the senior level, and the ability to observe what aspects of the previous command were successful or unsuccessful.<sup>66</sup> The commander can then refine his means of leading the ACE, as well as have an insight into how the ACE interrelates with the other MSCs and the MEU(SOC)

Command Element. This is an opportunity that is extremely valuable, and will only improve an ACE Commander's ability to lead the ACE. Although fleet up would not be part of the training program, it is invaluable for preparing and standardizing the prospective ACE Commander, and belongs as part of the process of preparing an ACE Commander. The problem again is the inability to insure every ACE Commander gets this opportunity.

### **Higher Level Staffs.**

The ability to understand the mission and intent two levels of command above is important, but it is even more so for the ACE Commander due to the unique situation of the MEU(SOC). The fact that the MEU(SOC) may perform operations in the international arena and these operations could have strategic implications implies that the MEU(SOC) could be implementing national policy.<sup>67</sup> The MEU(SOC) Commander could therefore be performing a mission directed by a Combatant Commander, which is in response to a national crisis. The MEU(SOC) ACE Commander must be aware of the interactions of the commands at this level.<sup>68</sup> A tour at Headquarters or on a Unified Command staff can give the commander the insight into the process of these higher level commands. This allows the ACE Commander to understand how the MEU(SOC) and the ACE fit into the theater, and it also improves his ability to integrate the ACE into the theater.<sup>69</sup> Although beneficial, these tours are gained at a cost of less time in the fleet. This experience is still valuable, and if a prospective ACE Commander has served on one of these staffs, he will benefit from a structured course to train him in the other aspects of leading an ACE. Marine Corps Command and Staff College also provides a level of expertise in the interactions of higher level commands. The course of instruction

provides education from National Strategy down to fighting the MEF, with an emphasis on the MEF and the Operational level of war. Although by design the majority of the instruction is directed toward MEF and Joint operations, the training received is still beneficial in understanding and integrating with higher level commands and is an asset in preparing an ACE Commander.<sup>70</sup> Instruction concerning higher level commands and the study of the Strategic and Operational levels of war give the student and potential ACE Commander insight into the inner workings of the various theaters in which the MEU(SOC) will be operating, easing his ability to integrate the ACE into the theater. Although the Command and Staff College is beneficial, it alone does not cover the actual employment of the ACE assets, since that is a tactical consideration. Command and Staff College is not a prerequisite for ACE command either.

### **Joint Training.**

In order to prepare an ACE Commander that is a MAGTF officer, training involving joint and multinational operations is required. As presented earlier, there are a variety of courses and forums available to provide this training; however, they are not presented sufficiently; neither are they on the MEU(SOC) nor MEU(SOC) ACE Commander level.<sup>71</sup> The Combatant Commander (CINC) will employ the MEU(SOC), which raises the issue of a need for joint training. As the commander that will employ the MEU(SOC), the CINC is the individual that needs to be satisfied with the level of training and capability of the MEU(SOC). Since the CINC maintains a joint command, the ACE is required to train toward joint standards in preparing for deployments.<sup>72</sup> The MEU(SOC) is the command that is actually directed to accomplish the CINC mission; however the ACE Commander must understand the joint standards just as the

MEU(SOC) Commander in order to provide effective advice and support. Training standards therefore need to provide for initial joint/multinational training and the appropriate CINC staff should provide input into the training process for the MEU(SOC) and the ACE.<sup>73</sup> The additional training for the ACE Commander could be developed through MAWTS-1, combining portions of the MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course, the TAC Course, and input from the Air Force Air Ground Operations School. The MAW Battlestaff Training Courses could be used for this as well.<sup>74</sup> CINC staff input is required also. This allows the ACE Commander to focus on integrating the ACE in the joint/multinational environment while still training, instead of focusing inward on just ACE specific training. The ACE can then prepare for the joint/multinational environment prior to arriving on station, and prevent the need to determine requirements and operating procedures in a given operating area upon arrival.<sup>75</sup>

### **The ACE Expert.**

The ACE Commander must be trained as a MAGTF officer, but he must also be the expert in the assets and capabilities of the ACE. This is a distinct difference between a Squadron Commander and an ACE Commander. The ACE Commander must have an in-depth understanding of the capabilities and employment options of all the detachments in the ACE. A lack of this understanding can occur if the ACE Commander has not had extensive experience in operating with the various detachments. This lack will cause the ACE Commander to be proficient in his own occupational specialty, but he will be weak as an ACE Commander.<sup>76</sup> Although the ACE will have a staff consisting of members of the various detachments, the ACE Commander needs this requisite knowledge himself, in

order to efficiently lead the ACE. The staff can be utilized for specific details of the individual detachments below the ACE Commander level.

The MAWTS-1 MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course provides additional training to help convert a Squadron Commander into an ACE Commander. The current course is a good starting point, but as the detachments comprising the ACE have improved and the missions of the MEU(SOC) have evolved, the current training provided falls short of that required.<sup>77</sup> A baseline description of the capabilities of the various detachments, with an explanation of the means in which to employ these assets will benefit a potential or current ACE Commander. A developed course of approximately two weeks duration explaining the employment options available to the ACE Commander is required; a course that is significantly more than just a basic introduction to the MEU(SOC) ACE. Previous MEU(SOC) Commanders and MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders can provide beneficial insights into this as well. New systems that may be available for the ACE warrant discussion, with employment considerations to help guide the future ACE Commander. It is even more critical with the reduced capabilities of the ACE compared to the increased requirements for an over the horizon capability while awaiting the MV-22.<sup>78</sup>

Improving the ACE Commander's ability to employ his detachments effectively includes an emphasis on the employment of the MACG Detachment. As the only aviation ground detachment in the ACE, they are often under employed or inefficiently used due to the ACE's lack of knowledge concerning their capabilities and employment options.<sup>79</sup> Command and Control has been identified as a weak area of the MAGTF, not because of its capabilities but because of the training in effectively utilizing it.<sup>80</sup> The

current process revolves around the ACE Commander learning about the MACG detachment on his own, or having the MACG detachment Officer in Charge explaining the process as each case arises.<sup>81</sup> This results in the inefficient use of this valuable asset. An in-depth course in the effective employment of the MACG detachment could resolve this problem. MAWTS-1 already provides a basic course of this instruction, but it does not cover it adequately.<sup>82</sup> The instruction required to insure effective use of the MACG detachment includes specific employment options of each element of the detachment, not only during actual operations, but in the planning process for various exercises, and in the day to day shipboard operations of the ACE. The ability of the detachment to coordinate integration within a joint or multinational arena is a tremendous advantage that is not presented sufficiently in training currently available as well. Additionally, a standardized means of utilizing this detachment could be produced. MACG maintains doctrine for providing the detachment, but there is no doctrine designed specifically for the detachment's employment as part of the MEU(SOC) ACE.<sup>83</sup> This weakness in aviation command and control can easily be overcome through training and standardization, and the MAWTS-1 MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's course is proceeding in this direction. Greater emphasis and a more in-depth study of the process at the MEU(SOC) ACE level could alleviate the problem.

## **Chapter 4: ACE Commander's Course**

The previous inconsistencies in MEU(SOC) ACE Commander training present a problem that can be corrected. In order to keep the warfighting edge of the MEU(SOC) ACE, a better means of preparing the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander must be instituted.<sup>84</sup> Improved training is not required because current ACE Commanders are incapable of performing their missions; it is required to improve the training for future ACE Commanders commensurate with the continuously increasing responsibilities that are being imposed upon the ACE. A training program or course of instruction will not only provide insights on the latest advances in systems and employment but will also provide a standardized baseline of training for all MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders. This baseline training will require an all encompassing course that provides some review for potential commanders. Although some portions of the course will appear repetitive for a potential commander, the course will still provide other aspects that would benefit that same potential commander. This course will therefore insure all ACE Commanders have the same basic level of training prior to assuming command. The individual backgrounds will still differ, which will provide for different ways of leading the ACE; however, no commander should take command of the ACE without at least the basic knowledge of all aspects of employing it. Although this course will not make up for inadequate experience in MEU(SOC) operations or ACE experience, it will provide useful information in order to improve the efficient, effective employment of the ACE. By training the ACE Commander, the course will better prepare him to lead the ACE.

The only structured training specifically designed and currently available for a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander is the MAWTS-1 MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's

Course. This course should be expanded and become part of the required training of the ACE Commander. By expanding the course and using some of the classes currently available through the TAC course, several aspects of employing the ACE can be further explained. A proposed MEU(SOC) ACE Commander's Course is listed in Table 6.

Under this proposal MACG detachment and command and control would be expanded, providing a better knowledge of these assets. Employment considerations for all the detachments would be provided as well. These considerations would insure the most recent capabilities of the assets can be exploited. Not only will specific considerations for mission planning of each type aircraft be presented, but also guidance on how to best employ each asset and integrate them into the entire ACE and MEU(SOC). Maintenance and Support Detachments would be presented as well. Training concerning the planning process and employment considerations for executing different MEU(SOC) missions and capabilities would be presented, stressing the efficient use of all ACE assets. Additional training would also cover the joint/multinational arena. MAWTS-1 provides some training in Joint Operations, but the ACE Commander needs more. MAWTS-1 is capable of providing more in-depth Joint Operations training, but it may be useful to get assistance through the Air Force Air Ground Operations School to support this aspect.

The MAW Battlestaff training courses provide additional training in this regard, but it would need to be tailored to the MEU(SOC) level vice MEF level. This training could provide information on the JFACC, the Joint Air Tasking Order process, and the Joint



| <b>PROPOSED MEU(SOC) ACE COMMANDER'S COURSE</b> |            |   |             |
|---|------------|---|-------------|
| <b>Class</b>                                    | <b>Hrs</b> | <b>Class</b>  | <b>Hrs</b>  |
| Aviation Intelligence                           | 2          | Noncombatant Evacuation Operations                            | 1           |
| Intelligence Assets Available to the MEU        | 1          | Emergency Defense of the ATF                                  | 1           |
| Imagery Systems                                 | 1          | Raids   | 1           |
| MACG Capabilities/Integration                   | 1          | Military Operations in Urban Terrain                          | 1           |
| LAAD Employment                                 | 1.5        | Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel                   | 1           |
| ATC Employment                                  | 1          | Rapid Response Planning Process                               | 1.5         |
| Air Support Element Employment                  | 1          | Deliberate Planning Process                                   | 2           |
| MWSS Det. Capabilities                          | 1          | Control of Aircraft and Missiles                              | 1           |
| MALS/AIMD Integration                           | 1          | CTAPS Overview/Lab  | 1.5         |
| CH-46 Capabilities/Employment                   | 1          | JTF Enabler Capabilities/Requirements                         | 1.5         |
| CH-53E Capabilities/Employment                  | 1          | MACCS and Naval Aviation Command and Control for the MEU(SOC) | 2           |
| UH-1N Capabilities/Employment                   | 1          | Airborne Early Warning  | 1.5         |
| AH-1W Capabilities/Employment                   | 1          | Planning/Execution of Joint Air Operations                    | 2           |
| AV-8B Capabilities/Employment                   | 1          | Marine Aviation in Joint Air Operations                       | 1           |
| Escort Operations (Fixed and Rotary Wing)       | 2          | Joint Force Support Requirements                              | 1           |
| KC-130 Capabilities/Employment                  | 1.5        | Command and Control in the Air Campaign                       | 1           |
| Offensive Air Support                           | 2          | MEU(SOC) and JTF Integration                                  | 1.5         |
| Special Operations Forces Capabilities          | 1          | ATO Process/ Joint ATO Process                                | 1           |
| Special Operations Forces Integration           | 1          | Multinational Operations                                      | 1           |
| MEU Command and Control                         | 1          | Airspace Control Authority                                    | 1           |
| Phasing Aviation Command and Control Ashore     | 1.5        | CINC Staff's Perspective of the MEU(SOC)                      | 2           |
| TACRON  | 1          | ACE/BLT Integration   | 1.5         |
| CVBG Assets/ Capabilities/ Employment           | 1.5        | Views of Former BLT Commander                                 | 2           |
| EA-6B Capabilities/Employment                   | 1          | Views of Former ACE Commanders                                | 3           |
| HH-60 Capabilities/Tactics                      | 1          | ACE/MSSG Integration  | 1           |
| Assault Support Mission Planning Considerations | 1.5        | Views of Former MEU(SOC) Commanders                           | 3           |
| Mission Load Allowance                          | 1          | <b>TOTAL HOURS</b>  | <b>70.5</b> |

Table 6. Proposed MEU(SOC) ACE Commander's Course

Command and Control structure. Getting instructor assistance from the Air Force may not be cost effective, but maintaining instructors at MAWTS-1 with this training is feasible and can be easily maintained. The MAW Battlestaff instructors can also be used in this regard. This instruction needs to be presented by an officer who has joint and multinational experience, to insure credibility.<sup>85</sup> Intelligence classes already provided through the TAC course would be included, in addition to classes involving the Carrier Battle Group assets and capabilities available to the MEU(SOC). Special Operations

Forces would be discussed, as well as means in which to integrate them with the MEU(SOC). The Commander's course would end with various perspectives from previous MEU(SOC), ACE and BLT Commanders. This would also include the chance to discuss various situations and study means of employment to best fulfill mission requirements. It would not be limited to just specific ACE missions, but it would also be directed toward utilizing the ACE to accomplish MEU(SOC) missions as well. Compared to the current MAWTS-1 course, the revised course would be expanded to two-weeks. The increased time frame would not only allow for more in-depth instruction, but it would also allow for more discussions among the participants in regards to the various aspects of the ACE.

The MAWTS-1 course should be coordinated with a Headquarters Marine Corps visit. The Headquarters visit would build on the training provided by MAWTS-1, and would be best accomplished at MAWTS-1 upon completion of the course. It would entail briefings on the theaters in which the MEU(SOC) will be operating, and any specific differences to the command structure that was discussed in the MAWTS-1 course. Assets that are available in the theater would be presented, as well as possible contingencies that can be expected. Current operations that may involve the MEU(SOC) would be discussed, as well as possible employment considerations. Although the MEU(SOC) Commander will employ the entire MEU(SOC) in any given operation, the ACE Commander must understand the implications of employing the MEU(SOC) to more effectively lead the ACE toward mission accomplishment. The CINC staff should provide input in this regard, or directly in the course. Although some of this already

occurs, it must be coordinated with the ACE Commanders course to insure all aspects of the theater in which the ACE Commander will be operating are understood.<sup>86</sup>

This course of instruction would require approximately two weeks at MAWTS-1, including two days with Headquarters representatives. It would require MAWTS-1 to increase the current course by no more than six days. MAWTS-1 could easily accomplish this since the courses presented can be produced from classes already presented in the various MAWTS-1 courses. It would also replace the MATC which MAWTS-1 is in the process of phasing out as well. The current course is offered once a year, with approximately eight students in each course. This would continue with the expanded course and not conflict with the other MAWTS-1 commitments. It would also require a commitment by the MEU(SOC) and Group Commanders to insure that those individuals requiring the course are provided the opportunity to attend prior to assuming command or accepting the detachments and joining the MEU(SOC). By training only ACE Commanders, the course would be provided once a year, in coordination with a respective WTI Course, and the number of students could be kept low, to assist in more direct training to each ACE Commander.

The ACE Commander's Course would not be a financial burden due to the means in which it will be produced. By combining classes already available through MAWTS-1, and keeping the course at MAWTS-1, the primary increase in cost to accomplish this course will be due to the additional time the students will be on Temporary Additional Duty (TAD). An increase in cost will also be seen from an increase in briefings by former MEU(SOC), ACE and BLT Commanders, which will entail TAD funds as well. The MAWs and MEU(SOC)s can easily afford the additional cost of sending their future

ACE Commanders to such a valuable course, and should be responsible for this funding, since both will reap the benefits.<sup>87</sup> The costs for additional lecturers can be covered by MAWTS-1, since there will be a savings from the reduction in MATCs that will occur. These costs are minimal when compared to what would be gained from this course.

MAWTS-1 would present the course and manage it under the guidance of the Training and Education Division (T&E), Marine Corps Combat Development Command. The greatest concerns of T&E deal with costs of any new program or course of instruction compared with what is gained by implementing the new program. Since the additional costs for the course would be covered by MAWTS-1 and the respective MAWs and MEU(SOC)s, and the gains consist of a better prepared and effective ACE Commander, T&E considers investigation of the program a worthwhile endeavor.<sup>88</sup>

Another option is to bring a MAWTS-1 Mobile Training Team to the individual MEU(SOC) ACEs to provide this training.<sup>89</sup> This would allow the team to train not only the commander, but his staff as well. The training teams would also allow the entire squadron to conduct training with MAWTS-1 providing instruction. The training would be beneficial; however, it would also be difficult with the commitments MAWTS-1 already maintains.<sup>90</sup> It would also take a large portion of the already limited time the ACE has to prepare for deployment. Just like the MATC that MAWTS-1 was providing, this would place MAWTS-1 Instructors in the position of training the ACE in aspects that the ACE WTI should be performing. It also takes away from many of the benefits of keeping the course at MAWTS-1, such as interaction with other current and previous ACE Commanders, and maintaining a syllabus dedicated to the ACE Commander.<sup>91</sup> Keeping the course at MAWTS-1 will also avoid the problems involved with

coordinating the Mobile Training Team with each MEU(SOC) ACE. Additionally, the Mobile Training Teams would not be as cost effective since all of the MAWTS-1 Instructors would require TAD funding during the instruction, and the number of courses would increase since each Mobile Training Team would only train one MEU(SOC) ACE Commander and his staff.

Although this course would provide continuity among all MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders, it would not replace previous experience. The course would “round out” the training of the experienced officer, preparing him for command of the MEU(SOC) ACE. It would not replace a lack of experience in the ACE Commander, but it would build upon the knowledge the commander already has, and bring him up to date on ACE assets, new systems, and employment considerations. The background of the prospective ACE Commander should also be weighed in assigning this challenging billet. Fleet experience, including operations within a MEU(SOC) should be a requirement. Higher Headquarters tours would be beneficial, as well as completion of a resident intermediate level school, but neither is necessary. In addition, the ACE Commander should fleet up to the command with a minimum of four to five months as the Executive Officer. The perception of a specific career pattern for a MEU(SOC) ACE Commander would not be a problem; the ACE Commander’s Course is designed to prepare a prospective commander regardless of his background, as long as he has MEU(SOC) experience. The process of fleet up and actually going to the course would not occur until after selection for command of the ACE. The proposed ACE Commander’s Course would ensure aspects of leading the ACE that the Commander did not gain through experience are presented to him, and it would insure that all MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders have the same basic

knowledge of employing the ACE.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The MEU(SOC) ACE Commander provides a wide variety of capabilities for the MEU(SOC) Commander. The ACE assets are employed to achieve the MEU(SOC) mission. Due to the special operations capability of the MEU(SOC), the missions that the ACE performs could have strategic implications. This responsibility requires the ACE Commander to be as prepared as possible in employing his assets. Due to improvements in the systems employed and the complexity of the missions assigned, the ACE Commander needs formal, standardized training in leading the ACE. There are several forums currently available to help prepare the future MEU(SOC) ACE Commander; however, these courses are not designed specifically for the MEU(SOC) ACE Commander. The courses do not provide training in all aspects that are required either. Additionally, these courses do not provide a comprehensive, single course of instruction that is provided for all MEU(SOC) ACE Commanders.

The proposed ACE Commander's Course would provide this formalized, structured training. Easily produced from existing courses already available, the ACE Commander's Course would build upon the prospective commander's experience, and provide instruction in employment fundamentals of the various ACE assets. These assets would not be limited to just the airframes comprising the ACE, but also the MACG detachments and maintenance and support assets as well. Employment considerations for the various MEU(SOC) missions would be presented as well. The course would also stress command and control, and how best to employ those assets that make up his portion of the MACCS. Maintaining the MAGTF concept in preparing the ACE Commander, the course would also discuss means of utilizing the ACE to achieve the

MEU(SOC) mission, and how the ACE can best support the other MSCs. It would also provide insight into integrating the ACE into the joint/multinational arena, as well as employment considerations with other naval assets. The course would prepare the commander to be able to explain the unique capabilities of the ACE and the MEU(SOC) to the sister services, and understand what they can provide to make the overall force more efficient. Utilizing former MEU(SOC) Commanders, as well as former ACE and BLT Commanders, would provide insights for the new ACE Commanders, and present different viewpoints and guidance on how to employ and integrate the ACE.

Coordinating the course with Headquarters Marine Corps input and the respective CINC staff perspective would complete the preparation and training for the ACE Commander.

The primary means of preparing to lead the ACE is still through experience and on the job training, but experience alone should not be the sole means in which an ACE Commander is prepared. Relying on previous experience alone is an injustice to potential ACE Commanders, as well the MEU(SOC) Commander, especially since the ability to provide the formalized, structured training presented is easily accomplished. As part of a Forward Presence force, the MEU(SOC) ACE should be afforded every opportunity to improve its ability to perform; the ACE Commander's Course will give the Commander the additional training to more effectively lead the ACE toward successful mission accomplishment. The prospective ACE Commander should be selected based partly on his previous MEU(SOC) experience and allowed to fleet up to his command. Prior to assuming command, the ACE Commander should be directed to the two-week ACE Commander's Course, which would be presented by MAWTS-1. This pipeline would ensure a standardized process for developing an ACE Commander, and



provide a baseline of knowledge and understanding of employing the MEU(SOC) ACE. The standardization would be an advantage not only to the MEU(SOC) Commander, but also to the respective Fleet Commanders and CINCs, as they would be guaranteed a standardized, capable package in the form of the MEU(SOC) ACE. The Marine Corps needs to continue to keep its warfighting edge through training and education, and training the ACE Commander is a process which should be undertaken and refined as presented. By using the forums already available, this formal, standardized and required course will insure a standardized MEU(SOC) ACE that is not only effectively employed, but is the most efficiently utilized asset brought to the international arena.

## **Glossary**

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| ACE      | Aviation Combat Element                                |
| BLT      | Battalion Landing Team                                 |
| CE       | Command Element  |
| CINC     | Commander in Chief; Combatant Commander                |
| CSSE     | Combat Service Support Element                         |
| CTAPS    | Contingency Theater Automated Planning System          |
| GCE      | Ground Combat Element                                  |
| JFACC    | Joint Force Air Component Commander                    |
| JTF      | Joint Task Force                                       |
| MACCS    | Marine Air Command and Control System                  |
| MACG     | Marine Air Control Group                               |
| MAGTF    | Marine Air Ground Task Force                           |
| MATC     | MEU/ACE Training Course                                |
| MAW      | Marine Aircraft Wing                                   |
| MAWTS-1  | Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1         |
| MEF      | Marine Expeditionary Force                             |
| MEU      | Marine Expeditionary Unit                              |
| MEU(SOC) | Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) |
| MSC      | Major Subordinate Command                              |
| MSTP     | MAGTF Staff Training Program                           |
| OAS      | Offensive Air Support                                  |
| PME      | Professional Military Education                        |
| SPMAGTF  | Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force           |
| TAC      | Tactical Air Commander                                 |
| TAD      | Temporary Additional Duty                              |
| WTI      | Weapons and Tactics Instructor                         |

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Butch Preston, LtCol, USMC, II MEF Special Operations Training Group, "MEW(SOC) Operations," Lecture at Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 25 February 1997. Listed are the six missions of the MEW(SOC).

<sup>2</sup>Larry R. Zinser, Col, USMC, "The MEU(SOC) in Joint Special Operations," (Naval War College, Newport, 10 May 1989, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Michael J. Williams, MajGen, USMC, "Sustaining the MEF," Lecture at the Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 19 December 1996.

<sup>4</sup>William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (Washington, D.C., 1996), p. 14; and John M. Shalikashvili, Gen, USA, *National Military Strategy of the United States Of America*, (Washington, D.C., 1995), p. 6-7.

<sup>5</sup>J. Castellaw, Col, USMC, Former Commanding Officer, HMM-264 24 MEU(SOC) and former Commanding Officer, MAWTS-1, Interview by author 5 December 1996. The frequency of MEU(SOC) employment has increased over the past 15 years to a point that almost every MEU(SOC) is now involved in a real world contingency.

<sup>6</sup>The MEU(SOC) can be placed in a situation normally handled by a higher command, such as operating as the forward element of a larger MAGTF. For more on this see David G. Rathgeber, Maj, USMC, "Training Tactical Level Leaders in the United States Marine Corps: Meeting the Challenges of the New World Order," School of Advanced Military Studies, Ft. Leavenworth, 1994, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>Ardent du Picq, "Battle Studies," quoted in David G. Rathgeber, "Training Tactical Level Leaders in the United States Marine Corps: Meeting the Challenges of the New World Order," (School of Advanced Military Studies, Ft. Leavenworth, AY1993-94), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Charles C. Krulak, Gen, USMC, *Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG)*, (Headquarters United States Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 1 July 1995), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>Headquarters United States Marine Corps, *Marine Air Ground Task Force Master Plan (MMP) 1992-2002*, (Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 5-5.

<sup>10</sup>Krulak, *CPG*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>11</sup>Castellaw, Interview.

<sup>12</sup>The requirement for an ACE training course was highly supported, and several officers interviewed wondered why there was not one instituted already. Commanders supporting this training course include: Frederick McCorkle, MajGen, USMC, Commanding General, Third Marine Aircraft Wing and former Commanding Officer, MAG-29, Interview by author 7 April 1997; John E. Rhodes, MajGen, USMC, Former MEU(SOC) ACE Commander, MEU(SOC) Commander, and Commanding General, Second Marine Aircraft Wing, Interview by author 9 December 1996; Michael D. Ryan, MajGen, USMC, Commanding General, Second Marine Aircraft Wing and former Commanding Officer, MAWTS-1, Interview by author 3 April 1997; Michael J. Williams, MajGen, USMC, Commanding General, Marine Corps Systems Command, former Commanding General, Second Force Service Support Group (FSSG), and former Commanding Officer MAG-26, Interview by author 9 April 1997; Castellaw, Interview; Wayne Forbush, Col,

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<sup>13</sup>Williams, Interview.

<sup>14</sup>Forbush, Interview.

<sup>15</sup>This is supported by previous ACE Commanders and MEU(SOC) Commanders, through interviews: Castellaw; Cowan; Duncan; Hanifen; Hardwick; and Forbush. Also supporting are: Emerson N. Gardner, Col, USMC, Commanding Officer, 26 MEU(SOC), Interview by author 26 December 1996; and David T. Kerrick, LtCol, USMC, Former Commanding Officer, HMM-264 26 MEU(SOC), Interview by author 4 December 1996.

<sup>16</sup>Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1), MEU/SPMAGTF ACE Commander's Course Syllabus of Instruction, Yuma, Az, 1996.

<sup>17</sup>Ashton; Castellaw; Cowan; Croisietiere; Duncan; Forbush; Gardner; Hanifen; Hardwick; Kerrick; Ryan; and Williams, Interviews. Also Samuel T. Helland, Col, USMC, Former Commanding Officer, HMH-461, and Commanding Officer, 22 MEU(SOC), Interview by author 9 April 1997.

<sup>18</sup>Ashton; Cowan; Duncan; and Forbush, Interviews.

<sup>19</sup>Croisietiere; Duncan; Forbush; Gardner; and Hardwick, Interviews.

<sup>20</sup>Castellaw; Cowan; Croisietiere; Duncan; Hardwick; Helland; McCorkle; and Ryan, Interviews.

<sup>21</sup>Ashton; Cowan; Outlaw; and Forbush, Interviews. Also Steven Jones, LtCol, USMC, Former Operations Officer, MAWTS-1, Interview by author 6 December 1996.

<sup>22</sup>Marine Corps University, *Command and Staff College Catalog 1996-1997*, (Quantico, Marine Corps University), p. 27; and Rathgeber, "Tactical Level Leaders," p. 39.

<sup>23</sup>Castellaw; Cowan; Croisietiere; Duncan; and Hanifen, Interviews.

<sup>24</sup>Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1 December 1996), p. IV-4. This publication discusses the relationship between the MAGTF Commander and the JTF Commander in regards to aviation assets. It is basically the outdated Omnibus Agreement, however most ACE Commanders interviewed were not aware of the change. It is taught at Command and Staff College and WTI, but not in any formal ACE Commander's Course.



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- <sup>25</sup>James F. Amos, Col, USMC, "The MEF is Our Mission. . . The MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP)," *Marine Corps Gazette*, February 1994, p. 26.
- <sup>26</sup>2d Marine Aircraft Wing, "ACE Battlestaff Training," MCAS Cherry Point, NC, March 1995; and T. E. Dailey, LtCol, USMC, Executive Officer, MACG-28, Interview by author 13 October 1996.
- <sup>27</sup>Steven B. Donnell, LtCol, USMC, MAGTF Staff Training Program, Interview by author 18 December 1996.
- <sup>28</sup>Castellaw; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>29</sup>Cowan; Gardner; Hardwick; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>30</sup>Duncan; Hardwick; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>31</sup>Amos, "MEF," p. 27; and Donnell, Interview.
- <sup>32</sup>Castellaw; Forbush; and Jones, Interviews.
- <sup>33</sup>MAWTS-1, ACE Commander's Course
- <sup>34</sup>Ashton; and Castellaw, Interviews.
- <sup>35</sup> Ashton; Castellaw; Croisetiere; Duncan; Forbush; Hanifen; Jones; Kerrick; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>36</sup>Scott Kerchner, Maj, USMC, MAWTS-1 Instructor, Interview by author 7 April 1997; and Outlaw, Interview. Both interviews discussed the need for more time to cover the material required. Maj Kerchner stated that of the 5 courses in which he has participated, each one required more time than that allotted.
- <sup>37</sup>Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1), MEU/ACE Training Course Syllabus of Instruction, Yuma, AZ, May 1995.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid
- <sup>39</sup>Michael Young, Capt, USMC, MAWTS-1 Instructor, Interview by author 20 December 1996; and MAWTS-1 MEU/ACE Training Course; and Kerchner, Interview.
- <sup>40</sup>Kerchner; and Young , Interviews.
- <sup>41</sup> Jones, Interview. MSTP provides training to the respective MEFs on an annual basis. This training deals with all of the MSCs in the MEF. By coordinating this training, MSTP has identified a shortfall in the training process at the MEF level, and has initiated actions to fix the process. Nothing has been done to identify, much less correct this at the MEU(SOC) level, yet MAWTS-1 can now direct more attention at this level.
- <sup>42</sup>Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1), Tactical Air Commander's (TAC) Course Syllabus of Instruction, Yuma, AZ, May 1995.
- <sup>43</sup>MAWTS-1, TAC Course
- <sup>44</sup>Mark G. Cianciolo, Maj, USMC, "The Tactical Air Commander's Course: An Advanced Warfighting Curriculum," *Marine Corps Gazette*, January 1996, p. 61-62.
- <sup>45</sup>Duncan; Gardner; and Hardwick, Interviews.
- <sup>46</sup>Cianciolo, "Tactical Air Commander's Course," p. 62.
- <sup>47</sup> Tim Kline, LtCol, USAF, "Joint Operations Overview," USCINCPAC JFACC Augmentation Cell Training, Hurlburt Field, Fl., 16 March 1995.

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- <sup>48</sup> Dailey, Interview; and 2d MAW, Battlestaff.
- <sup>49</sup> Buster C. Glosson, LtGen, USAF, *Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) Primer*, (Washington, D.C., February 1994), p. 6.
- <sup>50</sup> 2d MAW, Battlestaff.
- <sup>51</sup> Dailey, Interview; and 2d MAW, Battlestaff.
- <sup>52</sup> Dailey, Interview.
- <sup>53</sup> Hanifen; Croisetiére; and Cowan, Interviews.
- <sup>54</sup> Outlaw, Interview.
- <sup>55</sup> Albrecht; Gardner; Jones; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>56</sup> Outlaw, Interview; and Rhodes, Interview.
- <sup>57</sup> Castellaw; and Jones, Interviews.
- <sup>58</sup> Author's experience during Operation Sea Soldier VI while deployed with 22 MEU(SOC), 1991-92. The primary mission of the ACE during the primary evolution was providing a FARP capability for the LAVs during screening operations.
- <sup>59</sup> Ashton; Castellaw; Cowan; Duncan; Forbush; Gardner; Hanifen; Hardwick; and Kerrick, Interviews.
- <sup>60</sup> Outlaw, Interview.
- <sup>61</sup> Ashton; Castellaw; Cowan; Duncan; Forbush; Gardner; Hanifen; Hardwick; and Kerrick, Interviews.
- <sup>62</sup> Albrecht; Ashton; Castellaw; Cowan; Croisetiére; Duncan; Hanifen; Hardwick; Jones; Kerrick; Outlaw; and Rhodes, Interviews. Almost everyone interviewed strongly recommended diversification in some form, either in the MAGTF or joint level. This diversification is achieved at a price, since it takes the individual away from the ACE, where he gains the most experience, and can benefit from observing other ACE Commanders. Of note is one former MEU(SOC) Commander that felt ACE Commanders are given too much diversification prior to command. This spreads his experience level and does not promote proficiency in the squadron.
- <sup>63</sup> Outlaw, Interview.
- <sup>64</sup> Outlaw; Croisetiére; Forbush; Gardner; and Jones, Interviews.
- <sup>65</sup> Ashton; Cowan; and Duncan, Interviews.
- <sup>66</sup> Duncan; Forbush; Gardner; Hardwick; Helland; McCorkle; and Ryan, Interviews.
- <sup>67</sup> Zinser, "MEU(SOC) in Joint Operations," p. 7-8; and Preston, "MEU(SOC) Operations." LtCol Preston presents that the guidelines for special operations are tactical operations having strategic implications. Although the MEU(SOC) does not use clandestine forces, many missions performed can have strategic implications.
- <sup>68</sup> Rathgeber, "Tactical Level Leaders," p. 4; Hardwick; Outlaw; and Rhodes, Interviews.
- <sup>69</sup> Hardwick; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>70</sup> Ashton; Cowan; Forbush; and Outlaw, Interviews.

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- <sup>71</sup> Stephen D. Booren, LtCol, USMC, "Is CAX Just For Grunts?" *Marine Corps Gazette*, May 1990, p.74-75; Glosson, *JFACC Primer*, p. 6; Castellaw; Cowan; Croisetiere; Hanifen; and Kerrick, Interview.
- <sup>72</sup> Marine Corps Mission Area Analysis MA-33, "Assault Support," (Quantico: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, November 1991), p. 5.
- <sup>73</sup> Outlaw; McCorkle, Interviews; and MA-33, "Assault Support," p. 5.
- <sup>74</sup> Dailey, Interview.
- <sup>75</sup> Author's experience operating as MEU(SOC) and MEU(SOC) ACE Liaison Officer to Joint and Multinational Commands as part of 22 MEU(SOC) in 1991-92 and 1994-95; and Cowan; Croisetiere, Interviews.
- <sup>76</sup> Mathew Howard, Capt, USMC, "The CH-46 Community: A Leadership Challenge," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 1995, p. 22; Forbush; Castellaw; and Outlaw, Interviews. Author's own experience.
- <sup>77</sup> Castellaw; Forbush; Jones; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>78</sup> MA-33, "Assault Support," p. 2.
- <sup>79</sup> Castellaw; Cowan; Duncan; Forbush; Jones; Outlaw; and McCorkle, Interviews.
- <sup>80</sup> D. E. Gallus et al., *Mace 2010 Project War Game Final Report*, (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, May 1992), p. vii; and Booren, "CAX for Grunts?" p. 75.
- <sup>81</sup> Duncan; and Outlaw, Interviews. Author's own experience operating with MACG in 22MEU(SOC) in 1991-92 and 1994-95, and discussions with MACG detachment OICs.
- <sup>82</sup> Castellaw; Duncan; Jones; and Outlaw, Interviews.
- <sup>83</sup> Outlaw, Interview.
- <sup>84</sup> This view has been supported by McCorkle; Rhodes; Ryan; Williams; Castellaw; Forbush; Outlaw; Ashton; Cowan; Croisetiere; Duncan; Hardwick; and Jones, Interviews.
- <sup>85</sup> Jones, Interview.
- <sup>86</sup> Cowan; Hanifen; Rhodes; and Outlaw, Interview.
- <sup>87</sup> Forbush, Interview.
- <sup>88</sup> William Sanderson, LtCol, USMC, Training and Education Division, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Interview by author 12 March 1996. The greatest concern initially was added costs for such a course. Once the means of defraying costs was explained, the next aspect involved what could be gained from the course. The obvious advantages were explained, and readily accepted. At this point T&E would normally take the program and develop it with MAWTS-1. LtCol Sanderson considered the course a viable option and worthy of continued investigation and pursuit.
- <sup>89</sup> Ashton; and Croisetiere, Interviews.
- <sup>90</sup> Kerchner and Young, Interviews.
- <sup>91</sup> Duncan; Forbush; and Hanifen, Interviews.