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MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

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TITLE

**An Assessment of the Overseas Control Date**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR

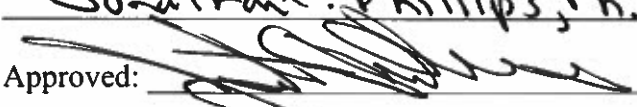
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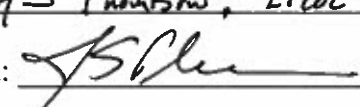
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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** An Assessment of the Overseas Control Date (OCD)

**Author:** Major Brian A. Felty, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Updates to the OCD policy should correspond with actual deployment durations, should support individual deployment periods instead of nonstandard deployment reoccurrence during unit assignment, and must reflect the current Marine Corps deployment training and exercise employment plan (TEEP).

**Discussion:** The OCD is one of several analytic tools used by Marine Corps monitors to identify personnel for potential assignment to overseas units or units identified for deployment on the TEEP. Units like the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) have a standing rotation for deployments as part of the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG).

ARG/MEU deployment durations are set by the U.S. Navy Optimized Fleet Response Plan (O-FRP) in order to fulfill the joint service requirements as requested by the Combatant Commanders and managed via the Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP). The ARG/MEU is essential to U.S. national security “to provide continuous, forward naval presence in key regions to conduct steady-state security cooperation, military engagement, and deterrence, as well as immediate response to episodic crisis and contingencies.”<sup>1</sup>

Although Marine Corps Order 1300.8 - *Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy* was revised in 2014, the OCD policy and criteria has not been changed since 1994. These criteria should be considered legacy and in need of an update as the duration of Marine Corps deployments has changed significantly over the last 20 years. Specifically, none of the criteria support the Marine Corps’ premier deploying force, the MEU.

**Conclusion:** The OCD is out of date and requires a detailed review and calibration of the update criteria to ensure it supports the nature of how the Marine Corps deploys today and in the future.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE COPRS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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## Preface

Deployed in 2014 as the adjutant for 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), my most frustrating and ultimately failed task pertained to not being able to update the OCDs for the individuals in the unit. Unfortunately, due to the length and location of the deployment, personnel did not meet any of the update criteria in accordance with MCO 1300.8. Additionally, the majority of personnel narrowly missed meeting two criteria by a matter of days. This particular MEU deployment is an example of the norm vice the exception as it pertains to units meeting the OCD update criteria. Following our return from deployment, multiple personnel, both officer and enlisted, were contacted by their monitors with notification that they were being identified for overseas assignment. Even though these Marines had just returned from a 9 ½ MEU deployment that had failed to update their OCD. As a result, I spent needless weeks working with these monitors to ensure they understood why overseas assignment should not be pursued for these individual Marines. Through coordination with other MEU adjutants, I learned that this was not a unique problem and existed across all seven of the MEUs. It was clear to me at that point, the that OCD policy was out of date and out of touch with the Marine Corps TEEP.

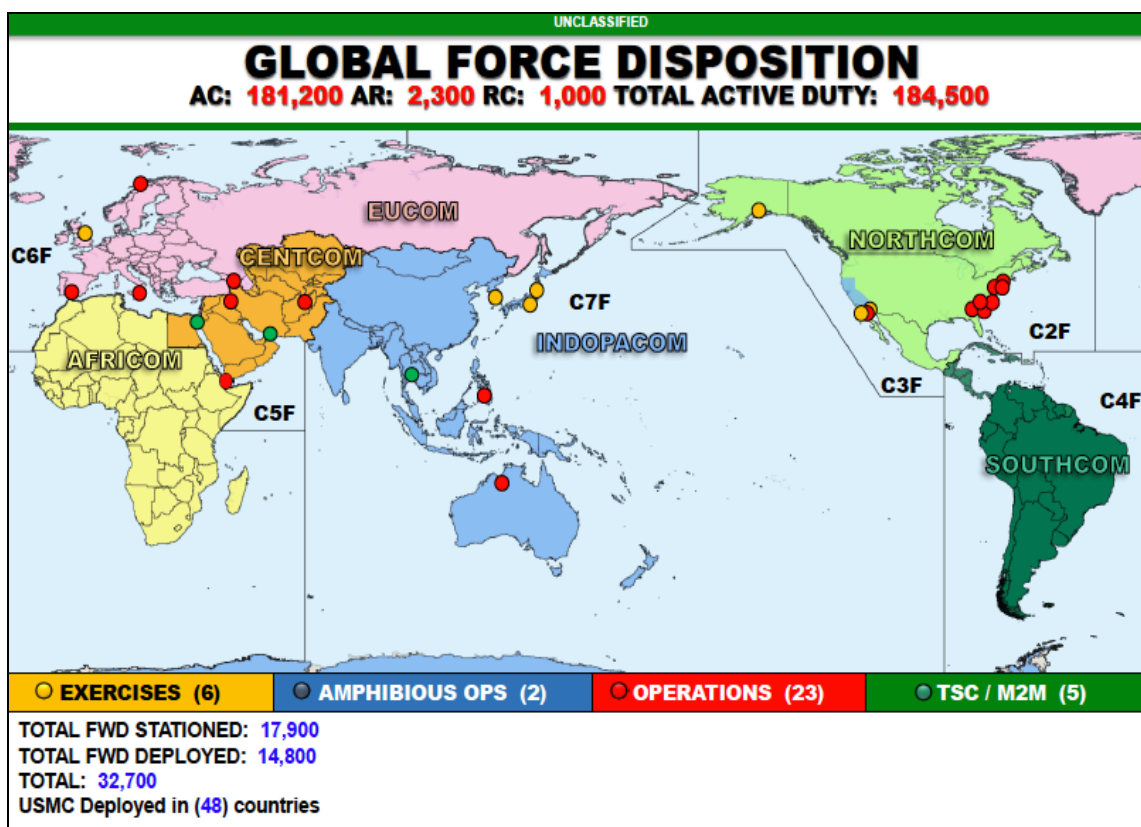
I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan F. Phillips, Dean of Academics, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University for his detailed and committed support and advice in reviewing multiple drafts of this paper. Without his direction and guidance, this paper would not have come together like it has.



### An Assessment of the Overseas Control Date (OCD)

On any given day, there are thousands of U.S. Marines forward deployed around the globe in support of the geographical combatant commands. As of 10 December 2020, there are 14,800 forward deployed Marines deployed in 48 countries.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1: Global Force Disposition:



These Marines deploy under a variety of circumstances, some more dangerous than others, but all are sharing the burden.<sup>a</sup> In accordance with Title 10, United States Code Armed Forces, the Marine Corps shall “provide detachments and organizations for service on armed vessels of the Navy, provide security detachments for the protection of

<sup>a</sup> Sharing the burden is determined to provide an equitable rotation and reassignment policy between overseas and CONUS assignments, and between deployment-designated units and units that do not normally deploy.

naval property at naval stations and bases, and perform such other duties as the President may direct.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the majority of these Marines do not realize that their deployment will not necessarily preclude them from the population for potential overseas assignment because the duration and/or location of modern deployments will likely not trigger an Overseas Control Date (OCD)<sup>b</sup> update.

The current requirements outlined in Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1300.8 - *Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy* need updating to support the Marine Corps standard training and exercise employment plan (TEEP).<sup>c</sup> Changes in OCD policy should coincide with the Marine Corps Force Synchronization Playbook,<sup>d</sup> reflect the original intent of the OCD to determine the Marine population for overseas assignment, and minimize the periods of forced family separation due to assignment to deploying units or overseas assignment. Significant change in the Marine Corps’ Playbook have not been reciprocated in OCD policy. Updates to the OCD policy should correspond with actual deployment durations, should support individual deployment periods instead of nonstandard deployment reoccurrence during unit assignment, and must reflect the current deployment TEEP.

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<sup>b</sup> As will be discussed further throughout this paper, OCDs are Marine Corps unique and governed solely by Marine Corps policy. The Marine Corps administratively uses OCDs internally to manage the assignment of Marines between overseas and CONUS units. Personnel Tempo (PERSTEMPO), also known as Deployment Tempo (DEPTempo), is used to adjust and update the OCDs of Marines.

<sup>c</sup> As will be discussed later, the TEEP is the Marine Corps five-year forecast force employment plan.

<sup>d</sup> As will be discussed later, the Marine Corps Force Synchronization Playbook is the primary USMC system used to capture combatant commander (CCDR) and Service requirements and associated sourcing recommendations/solutions. The Playbook reflects USMC pre-deployment scheduling, culminating in a sustainable rotational presence. The end state of which enables the Marine Corps to identify and generate forces/individuals trained with required skills, and are provided the necessary tools and capabilities to meet validated Secretary of Defense, CCDR, and Service requirements through a deliberate, timely, responsive, and analytical force sourcing framework.

Through the personnel assignments process, the Marine Corps meets its requirement in support of the requests for forces<sup>e</sup> as allocated by the Combatant Commanders (CCDR) and the Secretary of Defense (SecDef). One of the tools available to the assignments process, the Marine Corps uses OCDs to manage the assignment of Marines between overseas and continental United States (CONUS) deployable/non-deployable unit assignments.<sup>4</sup> The OCD was created to comply with Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 1315.18/ch 3 – *Procedures for Military Personnel Assignments*<sup>f</sup> to “ensure an equitable distribution of overseas assignment and to minimize the periods of forced family separation.”<sup>5</sup> OCDs are a critical factor in determining who in a population of Marines should be considered for overseas assignment. Additionally, OCDs assist in the designation of personnel for assignment to “deployment-designated units [units that routinely support major deployments, e.g., MEUs and Unit Deployment Program (UDPs)].”<sup>6</sup> Following deployments, OCDs can either be “updated” or “adjusted” based on specific criteria.<sup>7</sup> Adjustments reflect a “one-day for one-day adjustment (i.e., increase), based upon their accrual of creditable deployment days,” when the duration of deployment does not necessitate an update.<sup>8</sup>

An update is based on one of four completion criteria:

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<sup>e</sup> Requests for forces (RFFs) encompass enduring rotational requirements, with forces rotating on a pre-planned schedule. Some rotational requirements may be sourced episodically. Such requirements are registered and known, but source when validated by the Joint Staff in support of CCDR requirements.

<sup>f</sup> DoD Inst 1315.18 provides permanent change of station (PCS) policies and procedures to be used by the Military Services in maintaining an equitable assignment system for enhancing career attractiveness and professional development, sustaining an assignment base for overseas tour of duty, achieving stability for tour competitions, developing tour lengths consistent with maintaining a high degree of combat capability and readiness, and achieving PCS stability.

- (1) Completion of permanent overseas assignment, dependents-restricted, accompanied or unaccompanied, including Marines on dependent-restricted assignments completing a minimum of 270 consecutive days overseas.
- (2) Completion of at least 270 consecutive days deployed overseas, regardless of the type of unit the Marine is assigned to and regardless of whether deployed to an IDP or HFP are or not.
- (3) Completion of two consecutive major overseas deployments (e.g., MEU and/or UDP or equivalent) of at least five months (150 days, not waivable) duration each, during the same or continuous OPFOR tour.
- (4) Completion of at least 180 consecutive days deployed to a “hostile fire area”<sup>9</sup>

Upon meeting one of the above criteria, the Marine’s OCD will update to the date they returned from deployment or to CONUS from overseas assignment. If none of the criteria are met, the Marine’s OCD will be “adjusted by one-day for one-day deployed.”<sup>10</sup>

The above OCD criteria have remained relatively unchanged since the OCD was first implemented on October 4, 1994, as articulated in the previous to the current Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy, MCO P1300.8R.<sup>11</sup> Prior to the enactment of the OCD, a Marine’s calculated overseas time was expressed through the term Date Arrived U.S. Dependents Restricted (DAUSDR) and was adjusted based on Accumulated Deployed Time<sup>g</sup> (ADT).<sup>12</sup> As articulated through the current policy, each of the OCD criteria is intended to provide an update criteria to address the various types of deployments. The following provides a brief discussion of the purpose of each criterion.

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<sup>g</sup> ADT has been replaced by DEPTempo and PERSTEMPO to update OCDs as discussed further.

- Criteria one supports the OCD update for those personnel who are assigned on overseas duty and is critical to ensure these Marines are not involuntarily assigned to a dependent-restricted tour or an overseas assigned tour for a period of 24 months from the time the new OCD is assigned.
- Criteria two is an application of the overseas assignment criteria to reflect an equal criterion for similar duration for 270 consecutive days of overseas deployment.
- Criteria three attempts to give OCD update credit to MEU and/or UDP deployments when the completion of which are accumulated over consecutive deployments. Unfortunately, criteria three fails to recognize the actual duration of MEU and/or UDP deployments and that the assignment of continuous operational force (OPFOR) tours is contrary to the Marine Corps' personnel assignment policy. Additional detail will be provided throughout this paper specifically outlining evidence that criteria three does not reflect the deployment durations in the Marine Corps Force Synchronization Playbook and is contrary to the manpower assignments process.
- Criteria four provides an opportunity for update after only 180 days deployed to a hostile fire area<sup>h</sup> which gives benefit to the Marines who face an actual, credible risk of harm through combat.

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<sup>h</sup> The term "hostile fire area" is generally interpreted to mean assignment to: a Combat Zone (CZ) or an area authorized Hostile Fire Pay (HFP). HFP is an event driven determination. A hostile fire area is one that had hostile fire or action actually occur.

In accordance with Title 10 responsibilities, the Marine Corps manages its assignment, apportionment, and allocation of forces (units and personnel) to fulfill the CCDRs global force requirements known as the Global Force Management Allocation Plan<sup>i</sup> (GFMAP).<sup>13</sup> Annually, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) publishes the annual deployment order (DEPOD)<sup>j</sup> outlining the Secretary of Defense's decisions for allocation of forces between the Combatant Commanders in support their current operations and campaign plans.<sup>14</sup> To ensure the Marine Corps is meeting the GFMAPs current and changing requirements, the Commandant convenes the Force Synchronization Conference and Operations Summit quarterly to develop an informed allocation of Marine Corps units and personnel. Following the summit, the Marine Corps publishes the Playbook as a quarterly Marine Corps Bulletin (McBul) 3120 - *Marine Corps Force Synchronization Playbook*. The TEEP defines what units are deploying and the duration of their deployment. In practice, the TEEP provides a timeline / phase calendar for programming unit deployments. As an example, in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the TEEP defined O-5 commands as deployable for six months, and O-6 and above commands as deployable for one year. The TEEP additionally assigns

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<sup>i</sup> The GFMAP is one of several products produced by the Joint Staff in support of the Global Force Management (GFM) process. The GFM process enables the SecDef to make proactive, risk-informed decisions in order to align forces against known CCDR requirements in advance of planning and deployment preparation timelines. Based on SecDef direction in the Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF), Global Force Management Implementation Guidance (GFMIG), Forces for Unified Command Memorandum, and the GFMAP, the Joint Staff orchestrates the GFM process in order to allocate force for validated CCDR requirements. GFM continuously and systematically tracks demand for Service forces through annual CCDR force requirement submissions for inclusion in the GFMAP; modifications to the GFMAP address crisis response and responsibilities of GFM and force synchronization stakeholders.

<sup>j</sup> The DEPOD in its entirety is composed of the GFMAP and its associated annexes once approved by the SecDef.

units for MEU deployments, which deploy for eight months as outlined by the U.S. Navy's Optimized Fleet Response Plan<sup>k</sup> (O-FRP).<sup>15</sup>

Prior to U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Marine Corps standard deployments consisted of the MEU (six months), Unit Deployment Program (UDP) (six months), and the annual U.S. - South American Allied Exercise (UNITAS) (four months). As an example, East and West Coast MEUs deployed on what was known as a 2.0 presence. This changed in the mid-2000s to a reduced 1.0 presence, meaning there is only one MEU deployed at any time. During the 2.0 period both East and West Coast Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) maintained one deployed MEU at all times creating the 2.0 presence. The 2.0 presence addressed in this paper does not account for the additional presence associated with the deployment cycle of the 31<sup>st</sup> MEU. Multiple compounding circumstances precipitated this reduction in MEU presence, one of which was the decrease in U.S. Navy amphibious ship inventory as well as readiness and availability of that inventory.<sup>16</sup> As such, the Marine Corps curtailed its MEU presence around the globe and reduced the TEEP deployment requirements for MEUs. Additionally, during the previous 2.0 presence, Marines assigned to MEUs would deploy twice during a period of OPFOR assignment thus meeting the third criterion for an OCD update.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of the persistence of MEU presence, a deployed MEU has and will remain a vital element of our National Military Strategy “to provide continuous, forward naval presence in key regions to conduct steady-state security cooperation, military

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<sup>k</sup> The 2014 O-FRP announced the transition of the fleet training and maintenance to a 36-month cycle, which coincides with eight-month deployments to enhance stability and predictability while decreasing costs in maintenance. The end result intends to not affect forward presence levels, but instead affords the Navy more efficient use of the amphibious ships that are not deployed.

engagement, and deterrence, as well as immediate response to episodic crisis and contingencies.”<sup>18</sup>

Per MCO 1300.8, OCDs are designed to determine the pool of Marines available for “overseas assignment or CONUS assignment to deployment-designated unit, e.g. MEUs,”<sup>19</sup> but this policy does not reflect the Marine Corps’ Force Synchronization Playbook and the current nature of MEU deployments. In February 2015, the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) published a study entitled *Historical ARG/MEU Employment*. The study examined the historical roots, evolution, and employment of the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG)/MEUs.<sup>20</sup> This CNA study was specifically focused on the ARG/MEU concept of operations and capabilities of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF)<sup>1</sup> as it relates to standard MEU deployments as well as the recent trend in split disaggregated operations.<sup>m</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the CNA study also provides data concerning the duration of ARG/MEU deployments between 1989 and 2013. As depicted on table 1 below, these figures reflect that the historical ARG/MEU deployment length ranges from 123 to 301 days.<sup>21</sup> The average deployment, however, lasted six months or between 176 to 184 days.<sup>22</sup> The data from the CNA study clearly reflects a deficit between the OCD policy of 270 days and reality as it relates to the duration of MEU deployments.

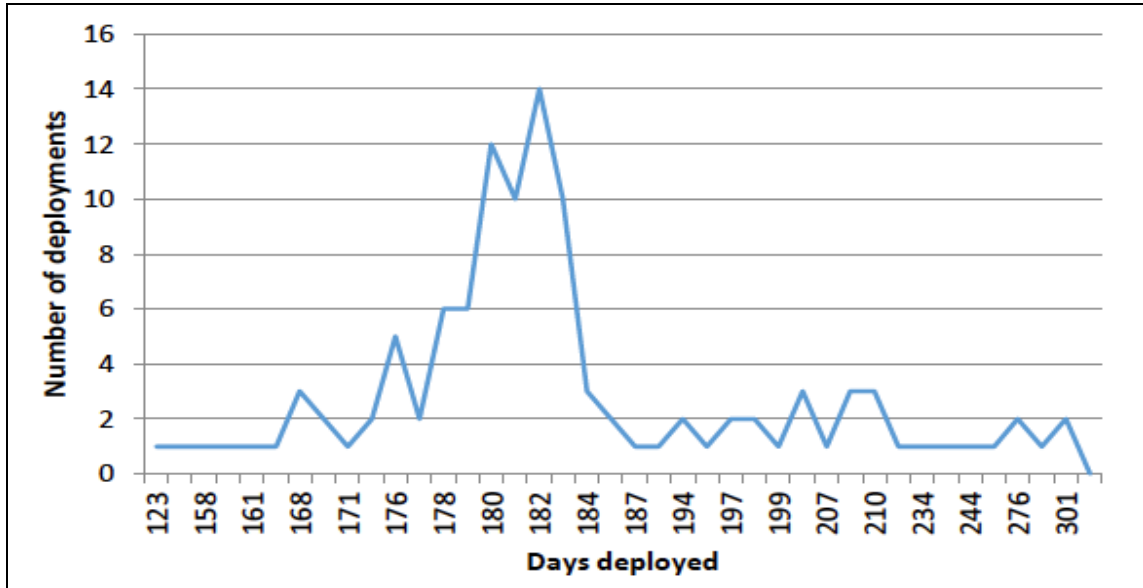
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<sup>1</sup> The MAGTF is a modular organization tailorable to its mission through task organization. All MAGTFs consist of four core elements – a command element, a ground combat element (GCE), an aviation combat element (ACE), and a logistics combat element (LCE). As such, the MAGTF is the principal organization for all Marine Corps missions across the range of military operations.

<sup>m</sup> Disaggregated operations encompass a variety of scenarios where an ARG/MEU is split in its employment between multiple combatant commands and supporting a variety of missions across the range of military operations in support of CCDR requirements.



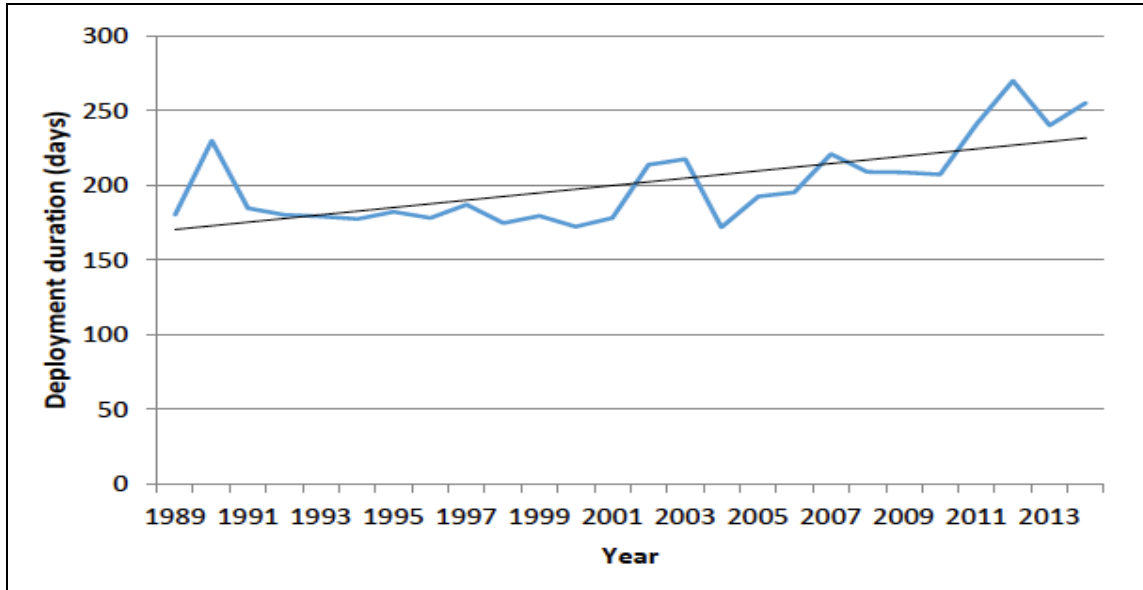
Table 1: Deployment Duration by Frequency (1989-2013).



The 22d MEU's 2014 deployment provides a clear example of this deficit.

Deploying on 10 February 2014 from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the 22d MEU embarked on what was supposed to be a standard eight-month deployment in accordance with the O-FRP. However, in August 2014, due to the recent invasion of Iraq by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), the 22d MEU was extended for an additional 45 days and did not return to CONUS until 28 October 2014. This extension resulted in a total deployment duration of 268 days (nearly 9 ½ months). The 22d MEU's deployment duration in perspective of the CNA study falls on the large end of the duration scale and well outside the mean deployment range. However, the CNA study further determined that ARG/MEU deployments have shown an increase in deployment length. Between 1989 and 2002, the average deployment lasted six months, and between 2002 and 2014, there has been a steady increase to about eight months.<sup>23</sup>

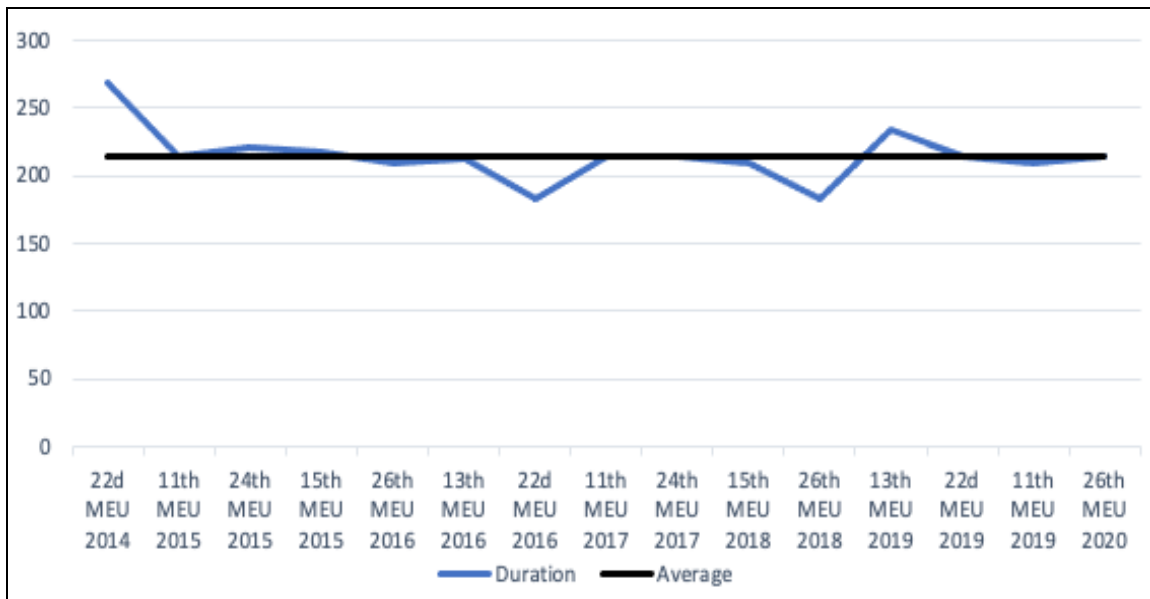
Table 2: Deployment Duration by Year (1989-2013).



Since 2014, the ARG/MEUs have deployed on a slightly more consistent duration and in line with the Navy's O-FRP. The following chart depicts the deployment duration history of ARG/MEUs between 2014-2020 reflecting the duration high of 268 days, low of 183 days, and average of 214 days.<sup>n</sup>

Table 3: Deployment Duration by Year (2014-2020).

<sup>n</sup> This chart reflects information on ARG/MEU deployment durations between 2014-2020. The information in this chart was provided by the Deputy Commandant, Plans Policy & Operations, Headquarters Marine Corps and was compiled from information and reports available at the Amphibious Programs Office (POE-50). This information was requested by the author specifically to reflect more recent and relevant data pertaining to the current extended duration of ARG/MEU deployments.



Unfortunately, due to the length and location of the 22d MEU 2014 deployment, personnel did not meet any of the update criteria in accordance with MCO 1300.8. Additionally, approximately 95% of personnel narrowly missed meeting two criteria by a matter of two days in each case. This particular MEU deployment reflects high end of the spectrum deployment duration norm versus the exception as it pertains to units meeting the OCD update criteria. The problem for the 22d MEU was that it narrowly missed multiple criteria to necessitate an update, despite a more than 30-day extension, and the unit was deployed for 268 days (criterion two) of which 176 days in a “hostile fire area” (criterion four).<sup>24</sup>

Currently taking into account “New Normal”<sup>o</sup> operations, as defined by General Martin E. Dempsey while serving as CJCS, the Marine Corps’ TEEP includes a greater variety of deployments.<sup>25</sup> The current TEEP includes the traditional MEU and UDP deployments, as well as two newly established standing Special Purpose Marine Air-

<sup>o</sup> General Dempsey defined “New Normal” in the context of the diffusion of power fueling insecurity and unrest across the Middle East and North Africa. This distinction is as a result of recent challenges in transnational crime presented by al-Qa’ida its affiliates Al-Qa’ida-Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM) as well as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

Ground Task Forces. With the drawdown of forces deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, fewer Marines are meeting criterion four which is specific to a hostile fire area.<sup>26</sup> The reality is that the Marine Corps Playbook has changed significantly, but the OCD policy fails to match it. Updates to the OCD policy should reflect the deployment duration, reoccurrence during unit assignment, and consistency with the current deployment TEEP. That is not to say that the OCD is irrelevant, rather that it is due for calibration.

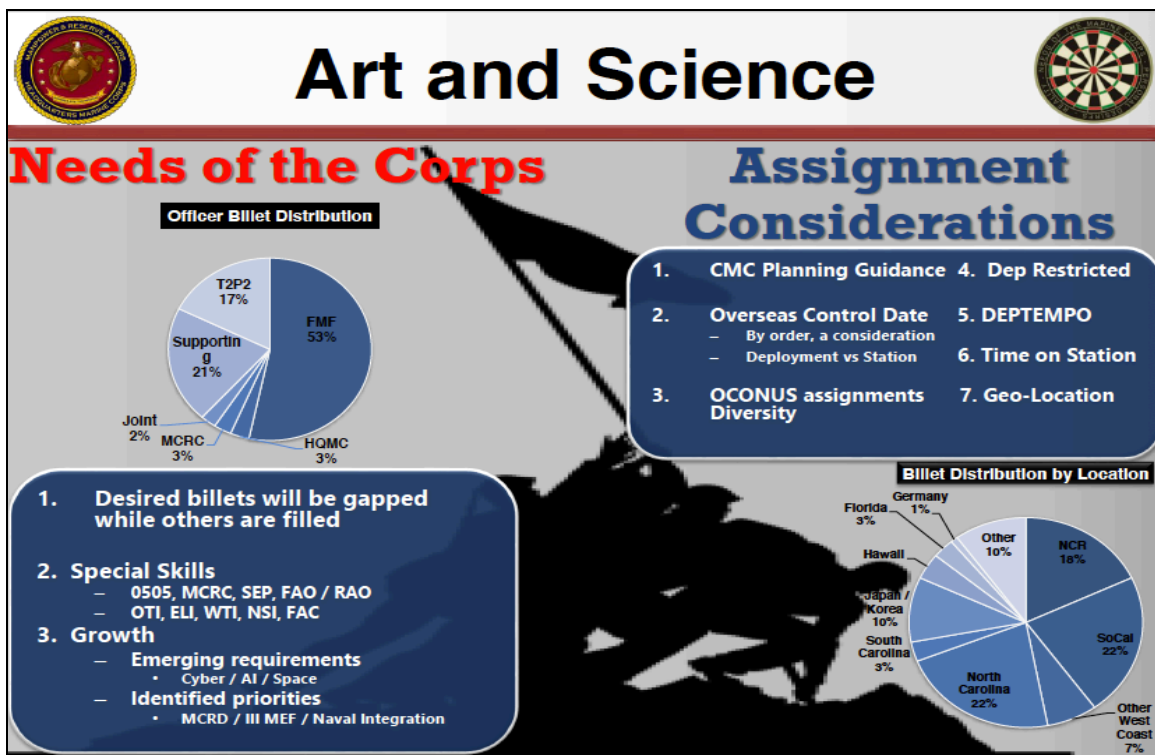
The original intent of the OCD was to determine a pool of personnel to queue for prioritization within a population of Marines for overseas assignment or to deployment designated units. This queue is used by Headquarters Marine Corps Manpower Management Division (i.e. monitors) to determine personnel to “fair share the burden of major overseas deployments and overseas assignments among Marines.”<sup>27</sup> Although most Marines think monitors use the “dartboard method” when determining future assignment, they actually use the OCD as a queue for identifying personnel who have not shared the burden of deployment. During the assignment process, monitors intend to assign Marines “to the right force in the right place at the right time”<sup>28</sup> in their career by giving attention to career timing and progression, deployment history, quality spread, and burden sharing. In doing so, monitors make assignments based on, and in accordance with MCO 1300.8, advised by the following priorities:

- a. Needs of the Marine Corps
- b. Career Progression (Operating Forces, Supporting Establishment, Seniority)
- c. Overseas Control Date (OCD)
- d. Individual preference

- e. Restricted officers (warrant officers and limited duty officers) must only be assigned to restricted officer billets within their respective MOSs<sup>29</sup>

As depicted in the image below from the Fiscal Year 21 (FY21) MMOA Road Show brief, monitors prioritize the OCD as a planning tool aiding the “Art and Science” of assignment considerations when working the assignments process.<sup>30</sup>

Figure 2: Art and Science.



For the Marine Corps’ assignments process, OCD policy is problematic because it does not effectively sort Marines based on their deployments. Specifically, monitors are having a harder time identifying personnel who have served with MEUs because their OCDs are only adjusting rather than updating as a result of these major deployments.<sup>31</sup> To ensure monitors are assigning the right personnel overseas, they have to review a Marine’s entire Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) to understand a Marine’s career

history. Just like the Marine Corps planning process, there is an art and science to assigning personnel.<sup>32</sup>

As an example, comparing the overseas assignments and deployments of majors X and Y. Both majors X and Y's, OCDs were only adjusted from their most recent deployments with Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force - Crisis Response Africa for 3 months in 2013 and the 22d MEU for 9 ½ months in 2014. Although majors X and Y are clearly sharing the burden, neither of these deployments met the criteria for an OCD update. As a result, majors X and Y have been identified by their respective monitors for potential overseas assignment.

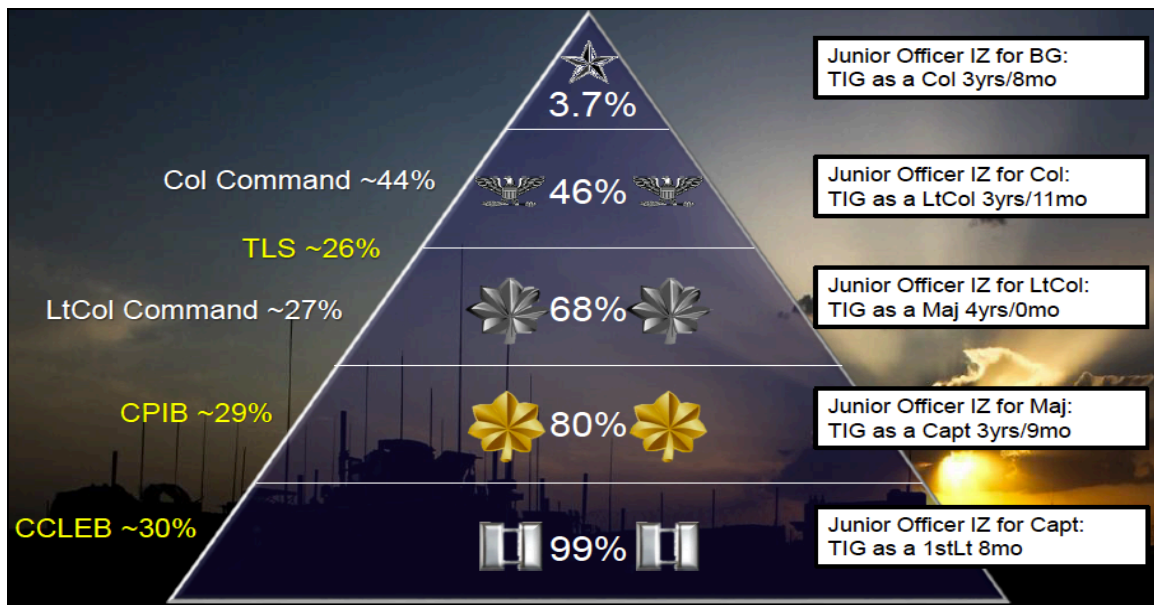
Major X was queued because he has the oldest OCD (5 August 2009) among the population of (60+) Majors eligible for orders within his MOS. Additionally, Major X previously completed an overseas assignment in Okinawa from November 2005 to August 2008 during which he completed an Operations IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) deployment from August 2006 to March 2007.

Major Y was queued because he has the oldest OCD (28 May 1996) among the population of (40+) majors eligible for orders within his MOS. Additionally, major Y previously completed a MEU deployment from February to July 2000 and an OIF deployment from February to July 2003. To date, Major Y has never been assigned overseas and all of his past deployments only met the criteria for an OCD day-for-day adjustment vice an update. Major Y currently has orders to report no later than 31 July 2021 for his first overseas assignment to Marine Corps Forces Europe/Africa in Stuttgart German. In the case of Majors X and Y, the respective monitors have to rely more on the art rather than the science associated with the intent of the OCD. By updating the OCD

policy to reflect the current Force Synchronization Playbook, monitors can rely more on the science of the OCD.

To complicate matters more, the second priority during the assignments process is career progression which is more and more relevant to the individual Marine vice a specific occupational field, the officer or enlisted corps, or the Marine Corps as a whole. Image 3 below outlines the typical career progression for Marine Corps officers taking into account various career way-points.<sup>33</sup> These way-points include selection percentages for Marine Corps advanced education opportunities by grade, percentages of those selected for command opportunities, promotion selection percentages, and time in service and time in grade requirements.

Figure 3: Career Progression.

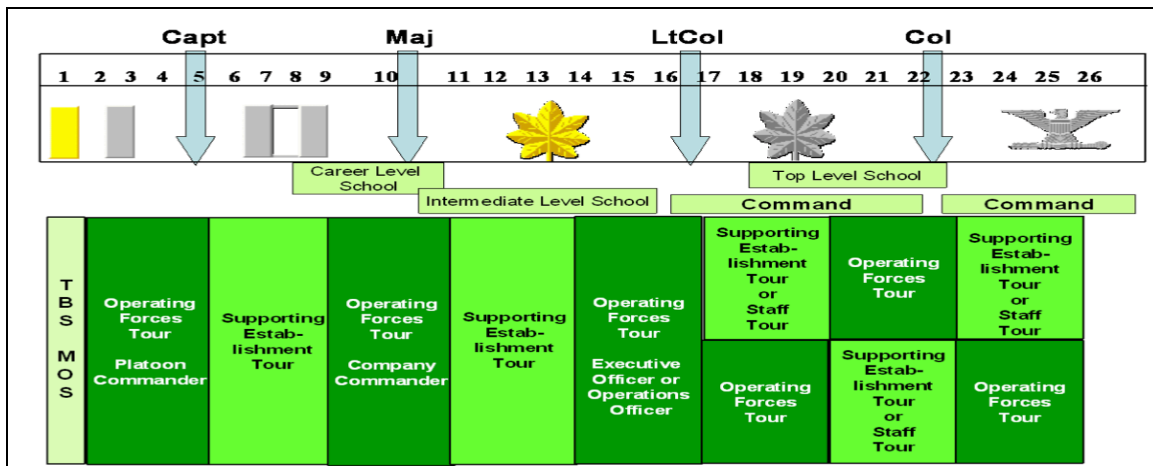


Career progression<sup>P</sup> is not uniformly followed across the Marine Corps while at the same time is it not military occupational specialty (MOS) specific either but does reflect some

<sup>P</sup> Career Progression also translates to individual "Career Objectives." Whether the individual desires promotion selection to higher ranks, if command is important, duty location preferences etc...

consistencies across all MOSs. Image 4 below provides an example template for ground officer career progression. This example depicts career progression consistency related to the back-and-forth assignment from the OPFOR to the supporting establishment on a continual rotational basis.<sup>34</sup> This continual rotation from the OPFOR to the supporting establishment is consistent across all MOSs for both the officer and enlisted elements of the Marine Corps. However, this practice of continual rotation from the OPFOR to the supporting establish is contrary to OCD criterion three which requires two consecutive deployments during the same or consecutive OPFOR tours.<sup>35</sup> Although it is not uncommon for personnel to be assigned on consecutive OPFOR tours, it is the exception rather than the rule and does not correlate with career progression models. If the OCD is going to be a tool used by monitors to determine assignments, then it should actually correlate with the directed assignment priorities.

Figure 4: Example, Career Progression (Ground Officer).



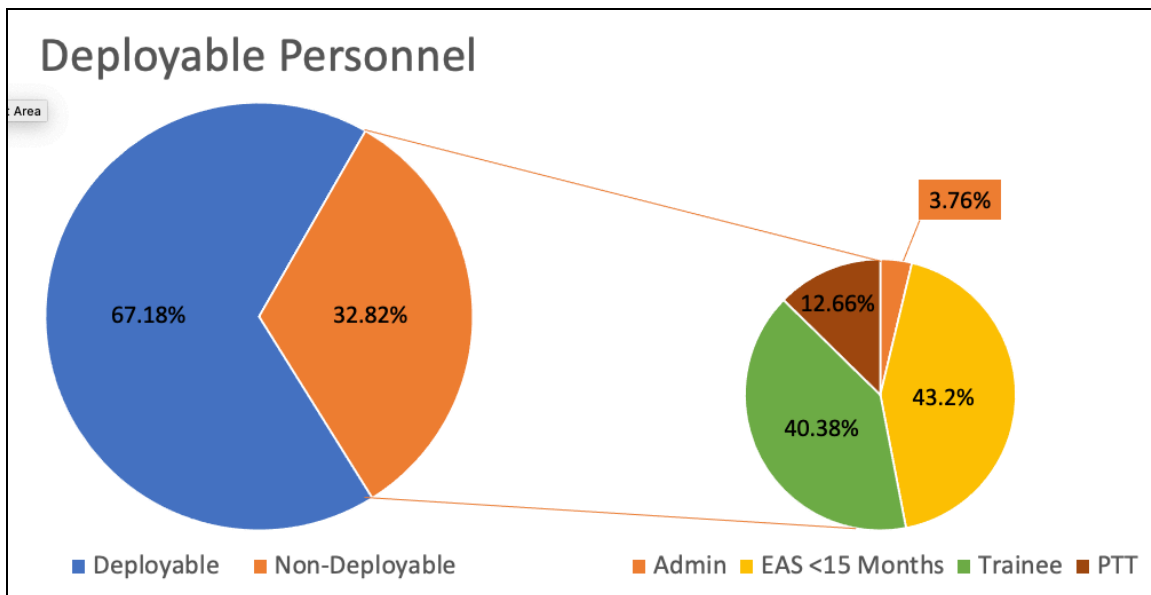
### Counter Argument

One of the concerns with updating the OCD policy is that it may increase the population of non-deployable personnel across the Marine Corps. On any given day, the number of non-deployable personnel fluctuates, however. As of 19 January 2021, the



Marine Corps has a non-deployable population of 32.82% or 59,220 personnel.<sup>36</sup> The largest percentage of non-deployable personnel is composed of the 25,581 (43.2%) Marines ending active service date in less than 15 months and 23,915 (40.38%) Marines in trainee status as depicted in table 4 below.<sup>37</sup> Additionally depicted are the much smaller percentages of personnel tracked as either administrative (3.76%) or categorized patients, prisoners, and transients composing (12.66%) of all non-deployable personnel.<sup>38</sup> These concerns are developed from restrictions on involuntary assignment of Marines to deploying units. Specifically, assignment restrictions apply when assigning first term Marines within six months of their OCD and career enlisted Marines within 12 months of their OCD to deploying units.<sup>39</sup>

Table 4: Deployable Personnel.



The deployment-to-dwell and mobilization-to-dwell policy is designed to ensure personnel at every level are not repeatedly exposed to combat, do not experience disproportionate deployments, and do not spend extended periods of time away from

their homeport/station/base unless required by operational necessity.<sup>40</sup> Similar to the OCD, the Marine Corps maintains the deployment-to-dwell and mobilization-to-dwell reporting via PERSTEMPO or DEPTempo events in order to manage personnel and ensure they do not experience disproportionate deployments or spend extended periods of time on overseas assignments.

The Marine Corps maintains its deployment-to-dwell ratio in accordance with the Secretary of Defense's goal 1:2 or greater.<sup>41</sup> It will be hard to assess what impact changing the OCD policy will have on the Marine Corps' deployable population. Any change to the deployable population is certainly a concern and should be researched in detail to understand the impact. As the circumstances under which an OCD may be updated is increased, more Marines' will receive updated OCDs, and the pool of Marines available and eligible for assignment will decrease. Simultaneously, as the number of Marines with updated OCDs increases, the value of the OCD may diminish. However, regardless of the number of Marines with updated and recent OCDs, there will remain a queuing and prioritization of the Marines within the queue, and the Marine with the oldest OCD will be the first considered for an assignment. The end state is to ensure the burden and hardship of deployments and overseas assignments is shared across the force.

### Recap and Recommendation

At its core, the OCD is an analytic tool for monitors to ensure the equitable distribution of overseas assignment and assignment to deployment designated units that routinely support major deployments (e.g. MEUs and UDPs).<sup>42</sup> The criteria associated

with the requirements to necessitate and update are based upon deployment tour duration, proximity to combat related hazards, and the potential for consecutive deployments over consecutive OPFOR tours. However, as it has been shown throughout this paper the OCD update criteria have not been updated to synchronize with standard deployment durations as governed by the Marine Corps Synchronization Playbook. Additionally, manpower assignment practices for career progression and rotation between the OPFOR and the supporting establishment run contrary to OCD update criteria. As a result, a monitor's use of the OCD has become more of an art than a science which reduces the usefulness of the OCD as an analytical tool.

To facilitate the manpower assignment process better, the OCD should be updated to correspond with actual deployment durations, should support individual deployment periods instead of nonstandard deployment reoccurrence from consecutive OPFOR assignment, and must reflect the current deployment TEEP. This paper demonstrates that the OCD update policy specifically fails to support MEU deployments. This is a startling fact considering the OCD, in its purpose, is to identify personnel for overseas assignment or assignment to the MEUs or UDPs.

It is clear from this paper's examination that the Marine Corps OCD policy is in need of an update. As a recommendation, it is relevant to update criterion two to reflect a deployment duration consistent with the average 214 days duration of ARG/MEU deployments instead of the current requirement of 270 days. It should also be considered that criterion two be specific to MEU deployments. Additionally, criterion three should be used under limited controlled capacity as its application of deployments over continuous OPFOR tours is contrary to Marine Corps career progression goals as well as

assignment policy intended to prevent continuous OPFOR assignments. It is however understood that personnel do serve in consecutive OPFOR assignments as the needs of the Marine Corps determine assignment more than any other priority.

### Conclusion

General David H. Berger, 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, in his Commandant's Planning Guidance reiterated the observation of his predecessor General Robert B. Neller: "The Marine Corps is not organized, trained, equipped, or postured to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving future operating environment."<sup>43</sup> General Berger further lamented that just as the Marine Corps is not ready for the next fight, our manpower systems and systems of manpower analysis must be modernized to adapt to the changing environment. Too many of these analysis tools, specifically the OCD, used by monitors to determine personnel assignments have not advanced to reflect the current much less future operating environment. In his planning guidance, Gen Berger reminded the Marine Corps of its charter as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness, the premier example of which is the MEU and its habitual relationship with the ARG and their adaptability to change.

In an era of persistent conflict, the Marine Corps must maintain policies that recognize burden sharing based on how the Marines fight in the New Normal construct. Regardless, "Marines will be ready and forward deployed. The intent of Congress that the Marine Corps serve as the Nation's 'force in readiness' reflects a recognized national need for a force capable of rapid response to emerging crisis. To meet this need, Marines routinely forward deploy around the globe with operational forces ready to deploy on

short notice.”<sup>44</sup> Deploying is the nature of what Marines do. Just as the conduct of warfare changes, so too should the theory, preparation, and policy. Over the last 20 years, the Marine Corps has made significant changes in how forces are deployed in support of the Geographic Combatant Commands yet some policies failed to adapt in support of these changes.

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### Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Head Quarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Current Operations Brief*, December 10, 2020, p.3.  
[https://www.mccell.usmc.mil/index.cfm?disp=myIdolSearch\\_XML.cfm](https://www.mccell.usmc.mil/index.cfm?disp=myIdolSearch_XML.cfm).

<sup>3</sup> United States Code Armed Forces: *United States Marine Corps: Composition and Functions*, U.S. code 5063, January 7, 2011, 1860. [http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File\\_id=fc0173d5-f7d3-4d74-8d42-1b9e185b7c6b](http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=fc0173d5-f7d3-4d74-8d42-1b9e185b7c6b).

<sup>4</sup> Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, *Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy*, MCO 1300.8, September 18, 2014, p.6-23. <http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/MCO%201300.8.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Procedures for Military Personnel Assignments*, Instruction 1315.18/Ch 3, June 24, 2019, p.13. <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/131518p.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-23.

<sup>7</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-24.

<sup>8</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-24.

<sup>9</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-24.

<sup>10</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-24.

<sup>11</sup> Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, *Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy*, MCO P1300.8R, October 4, 1994, (Cancelled, September 18, 2014 by MCO 1300.8), p.2-13.

<sup>12</sup> MCO P1300.8R, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Deputy Commandant for Plans Policy and Operations, *Marine Corps Global Force Management (GFM) and Force Synchronization*, MCO 3120.12A, June 3, 2020, p.1.  
<http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/MCO%203120.12.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Director, Joint Force Development, *Deployment and Redeployment Operations*, Joint Publication 3-35, January 10, 2018, p.I-4, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_35.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_35.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *Optimizing the Fleet Response Plan*, OPNAVINST 3000.15A, November 10, 2014, p.4.  
<https://www.secnav.navy.mil/doni/Directives/03000%20Naval%20Operations%20and%20Readiness/03-00%20General%20Operations%20and%20Readiness%20Support/3000.15A.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Geithner, Jonathan D., *Historical ARG/MEU Employment*, Center for Naval Analyses Arlington, VA., February 2015, p.18.

<sup>17</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-23.

<sup>18</sup> MCDP 1-0, p.2-12.

<sup>19</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-23.

<sup>20</sup> Geithner, p.i.

<sup>21</sup> Geithner, p.20.

<sup>22</sup> Geithner, p.20.

<sup>23</sup> Geithner, p.20.

<sup>24</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-23.

<sup>25</sup> Dempsey, Martin E. General USA, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, Statement of testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee – Defense, *FY14 Department of Defense Budget*, June 11, 2013, p.4. <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/hearings/CJCS%20FY14%20SAC-D%20Statement.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Hostile Fire Areas (HFAs) Identified for Overseas Control Date (OCD) Updates*, MARADMIN 577/04, December 29, 2004, p.2. <http://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/MessagesDisplay/tabid/13286/Article/114468/tile-fire-areas-hfas-identified-for-overseas-control-date-o cd-updates.aspx>.

<sup>27</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-23.

<sup>28</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Force 21*, EF21, March 4, 2014, p.2. <http://www.mccdc.marines.mil/ef21>.

<sup>29</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.2-1.

<sup>30</sup> Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, *Manpower Management, Officer Assignments (MMOA) FY21 Road Show brief*, Updated 31 July 2020, p.19. [https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/webcenter/portal/MMOA/pages\\_page17](https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/webcenter/portal/MMOA/pages_page17).

<sup>31</sup> Snyder, John M., Major USMC, interview with author, November 6, 2020. Major Snyder served as a HQMC Company Grade Monitor for 02XX, 26XX, and 34XX officers from March 2017 to July 2019. After which he served as the Aide de Camp to Deputy Commandant, Manpower & Reserve Affairs prior to reporting to his current assignment as a Student, Command & Staff College, Marine Corps University. Maj Snyder was interviewed by the author for his knowledge and subject matter expertise of the manpower process.

<sup>32</sup> Major Snyder.

<sup>33</sup> MMOA, Road Show brief, p.14.

<sup>34</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps Recruiting District, *L.I.N.K.S. for Spouses, Participants Handbook*, June 2008, p.2. <https://www.9thmcd.marines.mil/Portals/82/Docs/Mod%208-Staying%20Marine%20Section.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-24.

<sup>36</sup> Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps - Command Profile, *Deployable Breakdown*, January 19, 2021. <https://www2.manpower.usmc.mil/ncp/deployable>.

<sup>37</sup> Command Profile, Deployable Breakdown.

<sup>38</sup> Command Profile, Deployable Breakdown.

<sup>39</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.3-3.

<sup>40</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Deployment-To-Dwell, Mobilization-To-Dwell Policy Revision*, MARADMIN 346/14, July 14, 2014, p.1. <http://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/MessagesDisplay/tabid/13286/Article/167431/deployment-to-dwell-mobilization-to-dwell-policy-revision.aspx>.

<sup>41</sup> MARADMIN 346/14, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> MCO 1300.8, p.6-24.

<sup>43</sup> Berger, David H., General USMC, *Commandant's Planning Guidance, 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, June 2020, p1. <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/cmc/>.

<sup>44</sup> MCDP 1-0, p.1-4.

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