



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
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OPNAV INSTRUCTION 3501.316C

From: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: FORCE COMPOSITION OF AFLOAT NAVY AND NAVAL GROUPS

Ref: (a) NWP 3-56 of December 2015 (NOTAL)  
(b) OPNAVINST F3501.298C (NOTAL)  
(c) OPNAVINST F3501.318B (NOTAL)  
(d) MCO 3120.13  
(e) EF-21, Expeditionary Force 21, 4 March 2014  
(f) OPNAVINST F3501.319B (NOTAL)  
(g) OPNAVINST 3000.15A  
(h) 10 U.S.C §5062 and §5063  
(i) A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, March 2015  
(j) JP 1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States, 25 March 2013

Encl: (1) Carrier Strike Group  
(2) Amphibious Ready Group and Marine Expeditionary Unit  
(3) Expeditionary Strike Group  
(4) Surface Action Group  
(5) Definition of Terms

1. Purpose

a. This instruction defines the force composition and naming convention for afloat Navy and naval groups.

b. This revision updates the force structure for multiple naval groups due to evolving threats, technology, and lessons learned. This instruction is a complete revision and should be reviewed in its entirety.

2. Cancellation. OPNAVINST 3501.316B.

3. Scope and Applicability. This instruction is applicable to Chief of Naval Operations N-codes; Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command; Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet; naval component commanders; type commanders; systems commands; Commander, Navy Installations Command; regional commanders; and all subordinate commands.

4. Background

a. References (a) through (i) articulate strategic objectives and key capabilities required to meet combatant commanders (CCDR) requirements and describe how the Navy and Marine Corps team will typically organize, train, deploy, employ, and sustain a capable and ready force in defense of the Nation as part of the larger joint force. Central to this is the ability of naval forces to task and organize to confront a diverse array of challenges and missions while operating at sea. Inherently flexible and tailorable forces are vital to the commander's ability to adapt to the mission and shifting of resources.

b. This instruction is not intended as programming guidance. The terms and policy described herein neither imply specific operational or administrative command relationships nor address all capability options that may be required per reference (j). While this instruction describes units that form baseline force packages, global force providers, CCDRs, and operational commanders may tailor force packages based on unit availability, mission analysis, risk assessment, and their delegated authorities to meet specific mission requirements.

5. Discussion. Tasks vital to the success of initial crisis response missions throughout the range of military operations (ROMO) may be performed in permissive, uncertain, or hostile environments. Based on CCDR requirements, the baseline force compositions may be tailored to provide specific capabilities. Higher authority directives will define any deviation from the baseline standard rotational force compositions. Plans and orders, including initiating directives, issue organizational constructs for execution of operations, and will normally assign Navy and naval forces to a maritime component commander (service, joint, or combined component commander). Baseline force compositions (groups) are discussed in enclosures (1) through (4).

6. Definition of Terms. See enclosure (5).

7. Action. Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans, and Strategy (CNO N3/N5) must:


a. coordinate the implementation of this guidance;

b. serve as the focal point on the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) staff for Navy, joint, and interagency policy matters bearing on major afloat Navy and naval group deployments; and

c. conduct a periodic review and update this instruction as applicable.

8. Records Management. Records created as a result of this instruction, regardless of media and format, must be managed per Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Manual 5210.1 of January 2012.

9. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 5215.17A, CNO N3/N5 will review this instruction annually on the anniversary of its issuance date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, Department of Defense, SECNAV, and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction. This instruction will be in effect for 5 years, unless revised or cancelled in the interim, and will be reissued by the 5-year anniversary date if it is still required, unless it meets one of the exceptions in OPNAVINST 5215.17A, paragraph 9. Otherwise, if the instruction is no longer required, it will be processed for cancellation as soon as the need for cancellation is known following the guidance in OPNAV Manual 5215.1 of May 2016.



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Releasability and distribution:

This instruction is cleared for public release and is available electronically only via Department of the Navy Issuances Web site, <http://doni.documentservices.dla.mil/>

## CARRIER STRIKE GROUP

1. Discussion. The carrier strike group (CSG) is a forward-deployed, flexible, sea-based force that provides the President of the United States and the CCDR with credible deterrence and decision time across the ROMO. The CSG affords the CCDR with a responsive, flexible, and versatile capability to shape the operational environment, respond to crises, and protect United States and allied interests in any threat environment. CSG capabilities support dynamic crisis response missions, providing flexible sea base options, and decisive operations in hostile environments characterized by multiple threats including, but not limited to: anti-ship cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, sea mines, torpedoes, strike fighter aircraft, electromagnetic jammers, cruise missile equipped surface combatants, submarines (nuclear and diesel), terrorist threats, and cyber-attack. The CSG must be organized under the command of a one or two star Navy flag officer. The baseline CSG includes the groups in subparagraphs 1a through 1g.

a. One Navy flag officer with staff. The officer in tactical command, normally the CSG commander, may assign warfare commanders per references (a) and (b), giving specific attention to platform capabilities that support the warfare commander's ability to perform assigned duties.

b. One destroyer squadron staff.

c. One aircraft carrier.

d. One carrier air wing with staff.

(1) Four strike fighter squadrons with a minimum of 44 strike fighter aircraft (F/A-18C/E/F Hornet and Super Hornet or F-35C Lightning II). Nominally, a minimum of two F/A-18 E/F squadrons are included to provide internal tanker support. It will have at least one squadron be naval integrated fire control-counter air capable.

(2) One airborne early warning squadron with four E-2C Hawkeye or five E-2D Advanced Hawkeye aircraft. Naval integrated fire control-counter air capability is preferred.

(3) One electronic warfare squadron with seven EA-18G Growler electronic attack warfare aircraft.

(4) Rotary wing assets. One helicopter sea combat squadron with eight search and rescue, logistics, surface warfare (SUW), special operations forces (SOF), and personnel recovery capable helicopters, and one helicopter maritime strike squadron with eleven SUW and anti-submarine warfare capable helicopters.

(a) CSG escorts will, based on configuration and mission, embark helicopter assets.

(b) Helicopter and maintenance detachments should be assigned to helicopter capable and hangar-configured surface combatant with assigned helicopter detachments to ensure readiness for disaggregated operations.

(5) One carrier onboard delivery aircraft detachment with two aircraft (C-2A Greyhound).

e. One air and missile defense commander (AMDC) with staff.

(1) Based on capability, five to seven air and missile defense-capable large surface combatant ships (guided missile cruiser and guided missile destroyer) to combat the advent of highly capable anti-ship ballistic missiles and anti-ship cruise missiles, particularly those launched from ships, submarines, and ashore in a coordinated, multi-axis (360 degree) threat environment. The large surface combatants must be collectively capable of conducting integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) (simultaneous ballistic missile defense and anti-air warfare) operations in a high raid density environment. The AMDC should have a major command surface combatant to direct IAMD of the CSG. A naval integrated fire control-counter air capable cruiser is the preferred ship for the AMDC.

(2) No less than three cruise missile land attack (e.g., Tomahawk land attack missile or follow on weapon) capable large surface combatant ships.

(3) No less than three SUW cruise missile (e.g., Harpoon or follow-on weapon) capable large surface combatant ships.

(4) No less than four multi-functional tactical towed array systems.

f. One fast combat support (T-AOE) or equivalent dry cargo and ammunition (T-AKE) or fleet replenishment oiler (T-AO) pair combat logistics force ship(s), while not a part of the CSG, are usually assigned to support CSG operations.

g. One Navy explosive ordnance disposal platoon.

2. Naming Convention. The CSG assumes the name of the aircraft carrier. Example: “*LINCOLN* CSG.” This standardized naming convention will be used for administrative and planning purposes (e.g., strategic communications, public affairs, global force management (GFM) (training, maintenance, etc.)) to more easily identify major afloat Navy and naval groups.

AMPHIBIOUS READY GROUP AND MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT

1. Discussion. The amphibious ready group (ARG) and Marine expeditionary unit (MEU) is a forward-deployed, flexible, sea-based force that provides the President and the CCDR with credible deterrence and decision time across the ROMO. The ARG and MEU affords the CCDR with a responsive, flexible, and versatile capability to shape the operational environment, respond to crises, and protect United States and allied interests in permissive and select uncertain and hostile environments. Per reference (c), ARG and MEU capabilities support initial crisis response, introduce follow-on forces, support designated SOF, and other missions in permissive and select uncertain hostile environments which include, but are not limited to: amphibious assaults, amphibious raids, amphibious demonstrations, amphibious withdrawals, and support to crisis and other operations (e.g., non-combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian assistance, or maritime security operations). Refer to reference (d) for complete list of MEU mission essential tasks. The ARG and Navy detachments are organized under the command of a Navy O-6, while the MEU, with its embarked Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF), is under the command of a Marine Corps O-6.

a. ARG Composition. An ARG normally consists of the groups in subparagraphs 1a(1) through 1a(11).

(1) One Navy O-6 with amphibious squadron staff.

(2) A minimum of three amphibious ships. This is a nominal number as it is dependent on the CCDR requirements and missions (i.e., forward-deployed naval force Japan requires four amphibious ships) and specific ship platform capacities and capabilities.

(a) At least one amphibious assault ship, multi- or general purpose ship (landing helicopter assault (LHA) or landing helicopter dock (LHD)).

(b) At least one amphibious transport dock ship (LPD).

(c) At least one amphibious dock landing ship (LSD).

(3) One helicopter sea combat expeditionary detachment with two or three search and rescue, logistics, SUW, SOF, and personnel recovery capable helicopters.

(4) One assault craft unit detachment with landing craft, air cushion (LCAC). The number of LCACs is contingent upon ARG well-deck spots and MEU load-out.

(5) One assault craft unit detachment with landing craft, utility (LCU) boat. The number of LCUs is contingent upon ARG well-deck spots and MEU load-out.

(6) One beachmaster unit detachment.

- (7) One tactical air control squadron detachment.
- (8) One fleet surgical team detachment.
- (9) When the ability to source permits, one Navy explosive ordnance disposal platoon.
- (10) One amphibious construction battalion detachment.
- (11) A minimum of two naval special warfare 11 meter rigid-inflatable boats.

b. MEU Composition. Per reference (e), the baseline MEU is approximately 2,400 Marines and deploys with 15 days of supply for sustained operations ashore. The MEU is comprised of the four elements listed in subparagraphs 1b(1) through 1b(4).

- (1) One command element led by a Marine Corps O-6 with MEU command element staff.
- (2) One aviation combat element with a task organized mix of medium and heavy lift rotary wing and tilt-rotor assault support; rotary wing attack and utility helicopters; short takeoff vertical land (STOVL) strike; and aerial refueling and transport fixed-wing aircraft and associated supporting detachments. For planning purposes, a notional aviation combat element consists of six AV-8 Harrier II or F-35B Lightning II aircraft; twelve MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft; four CH-53 Super Stallion helicopters; four AH-1 Cobra helicopters; three UH-1 Iroquois helicopters; and two KC-130 Hercules aircraft, per reference (d).
- (3) One ground combat element consisting of a battalion landing team formed of an infantry battalion reinforced with attached light armored reconnaissance company or platoon, tank platoon, amphibious assault vehicle platoon, reconnaissance platoon, combat engineer platoon, and artillery battery.
- (4) One logistics combat element consisting of a task organized combat logistics battalion which normally includes military police, explosive ordnance disposal (Marine Corps), transportation, general engineering, maintenance, communications, supply, medical, dental, postal, and disbursing detachments.

c. SOF. Depending upon the mission and task, the ARG and MEU may temporarily embark, support, or operate with joint SOFs. The ARG and MEU will be capable of conducting integration and interoperability with SOFs, when directed. Command and control between SOF and ARG and MEU will be established prior to operations per unique mission and task requirements. An SOF liaison element will be added to the MEU to support SOF and ARG and MEU interoperability.

2. Naming Convention. The ARG and MEU assumes the name of the large deck amphibious ship (LHA or LHD) and numbered MEU. Example: "*BATAAN* ARG/22 MEU." When the MEU is not embarked, naming convention will be "*BATAAN* ARG." This standardized naming convention will be used for administrative and planning purposes (e.g., strategic communications, public affairs, GFM (training, maintenance, etc.)) to more easily identify major afloat Navy and naval groups.



### EXPEDITIONARY STRIKE GROUP

1. Discussion. In the event a requirement exists that an ARG and MEU, supported by other forces, be Navy flag officer or Marine Corps general officer-led, the formation must be referred to as an expeditionary strike group (ESG), per reference (f). It must include an embarked Navy flag officer or Marine Corps general officer and the associated command element staff. For Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB) level amphibious operations, ESG commanders act as commander, amphibious task force, and must be co-equal planner with the MEB commanding general. The ESG provides a greater range of amphibious and expeditionary warfare planning capabilities for the execution of a variety of missions in the operational environment, including the ability to conduct and support operations ashore and function as a sea base. ESG capabilities support initial crisis response missions and may be undertaken in permissive and selected uncertain and hostile environments, dependent upon the assigned or attached force structure and composition. The ESG includes:

- a. one Navy flag officer or Marine Corps general officer with command element staff;
- b. one ARG and MEU or an amphibious task force if an MEB embarks; and
- c. other forces assigned (surface combatants and auxiliary support vessels will be similar to those assigned to a CSG dependent on the threat and capabilities of the ships assigned).

2. Naming Convention. The ESG assumes the name of the large deck amphibious ship (LHA or LHD). Example: "BATAAN ESG." This standardized naming convention will be used for administrative and planning purposes (e.g., strategic communications, public affairs, GFM (training, maintenance, etc.)) to more easily identify major afloat Navy and naval groups.

SURFACE ACTION GROUP

1. Discussion. Per reference (g), the surface action group (SAG) affords the CCDR with a tactical level element that is responsive, flexible, and tailorable to execute missions independently or as an extension of the CSG. SAGs deployed with adaptive force packages synergistically contribute to the core naval functions of conventional deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security, high value unit escort, and all domain access. When so equipped, SAGs provide IAMD, cruise missile land and surface attack, anti-submarine warfare, and could leverage littoral combat ships or frigates with tailorable mission packages suited for the tactical situation. The SAG is organized under the command of a designated SAG commander and is comprised of, at a minimum, two surface combatant ships based on forces available and SAG mission tasking.

2. Naming Convention. The SAG assumes the name of the ship of the SAG commander. Example: "*LAKE ERIE* SAG." This standardized naming convention will be used for administrative and planning purposes (e.g., strategic communications, public affairs, GFM (training, maintenance, etc.)) to more easily identify major afloat Navy and naval groups.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Amphibious Force. An amphibious task force and a landing force together with other forces that are trained, organized, and equipped for amphibious operations. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-02)
2. Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). A Navy task organization formed to conduct amphibious operations. (NTRP 1-02)
3. Amphibious Squadron. A tactical and administrative organization composed of amphibious warfare ships used to transport troops and their equipment for an amphibious operation comprised of three amphibious ships. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-02)
4. Amphibious Task Force. A Navy task organization formed to conduct amphibious operations. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-02)
5. Carrier Air Wing. Two or more aircraft squadrons formed under one commander for administrative and tactical control of operations from a carrier. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-32)
6. Carrier Strike Group (CSG). A standing naval task group consisting of a carrier, embarked air wing, surface combatants, and submarines as assigned in direct support, operating in mutual support with the task of destroying hostile submarine, surface, and air forces within the group's assigned operational area and striking at targets along hostile shore lines or projecting power inland. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-32)
7. Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG). An ARG and MEU unit, supported by other forces, and led by an embarked Navy flag officer or Marine Corps general officer and an associated command element staff. An ESG provides a greater range of amphibious and expeditionary warfare planning capabilities for the execution of a variety of missions in the operational environment, including the ability to conduct and support operations ashore and function as a sea base. (NTRP 1-02)
8. Hostile Environment. Operational environment in which host government forces, whether opposed to or receptive to operations that a unit intends to conduct, do not have control of the territory and population in the intended operational area. (Source: JP 3-0)
9. Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). The Marine Corps' principal organization for all missions across a ROMO composed of forces task-organized under a single commander capable of responding rapidly to a contingency anywhere in the world. The types of forces in the MAGTF are functionally grouped into four core elements: a command element, an aviation combat element, a ground combat element, and a logistics combat element. (MCRP 1-10.2)
10. Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). A MAGTF that is constructed around an infantry battalion reinforced, a composite squadron reinforced, and a task-organized logistics combat

element. It normally fulfills Marine Corps' forward sea-based deployment requirements. The MEU provides an immediate reaction capability for crisis response and is capable of limited combat operations. In a joint or multinational environment, it may contain other Service or multinational forces assigned or attached to the MAGTF. (Source: MCRP 1-10.2)

11. Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). A MAGTF that is constructed around an infantry regiment reinforced, a composite Marine aircraft group, and a combat logistics regiment. The MEB, commanded by a general officer, is task-organized to meet the requirements of a specific situation. It can function as part of a joint task force, as the lead echelon of the Marine expeditionary force (MEF), or alone. It varies in size and composition (scalable up to 15,000 Marines) and is larger than an MEU but smaller than an MEF (scalable up to 20,000-90,000 Marines). The MEB is capable of conducting missions across a ROMO. In a joint or multinational environment, it may also contain other Service or multinational forces assigned or attached to the MAGTF. (Source: MCRP 1-10.2)

12. Operational Environment. A composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-0)

13. Permissive Environment. Operational environment in which host country military and law enforcement agencies have control as well as the intent and capability to assist the operations a unit intends to conduct. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-0)

14. Sea basing. The deployment, assembly, command, projection, reconstitution, sustainment, and re-employment of joint power from the sea without reliance on land bases within the area of operations. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-02)

15. Surface Action Group (SAG). A temporary or standing organization of combatant ships, other than carriers, tailored for a specific tactical mission. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-32)

16. Surface Combatant. A ship constructed and armed for combat use with the capability to conduct operations in multiple maritime roles against air, surface and subsurface threats, and land targets. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-32)

17. Task Force

a. A temporary grouping of units, under one commander, formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific operation or mission. (NTRP 1-02)

b. A semi-permanent organization of units, under one commander, formed for the purpose of carrying out a continuing specific task. (NTRP 1-02)

c. A component of a fleet organized by the commander of a task fleet or higher authority for the accomplishment of a specific task or tasks. (NTRP 1-02)

18. Uncertain Environment. Operational environment in which host government forces, whether opposed to or receptive to operations a unit intends to conduct, do not have totally effective control of the territory and population in the intended operational area. (JP 1-02. Source: JP 3-0)