

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, FMF
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I MEFO 3000.2A
G3
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I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE ORDER 3000.2A

From: Commanding General
To: Distribution List

Subj: STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR AIRBORNE OPERATIONS
AND TRAINING (SHORT TITLE: SOP FOR AIRBORNE OPERATIONS)

Ref: (a) MARINE CORPS ORDER 3500.27, Operational Risk
Management
(b) MCO 13480.IB, Joint Airdrop, Inspection, Malfunction,
Investigation, and Activity Reporting
(c) MCO 3500.20, Marine Corps Parachuting and Diving Policy
and Program Administration
(d) MCWP 3-1.5.7, Static Line Parachuting Techniques and
Training (FM 57-220)
(e) NWP 3-22-5 KC-130 Vol. I May 97
(f) FM 100-27, USA/USAF Doctrine for Joint Airborne Tactical
Airlift and Operations
(g) FM 90-26, Airborne Operations
(h) FM 57-38, Pathfinder operations
(i) FM 31-19, Special Forces Military Freefall Parachuting
(FMFM 7-43)
(j) TC 31-24, Special Forces Air Operations (FMFM 7-44)
(k) FM 31-25, Special Forces Waterborne Operations (FMFM 7-45)

Encl: (1) I MEF Airborne Operations Assessment Group (AOAG)
Organization and Responsibilities

1. Purpose. To establish standing operating procedures for the safe and effective conduct of airborne operations and training in the I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF).

2. Terminology. For this document, the terms "airborne" and "parachute" will be used interchangeably and will refer to:

a. "In relation to personnel, troops especially trained to effect, following air transport by air, an assault debarkation, by parachuting... (joint Pub 1-02)

b. "In relation to equipment, pieces of equipment that have been especially designed for use by airborne troops during or after an assault debarkation." (Joint Pub 1-02)

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3. Background. Commanders are responsible for the safe conduct of airborne operations in their units. Airborne operations are inherently dangerous and require special attention. During peacetime, commanders must be guided by the following rule: **SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT AND OVERRIDES ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**. References (a) through (k) provide guidance for airborne operations and training. This SOP provides amplifying guidance and establishes a forum for identifying, addressing and resolving inconsistencies in current airborne regulations and unsafe procedures.

4. Action. To assist Commanders in planning and conducting safe and effective airborne operations, the following actions are directed:

a. Operational Risk Management (ORM). Uncertainty and risk are inherent in the nature of airborne operations and training. ORM is an effective tool to assist Commanders in selecting a course of action that minimizes the amount of risk associated with an assigned mission. ORM will be incorporated in all airborne operations and training in accordance with reference (a).

b. Unit SOPs. Units conducting airborne operations will establish and maintain current SOPs that provide clear, concrete, and current guidance for all authorized parachute operations, such as free-fall jumps, static-line jumps and air delivery.

c. Approved Regulations. All airborne operations and training will be conducted in accordance with references (a) through (k), local range regulations, and units SOPs. Aircrews are governed by the references and appropriate Naval Aviation Training Operations Procedures Standardization (NATOPS) and tactical manuals.

d. Jumpmaster Release. I MEF organizations that conduct parachute operations are authorized to utilize the "Jumpmaster Designated Release" and "Self-Determined Exit" techniques in the conduct of parachute training. These techniques will be employed only by Jumpmasters who have received specific training and successfully completed evaluation in these procedures.

e. Basic Parachutist Progressive Training. I MEF airborne organizations will establish and enforce a policy which requires a progressive sequence of parachute training for all parachutists. Particular attention will be paid to the proper training of newly joined and newly qualified parachutists to prevent them from becoming involved in operations that are beyond their level of training or proficiency. Established guidelines for sequential skill progression and sustaiment

training will require the individual parachutist to meet certain milestones prior to participating in the higher skill level operations. This policy will ensure that appropriate-level refresher training and/or rehearsal jumps are executed prior to tactical jumps, whether for training exercises or operational missions.

This policy will be applied as follows:

(1) Experienced Parachutists. Individuals who are deemed by the command to be experienced parachutists, but who have not jumped within six (6) months will receive ground refresher training prior to their next jump. Their next jump will be administrative and will not be a combat equipment jump. Subsequently, experienced parachutists may participate in all types of jumps.

(2) Inexperienced Parachutists. Individuals who are deemed by the command to be inexperienced parachutists and have not jumped within six (6) months will be treated as newly joined or qualified jumpers. These individuals will receive ground refresher training and a more extensive sequence of administrative jumps prior to being considered fully qualified to participate in all types of jumps. For example, prior to making a night, combat-equipment jump, an inexperienced parachutist would be required to sequentially show competence in completing the following jumps: 1) an administrative, day-jump, 2) a day, combat-equipment jump, and 3) finally a night, administrative jump.

Remember: **No training scenario so important to compromise safety.**

f. Airborne Operations Assessment Group (AOAG). CG, I MEF established the AOAG in February 1998 to identify, address and propose solutions for inconsistencies or ambiguities in current regulations and unsafe procedures for airborne operations and training. The AOAG organization and responsibilities are outlined in the enclosure.

4. Applicability. This SOP is applicable to all I MEF units conducting airborne operations and training. Recommend changes will be directed to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, I MEF.

-SIGNED-
L. D. OUTLAW
Chief of Staff

I MEF AIRBORNE OPERATIONS ASSESSMENT GROUP
ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Background. In February 1998, the I MEF Airborne Operations Assessment Group (AOAG) was established to provide an open forum for the identification, review and resolution of inconsistencies in I MEF airborne regulations and safety procedures. Chartered as a working group, the AOAG is comprised of subject matter experts and unit operations officers. The AOAG is responsible for ensuring that airborne tactics, techniques, and procedures within I MEF airborne units are standardized, when appropriate, and in accordance with current regulations. The AOAG researches issues and forwards recommendations to an Executive Steering Committee (ESC) for validation and subsequent forwarding to the Commanding General for final approval

2 . Mission. The mission of the AOAG is to review, revise and update I MEF airborne operational, training and safety procedures and evaluate proposed equipment modifications in order to safeguard I MEF airborne personnel and equipment.

3. Composition. The AOAG is composed of the Parachute Safety Officers and Operations officers (G-3/S-3) from the following units:

- a. I MEF Command Element (I MEF CE),
- b. I MEF Headquarters Group (I MHG),
- c. First Force Reconnaissance Company (1st FORECON Co),
- d. First Transportation Support Battalion (1st TSB).

Third marine Aircraft Wing (3D MAW) representation will be included when issues are addressed that relate to aircraft operations in support of airborne operations. Representation will normally include 3D MAW Director of Safety Standardization (DODD)/AC/S G-3, MAG-16 DOSS/S-3, MAG-39 DOSS/S-3 and VMGR-352 DOSS/S-3, as necessary for aircraft related issues. As required, other subject matter experts will be invited to attend AOAG meetings. Such representatives may include, but are not limited to, Range Control personnel, Special Operations and Training Group (SOTG), AC/S G-7, I MEF, representatives, and U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force Liaison Officers.

The AOAG is chaired by the Deputy AC/S G-3, I MEF. The Senior Parachute Safety Officer, I MEF, will serve as the Assistant AOAG Chairman.

4. AOAG Oversight. An Executive Steering Committee, consisting of the AC/S G-3, I MEF; Commanding Officer (CO), I MHG; CO, 1st FORECON Co

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and CO, 1st TSB provide supervision and guidance to the AOAG, as appropriate. The ESC is chaired by the AC/S G-3, I MEF. The ESC reviews and validates all ADAG issues and recommendations prior to submitting them to CG, I MEF for approval. The AC/S G-3, 3D MAW, will be included as required to address aircraft-related issues.

5. Working Groups. The AOAG establishes general and special working groups to address issues requiring resolution. The working groups consist of AOAG members or their appointed representatives. The AOAG Chairman coordinates the working groups to include the assignment of personnel and agenda items, the definition of scope and working relationships and the determination of deliverables and timeliness

6. Responsibilities.

(a) AC/S G-3, I MEF:

(1) As the ESC Chairman, schedule and chair the semiannual ESC meeting to review and validate issues emerging from the preceding AOAG conferences.

(2) Forward ESC-validated airborne operations and safety issues to CG, I MEF, for review, validation and guidance.

(b) Deputy, AC/S G-3, I MEF:

(1) As the AOAG Chairman, schedule and chair the semi annual AOAG conferences.

(2) Screen and approve issues submitted for AOAG review.

(2) Forward issues emerging from the semiannual AOAG conferences to the ESC for review and validation.

(c) Senior I MEF Parachute Safety Officer:

(1) Assist the AOAG Chairman as the point of contact for all issues addressed by the AOAG.

(2) Convene and host the semi-annual AOAG conference.

(3) Track the status of all AOAG action items.

(4) Coordinate collection of agenda items for the semi-annual conference.

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(5) Ensure AOAG members incorporate approved changes to current parachute procedures or orders into their respective unit SOPs.

(6) Publishes an AOAG Conference Report. The report will include the following:

a. Brief synopsis of all items considered by the AOAG.

b. Recommended corrective actions. If AOAG consensus is not achieved, dissenting opinions and alternative actions will also be noted.

c. By-name roster and contact information of all AOAG and ESC members.

(7) Periodically, on a random basis, participate in and observe subordinate unit parachuting operations in order to maintain situational awareness and identify any possible trends that could develop.

(8) Represent I MEF at the annual Marine Corps Parachute Conference and malfunction Review Board. Present validated I MEF airborne operations and safety issues at these meetings, as appropriate.

7. AOAG/ESC Procedures.

(a) Airborne operations and safety issues are submitted to unit AOAG members using an Item/Discussion/Recommendation format. The unit AOAG member consolidates these issues for submission to the I MEF Senior Parachute Safety Officer. These issues are then reviewed by the AOAG Chairman for completeness and appropriateness. Based on the issues submitted, the AOAG chairman convenes a AOAG working group to address and develop recommendations/proposed solutions, as appropriate.

(b) Recommendations/proposed solutions are subsequently forwarded to the ESC for validation.

(c) The ESC reviews AOAG recommendations and submits validated recommendations to the Commanding General, I MEF for review, validation/approval and guidance.

(d) Validated proposed solutions/recommendations and guidance are received by the AC/S G-3, I MEF from the CG I MEF for appropriate action.