



## **I Marine Expeditionary Force**

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**July 27, 2016**

**16-007**

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### **I MEF holds change of command: Berger, Craparotta transfer authority for third time**

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MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Lt. Gen. David H. Berger, outgoing commanding general of I Marine Expeditionary Force, relinquished command to Lt. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta during a change of command ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton July 27, 2016.

Berger will go on to serve as the commanding general of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific and Fleet Marine Force Pacific. Craparotta previously served as the commanding general of Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center and Training Command, Twentynine Palms.

With the passing of the Colors, salutes rendered and handshakes given, Berger and Craparotta switched positions, signifying the steep tradition of change of command.

“I’m confident passing the flag,” said Berger. “The Marines and Sailors in this Marine Expeditionary Force are ready. I think they are very well led by company-grade officers and staff noncommissioned officers who know what they are doing, all the way up to their commanding generals. I believe they’re focused and understand the mission that is given to them. The training is hard, they have made it realistic, they have made it challenging, and they have made it relevant.”

During the last two years, I MEF has worked to increase its amphibious and combined arms readiness and interoperability even with austere budget constraints, keeping in line with the moto of ‘doing less with more’.

Specifically, the Corps ‘ first Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force deployed to the Middle East in 2014 in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

Additionally, Marines of Third Marine Aircraft Wing gained operating capability of the world's first F-35B squadron in 2015, and the second squadron was subsequently designated in 2016.

I MEF Marines have also worked hard to train alongside the U.S. Navy to increase their combined readiness as a naval fleet force. The Navy-Marine Corps team conducted table-top exercises, multinational live fire training with partner-nation Navies and conducted Blue-Green Team training courses to increase I MEF's amphibious acumen and readiness.

"I'd like to acknowledge the Marines, Sailors and I MEF that are serving today and are in this formation that makes this ceremony professional," said Craparotta. "For the Marines and Sailors of the MEF, I wanted to tell you that the only promise I can make is 100 percent commitment as long as I have the privilege to command. I am honored to join your ranks."

The generals are no strangers to each other, and the ceremony was the third time Berger and Craparotta have transferred commands to one another.

On July 10, 2014, then- Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, commander of Marine Air Ground Task Force, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, transferred authority to then -Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, director of operations for Headquarters U.S. Northern Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, during a change of command ceremony at the base on July 10.

And previously on Feb. 25, 2012, then-Brig. Gen. Craparotta, commanding general of 2nd Marine Division (Forward) transferred authority of Task Force Leatherneck at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, to then-Maj. Gen. Berger, commanding general of 1st Marine Division (Forward).

Gen. Robert Neller, commandant of the Marine Corps commented on Berger's impact on the Marine Corps.

"He's made the Marine Corps a better warfighting organization, which at the end of the day is what we're all about," said Neller. "We can go help people and rescue them ... to defeat our nation's enemies, and that's what we do ... We assure our friends and deter our adversaries."

Neller expressed his expectations he had for Craparotta.

"You're not just competent and capable, but you're a person of virtue and character and you care about not just the mission, but you care about the people that do the mission" Neller said. So, I've got every trust and confidence in you that you're going to do a great job."

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