

11th Marine Regiment activates first long-range missile battery



Photo By [Lance Cpl. Migel Reynosa](#) | U.S. Marine Corps Col. Patrick Eldridge, the commanding officer of 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, gives a speech during the activation ceremony for Long Range Missile Battery A, 11th Marines, at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, July 21, 2023.

[Release from the 1st Marine Division](#)

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Story by Capt. Joseph DiPietro, 1st Marine Division

In a historic event at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, the 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division activated the Marine Corps' first long-range missile battery during a ceremony July 21.

The new battery, which falls directly under 11th Marines, is designed to enhance the division's and the joint force's long-range strike and eventually sea denial capability and lethality.

"It is truly a privilege and honor to stand with these Marines as we move forward with the long-range fires capability," said Capt. Justin Hillebrand, who became the battery's first commander during the ceremony. "These Marines have done phenomenal things. They took an idea and are making it work. The job just started, but this capability will be able to

reach out and provide devastating and lethal fires.”

The battery will train with long-range fires launchers, designed to fire Tomahawk cruise missiles, and various supporting assets to further refine the structure and requirements necessary for successful employment of the system. The battery’s Marines, along with 11th Marines’ leadership, will continue to refine tactics, techniques, and procedures to employ the long-range fires system in support of 1st MARDIV and I Marine Expeditionary Force initiatives.

“This is a historic chapter in the Marine Corps and the 11th Marine Regiment. The American people expect the Marine Corps to prepare for war,” added Col. Patrick Eldridge, the commanding officer for 11th Marines. “There are nefarious states and actors in our world today who are credible threats to their neighbors, to our allies, and to the United States. The requirement for this capability now exists and the SecDef turned to the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps turned to 11th Marines, and we turn to Alpha Battery and our test and evaluation partners to make this capability a reality.”

The long-range fires platform is an emerging capability for the Marine Corps and is growing as part of the broader ground-based anti-ship missile development for the service.

Col. Eldridge concluded his activation ceremony remarks on a lighter note adding, “I imagine someone pretty high up said, ‘We’ve seen what Marines can do with rifles, let’s see what Marines can do with Tomahawks.’”

In addition to the long-range missile battery activation, Marines with 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st MARDIV executed the first live-fire Naval Strike Missile test conducted by Marines of the Navy/Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System last month to demonstrate the firepower of another emerging capability. In conjunction with

Marine Corps Systems Command, the NMESIS successfully launched and engaged a simulated target off the coast of Southern California.

“NMESIS is the Marine Corps’ material solution for the ground based anti-ship missile capability through the Remotely Operated Ground Unit for Expeditionary Fires platform,” explained Staff Sgt. Derek Reddy, the NMESIS team leader for 11th Marines, during the flight test. “The guided flight test is absolutely imperative. It is so important that the Marines are actually conducting the exercise now to show off the system and its capabilities to the Marine Corps.”

The long-range fires platform, NMESIS, and other fire support assets are only part of 1st MARDIV’s commitment to sea denial. Maritime reconnaissance, port and airfield seizure, and a continued emphasis on small unit leadership and tactics all drive the division toward capabilities and experience necessary to compete on the modern battlefield. Despite the advances in technology, formations, and tactics, 1st MARDIV Marines and Sailors relentlessly train fire and maneuver skills and will continue to build on the basics of the combined arms dilemma.