

II Marine Expeditionary Force: Ready for a New Challenge as a Joint Task Force Headquarters

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U.S. Marines with 2nd Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, II MEF Information Group, II Marine Expeditionary pull coordinates for the Swedish mechanized 120mm mortars to target during BALTOPS 24 on Gotland, Sweden, June 16, 2024. *U.S. Marine Corps | Captain Mark Andries*

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, North Carolina – A key transformational step in the Marine Corps' journey of Force Design occurred in early July at the II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) headquarters in Camp Lejeune.

During a visit by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric M. Smith, II MEF was officially validated as a Joint Task Force – Capable (JTF-C) headquarters on June 10, 2024. This milestone means II MEF is now ready to lead and coordinate complex operations involving different branches of the U.S. military and allied forces.

Transitioning to a JTF-C headquarters involves integrating and coordinating forces across land, sea, air, space and cyber domains, preparing for any situation, from peacekeeping missions to full-scale military operations. To prepare for this new role, II MEF participated in several key exercises that tested their ability to plan, execute and sustain complex operations.

From Feb. 10-17, 2023, around 1,200 Marines and Sailors with II MEF and its four major subordinate commands—2nd Marine

Division, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, 2nd Marine Air Wing, and 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade – conducted Marine Expeditionary Force Exercise (MEFEX) 23 at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. This exercise showcased II MEF's ability to command and control forces during a simulated peacekeeping operation in a challenging environment. It was a crucial step toward their JTF-C validation.

II MEF came together again in Camp Lejeune from Sept. 9-15, 2023, to exercise command and control capabilities with the subordinate commands as well as joint enablers during Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX) 23. JTFEX 23 simulated II MEF's ability to operate as a task force during large-scale all-domain operations. Various tools were employed to test the command-and-control capabilities of II MEF during JTFEX 23 including a simulated information environment that tested the real-time response capabilities of the MEF.

In March 2024, II MEF participated in Nordic Response 24 in Norway, assuming authority as the Land Component Command headquarters for a multinational force. This exercise involved 20,000 participants from NATO allies and Nordic partner nations, focusing on crisis response in northern Europe. II MEF worked closely with Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish forces, demonstrating their ability to lead in cold weather conditions.

The validation process involved rigorous assessments by higher headquarters and independent evaluators, who verified II MEF's capabilities in command and control, intelligence integration, logistics and cyber defense. Colonel Matthew T. McSorley, II MEF G-37 Director of Training, praised II MEF's achievement.

“The validation of II MEF as a Joint Task Force – Capable headquarters is a significant milestone for the Marine Corps and our joint force capabilities. This transformation establishes II MEF as the service-retained JTF-C headquarters for assignment and tasking as an Immediate Response Force

(IRF); enhancing our ability to respond to crises and underscores our commitment to maintaining a robust, adaptable, and ready force," McSorley said.

As a JTF-C headquarters, II MEF will continue to evolve, embracing new technologies and doctrines. This new role places them at the forefront of the Marine Corps' efforts to adapt to a complex global security environment. II MEF will play a crucial role in ensuring that the United States and its allies can face future conflicts with unity and strength.