

Marine Corps Generals to Integrate with Navy Numbered Fleet Staffs



CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa (Feb.16, 2023) U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Derek Trinque, commander Task Force 76/3, left, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Rear Admiral Motoyuki Kanezashi, commander, Amphibious and Mine Warfare Force, left-center, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Maj. Gen. Shingo Nashinoki, commander, Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, right-center, and U.S. Marine Brig. Gen. Fridrik Fridriksson, deputy commander TF 76/3, right, pose for a photo during Iron Fist 23 aboard Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan, Feb. 16, 2023. This visit took place during Exercise Iron Fist and provided an overview of TF 76/3, focusing on the command-and-control structure and command position, and how it improves the commander's ability to control forces and command from ashore without the need to embark. Iron Fist is a U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific-directed, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit-executed, bilateral training exercise between the U.S. Marine Corps and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and aims to improve staff planning, enhance core competencies in amphibious operations and interoperability, and maintain a positive military-to-military relationship between Japan and the United States. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew Ochoa)

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps is planning to establish integrated staffs with two U.S. Navy numbered fleets next year, according to the latest update to its Force Design 2030 concept.

The Corps plans to integrate a brigadier general in the headquarters staffs of U.S. Sixth Fleet and the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

“We need to formalize the process for establishing integrated

Navy-Marine Corps staffs with numbered fleets while giving the MEF CGs [Marine Expeditionary Force commanding generals] the ability to adapt organizations to the specific needs of their partner numbered fleets,” said General David H. Berger in the latest Force Design 2030 document. “Whenever feasible, and in coordination with the efforts of the appropriate combatant commanders, these integrated staffs should also include key ally and partner representation to strengthen our integrated deterrence, offering a mature approach to campaigning.

“NLT 1 September 2024, Commander, Marine Corps Forces Pacific (COMMARFORPAC) and Commander, Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa (COMMARFOREUR/ AF) will formalize the establishment of O-7 staffs within Sixth and Seventh Fleet headquarters.”

Lieutenant General Karsten S. Heckl, deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration and commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, speaking June 2 to reporters in press conference, said the move would be in accordance with the commandant’s guidance to returning to a Fleet Marine Force.

“A big piece of that is getting the staffs right,” Heckl said. “We realize now more than ever that in this operating environment – now that we’re back to great power competition, without question – it is important that these staffs be properly, fully integrated, or we’re going to have problems.

“A mentor of mine told me 30 years ago that if you get the command and control of any problem figured out, you’ve got 90% of it solved, and that’s what we’re doing here” he said.

Brigadier General Kyle Ellison, commanding general of the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, also speaking at the press conference, stressed that such a staff would be integrated to the point that it could have a Navy rear admiral in command with a Marine Corps brigadier general as deputy, or vice versa. He mentioned Task Force 79 – III Marine Expeditionary

Force – and Task Force 76 – the 7th Fleet’s amphibious force – as a “completely integrated staff with an integrated maritime operations center right there on Camp Courtney [Okinawa].

“It’s critically important to recognize that it’s not just the 0-7,” Ellison said. “It’s integrating the staffs so you have a truly naval staff to execute naval operations in support force. That is exciting in that typically happens only when you are task-organized and for a specific mission. Now we’re standing it up and experimenting with it as a permanent structure, and that’s happening as we speak as an 18-month experimentation that was agreed upon by two three-stars – commander of III MEF and the 7th Fleet commander.”