

The Essential EWS

You are a captain, at sea with the 15th MEU aboard the USS Bataan. For the past few days, you and nearly everyone on board has been following the news of increased unrest in a country that has been a long-time ally of the United States. As you sit in the wardroom, sipping a cup of coffee after chow, over the IMC, you hear the announcement, “Crisis Action Team One, report to the Landing Force Operations Center.”

As you head to the LFOC, you feel the ship increase speed and change direction. “What’s up?” you wonder. As the group assembles in the LFOC you see a few of your EWS classmates, now serving in various elements of the MEU. The MEU CO and the Commodore enter; the room quiets down in anticipation. With the rest of the CAT, you hear that the US has decided to commit forces in support of our ally, but those forces, mostly from CONUS, will take time to deploy. The Bataan ARG and the MEU are already in the area. You also learn that the MEU has been tasked to seize a port and airfield to allow for the introduction of follow-on forces. While the host nation is fighting coup forces well north of the expected amphibious objective area, hostile coup elements are expected to counter American involvement. This is not going to be an admin landing. This could turn into a real gunfight, you realize with a confused mix of anxiety and relish.

“Hey, we’re US Marines and amphibious operations are what we do!” And suddenly you are glad for all those lessons, discussion, and planning exercises you endured back at Expeditionary Warfare School. It’s course of action development, wargaming, and landing plans—the block and tackling of an amphibious operation. And you are right in the middle of it.

Expeditionary Warfare School is a 41 week course designed to educate and train company grade Marine Air Ground Task Force officers to serve in the expeditionary environment. The student body consists of 250 officers from the Marine Corps, Army, Navy, Air Force and international partners. The curriculum covers history, organization, capabilities, expeditionary environment, doctrine, planning, expeditionary and amphibious operations, small wars, professional communication, and leader development.

Introduction. Personal professional military education (PME) is an institutional expectation within the Marine Corps. Leaders strive to enhance their professional abilities to gain the knowledge, experience, and skills to lead Marines. The investment in professional education sets the Armed Forces apart from many civilian institutions and the Marine Corps has a particularly strong emphasis on PME to include requiring completion of specified PME courses to prepare for future assignments. It is PME, both personal and institutional, that prepares us for the

situations in which we will find ourselves in the uncertain expeditionary environment of the future.

This article describes one of the key elements of the officer PME continuum, the resident Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS) course. It provides sufficient detail to assist company grade officers decide that this is a PME opportunity worth pursuing, to provide information to officers who have been selected to attend EWS, and to inform commanders who have EWS graduates assigned to their units.

PME Selection and Assignment. Because of the value of PME and the desire to provide this opportunity to the best qualified officers, the Marine Corps decided in 2011 to institute the Commandant's Career Level Education Board (CCLEB). This board convenes annually to select 300 of the best and fully qualified captains to attend a range of resident PME programs based on superior MOS performance and future potential. Recommendations from reporting seniors and reviewing officers carry significant weight. Officers desiring selection for PME should strive to be top performers and make that desire known to their commander.

Once selected by CCLEB, officers commit to two to three years of obligated service after PME completion. Selected officers who choose not to attend resident PME will be separated at the end of their obligated service. Those who accept selection submit their preference and are slated by their Monitor based on qualifications, availability, preferences, and needs of the Corps. Career level resident PME opportunities include EWS, Army MOS-based career captain courses, and a range of special education and advanced degree programs. Generally, officers with particular educational qualifications are likely candidates for civilian education within their field of study. Captains who are not selected for resident PME must complete the EWS nonresident course or the new Blended Seminar Program to be "PME complete."

The Mission: Training and Education. The Basic School focuses on training and the science of war: processes, weapons capabilities, and employment. Command and Staff College is more about education and the art of war. EWS is at the crossover point dealing with both the science and the art of war. EWS *trains* processes, procedure, and capabilities and *educates* students on their application. The course challenges students to think critically as MAGTF officers by providing them with a firm doctrinal foundation augmented with the exchange of practical experiences with faculty and fellow students, reinforced with extensive practical application and numerous planning exercises. The focus of EWS is to prepare these officers to serve as commanders or staff officers on staffs up to colonel-level command (battalion, squadron, regiment, group, MEU or SPMAGTF). The educational horizon is the next

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five years, roughly from now until the students' next opportunity to attend resident PME at Command and Staff College.

Student Body. The EWS student body typically consists of 180 Marine captains from all occupational fields. In addition, 22 Army, 16 Navy, 6 Air Force, and 22 international military officers (IMO) are selected by their Service or country to attend the course and the knowledge and perspective they bring contributes much to the course. Sixteen Navy line officers, first assigned to attend the course in AY 14, have been particularly valuable in fostering mutual understanding among both partners on the Navy-Marine Corps Team. EWS develops students as *MAGTF officers*, knowledgeable with each element of the MAGTF. Graduates are armed with the knowledge needed to operate in fluid and dynamic expeditionary environment, across a range of missions and across the globe. These are the officers who you will be serving with for the rest of your career.

The majority of learning occurs in the students' conference groups, which consist of approximately 16 captains and Navy lieutenants of various military occupational specialties, services, and nationalities. Each of the 16 conference groups is mentored by a seasoned major, who acts as the Faculty Advisor (FACAD). Throughout the academic year, the FACADs model MAGTF officer skills, mentor and guide students, facilitate conference group discussions, assess student performance, and provide feedback to their students.

The EWS curriculum is built on **Program Outcomes and Learning Outcomes**. EWS accomplishes four program outcomes—threads that run through the entire course—that are supported by 22 learning outcomes (LO) that describe what graduates are expected to know or be able to do when they graduate. Examples of LOs that help describe the scope of the curriculum include:

- Describe the cultural, geographic, and military aspects of the expeditionary environment.
- Apply Marine Corps doctrine and maneuver warfare philosophy to the planning and execution of tactical operations.
- Apply the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP) to tactical planning.
- Develop a tactical plan to accomplish a MEU mission using the Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2).

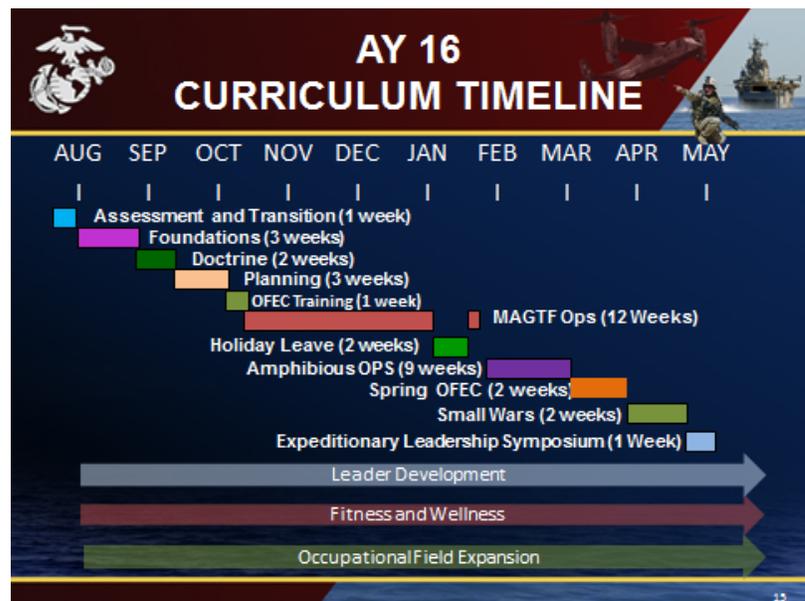
PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Serve as **MAGTF Officers** who are experts within their warfighting specialties and highly skilled in synchronizing all elements of the MAGTF in the expeditionary environment.
- Serve as **Critical Thinkers and Decision-Makers** who are well-educated, inquisitive, capable of broad and deep analysis of ill-structured problems, and able to apply sound, timely decisions.
- Serve as **Effective Communicators** who are able to convey their plans, judgment, and informed opinions in concise, well-reasoned writings, briefs, and discussions.
- Serve as **Ethical Leaders** who can develop the principled, disciplined units and subordinates that will operate in distributed, complex expeditionary environments.

- Develop an integrated tactical plan for the employment of a MAGTF synchronizing warfighting functions using MCPP.
- Describe the characteristics, principles, and challenges of expeditionary small wars.
- Develop both written and oral products that demonstrate the officer's ability to effectively communicate complex topics clearly and succinctly.
- Describe leadership skills necessary to cultivate effective command climates and ethical subordinates.

To accomplish the assigned learning outcomes, the EWS curriculum consists of eight courses, each building on the knowledge from previous courses.

The **Foundations** Course sets the stage for the EWS academic year by introducing the students to Marine Corps tenets through three subcourses: *Who We Are*, *How We Fight* and *Where We Fight*. *Who We Are* reviews key touch points in Marine Corps history that have shaped today's roles and missions. *How We Fight* is a study of the organization and structure of Marine Corps operating forces and the supporting establishment. *Where We Fight* examines the



expeditionary environment based on a regional review of current and potential littoral conflicts in and around maritime choke points and sea lines of communication including US interests, potential threats, and operational culture in the region. These lessons are taught by regional experts from the Marine Corps Center for Advance Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL). The course begins to build knowledge of our Navy teammates on the Navy-Marine Corps team with a trip to Norfolk to visit a variety of ships and other Navy organizations. The Foundations Course provides the students will with the baseline Marine Corps knowledge that supports the rest of the EWS curriculum.

The **Doctrine** Course introduces students to key Marine Corps doctrinal publications to include MCDP 1 Warfighting, MCDP 1-0 Marine Corps Operations, and MCDP 6 Command and Control. FACADs facilitate conference group discussion on the origins, development, merits, and applicability of Marine Corps doctrine, knowledge that will be applied throughout the rest of the curriculum. .

The **Planning** Course is focused on the understanding and application of the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP). Working as an Operational Planning Teams (OPT), the students work their way through the six steps of MCP. Knowledge gained during the Doctrine and Planning courses supports the instruction that follows in and provides a foundation that will be applied over and over throughout their careers.

MAGTF Operations focuses on the application of enduring concepts such as task organization, integrated planning, single-battle concept, combined arms integration, and doctrinal MAGTF employment. In a series of eight four-day rotations, students work as an operational planning team (OPT) to develop plans for each element of the MAGTF and selected warfighting functions. One interesting aspect of this course is the wargame that pits the plan developed by the GCE in the Offense OPT against the plan developed by GCE in the Defense OPT at the end of the rotation. The knowledge gained in this subcourse contributes to the students' ability to integrate the MAGTF capabilities to create synergistic effects and prepare students for the transition to MAGTF operations from the sea during Amphibious Operations.

Courses and Subcourses

- **Foundations:** History, Organization & Capabilities, Expeditionary Environment
- **Doctrine:** MCDP -1, MCDP 1-0, MCDP 6
- **Planning:** Marine Corps Planning Process
- **MAGTF Operations:** Eight subcourses focus on elements of the MAGTF or selected warfighting functions.
- **Amphibious Operations :** Fundamentals, MEU Ops, Landing Plan, Prepositioned Operations, major planning exercise
- **Small Wars:** Scope, history, and current application
- **Professional Development:** Leadership and Ethics, Professional Communication

MAGTF OPS ROTATIONS

- **Aviation Combat Element**
- **GCE in the Offense**
- **GCE in the Defense**
- **Logistics Combat Element**
- **Fires**
- **Command Element/C4**
- **Combat Assault Support Ops – GCE**
- **Combat Assault Support Ops – ACE**

A core mission of the Marine Corps is to conduct amphibious operations and EWS is the premier amphibious school of the Marine Corps. The **Amphibious Operations** Course addresses the role of the Marine Corps as an expeditionary force, specifically as part of a larger Naval or joint operation, and includes employment of the MAGTF in amphibious operations and Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) operations. EWS teaches the knowledge and skills to conduct an amphibious operation—everything from conceptual planning to the detailed mechanics of the landing plan. Significant emphasis is given to MEU operations and the Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2). The course concludes with a two-week capstone exercise where the students are organized as battle staffs representing the amphibious force and its various subordinate elements planning for an amphibious operation while another MAGTF ashore plans for the defense. Students carry this knowledge from EWS back to the operating forces where they are well prepared to serve as members or leaders of OPTs for planning amphibious operations or other operations, including “small wars,” the Corps is likely to be engaged in.

Recently reintroduced as a separate course, **Small Wars** provides students an understanding of the term "small wars" as an umbrella over a range of operations that go by many other names such as military operations other than war, stability and support operations, limited scale wars, counterinsurgency, and irregular warfare. These are the types of operations that graduates are most likely to participate in as they return to the operating forces. Students review FMFRP 12-15 Small Wars Manual to develop an understanding of its historical importance and its applicability today. Past and current small wars are studied to determine the role they play in today's complex security environment. At the conclusion of Small Wars, students will have a historical understanding of small wars, planning and leadership challenges of small unit leaders engaged in small wars, and the complexities students will face in future small wars in the expeditionary environment.

Attendance at EWS is not primarily about you. It is about improving yourself to better serve the Marines you will lead and the **Leader Development** Course is an important element of your education as a leader. The course consists of the leadership and ethics subcourse and the professional communication subcourse. Lessons, discussions, written, work and presentations are spread throughout the academic year and have a dual nature as stand-alone periods of instruction and reinforcement of other portions of the curriculum.

The goal of the **Leadership and Ethics** Subcourse goes beyond developing one's personal leadership skills to include techniques for developing subordinates' leadership ability. Additionally, it is designed to inspire students to lead within a framework of ethical values. Under the umbrella of this course, the students are addressed by a number of senior leaders, active duty, retired, and noted civilians, and participate in a series of discussions among their peers to help them develop a personal strategy and command philosophy for future leadership billets.

The ability to communicate effectively in both verbal and written forms is a fundamental skill that all military officers must possess. The **Professional Communication** Subcourse is designed to achieve that end with a program focused on both academic and professional writing. The school administers an initial grammar and writing assessment shortly after the students arrive and those whose skills need improvement are assigned to attend a series of remedial lessons. During the core curriculum students write position papers, a contemporary issues paper, and a command philosophy. There is also a major writing assignment—the argumentative research paper—on a topic of the student's own choice. The course also provides instruction to help improve the students' ability to "stand and deliver" with application during numerous planning exercises, a battle study presentation, and two battlefield staff rides.

Specialized military occupational specialty (MOS) training, known as the **Occupational Field Expansion Course (OFEC)**, makes EWS unique in the Officer PME continuum. As a career-

level school, EWS is tasked with educating and training the students at the tactical level. Unlike schools later in the Officer PME continuum, MOS training is included as part of the EWS curriculum. The OFEC enhances the students' ability to blend the military art (education) with the military science (training) to increase their proficiency as MAGTF Officers. The OFEC is divided into a one week Fall session and a two week Spring session with additional half-day OFEC periods throughout the academic year.

Future war will still require Marines with hard feet and strong backs to maintain physical and mental endurance. **Fitness and Wellness** is another line of effort that runs through the entire course. Students have the opportunity to use the on-site locker rooms, a well-equipped gym, and nearby running trails for personal PT. In addition to the required PFT and CFT, students participate in biweekly conference group physical training sessions and school-wide physical fitness events designed to foster personal fitness among students as well as to model physical training sessions that are both effective and fun.

In addition to the core curriculum, EWS offers a number of **Curriculum Enhancements**. These include a lunchtime series of voluntary military history case studies as well as a series of written and oral presentation improvement lessons. In recent years, students have been offered a student-run Central Virginia Battlefield tour consisting of six Saturday tours of Civil War battlefields, each led by an expert National Park ranger. There is also a demanding but rewarding Military Literature Review voluntary elective taught by a noted historian that requires the students to read, write on, and discuss ten works of military literature. The books range from *Grant's Memoires* to Eugene Sledge's *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*.

EWS also offers a number of extracurricular events. Organized student events include a Family Day, Marine Corps Ball, a Holiday Party, the US vs IMO soccer game, a field meet, and a mess night. Individual conference groups also conduct a number of other smaller social events throughout the year. A large number of students participated in the annual Marine Corps Marathon and this past November, a nine person team of EWS students won the Military Division trophy for the JFK 50 Miler. In addition, EWS regularly enters teams in the base intramural leagues for various sports. In the basement of EWS there is a student lounge called the Warrior Room. With plenty of easy chairs and a big screen TV, the Warrior Room is a place where students can meet, relax, and converse at lunch or at the end of the day. The course is academically demanding, but without the demands of field operations and deployments, students are home nearly every night and every weekend. The opportunity to reset the work-life balance and take advantage of the many social and cultural opportunities in the National Capital Region is encouraged.

Conclusion. There is more to EWS than the core curriculum, extracurricular activities, and electives. Virtually every EWS graduate you ever meet will tell you that one of the greatest

benefits of EWS is not just the wealth of knowledge you get in the classroom, but what you learn from your classmates and the relationships that you build with them. Many friendships are born that will last a career and a lifetime.

Armed with skills, knowledge, and experience, and building on the relationships forged at EWS, EWS graduates will be better qualified for the privilege of leading Marines and they will be on their way to becoming the battle captains and iron majors who will be among those who will lead our Corps into the future.