



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350

IN REPLY REFER TO
OPNAVINST 3125.2
OP-323
Ser 385P32

21 JUL 1972

OPNAV INSTRUCTION 3125.2

From: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: Policy for Embarkation and Basing of Marine Corps Helicopters
Aboard Amphibious Ships

Ref: (a) CNO ltr ser 00234P34 of 9 May 69 (NOTAL) (Canceled hereby)
(b) CGFMFPAC msg 020454Z Jul 70 (NOTAL)
(c) ADMIN CINCPACFLT msg 220441Z Jul 70 (NOTAL)
(d) CNO msg 311530Z Oct 70 (NOTAL) (Canceled hereby)
(e) CTF 79 msg 270512Z Jan 72 (NOTAL)
(f) OPNAVINST 4790.2 of 21 Jul 70, Naval Aviation Maintenance
Program
(g) CNO msg 141955Z Apr 72 (NOTAL)
(h) NAVAIRNOTE C13010 (Issued separately for each aircraft
model) Weapons System Planning Document

1. Purpose. To establish policy for the embarkation and basing of
Marine Corps helicopters aboard amphibious ships.

2. Cancellation. References (a) and (d) are superseded hereby.

3. References

a. Reference (a) initiated restrictive policy for extended deploy-
ments of Marine Corps helicopters aboard amphibious ships.

b. Reference (b) reported on the successful completion of a 45-day
WESTPAC operation with a detachment of two UH-1Es aboard the LPD,
USS DENVER, equipped with an expandable hangar. Shipboard facilities
were adequate for servicing and limited maintenance. Appropriate
ashore facility support was required during the cruise. Recommendations
for subsequent extended cruises included the requirement for major
maintenance ashore and rotation of aircraft to avoid calendar inspections
or major component changes while embarked.

c. Reference (c) requested CNO approval for similar helicopter
operations from properly configured LPDs in the absence of adequate
LPHs/LHAs.

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d. Reference (d) granted authority for future deployments of UH-1E aircraft on LPDs, with troops embarked, which are equipped with a hangar, provided aircraft maintenance, supply, and aviation standards within the deployed detachments and parent Marine aircraft group are satisfactorily maintained.

e. Reference (e) reported the inadequacy of the LPD, USS DENVER, facilities to support medium and heavy helicopters during an Indian Ocean contingency operation with four CH-46 helicopters aboard 23 Dec 1971 to 4 Jan 1972; replaced by three CH-53s during the period 4 Jan 1972 to 10 Jan 1972. Experience gained during this operation reinforced the restrictive CNO amphibious basing policy expressed in reference (a).

f. Reference (f), the Naval Aviation Maintenance Program, prescribes the proper procedures, and facilities required, for the maintenance of aircraft.

g. Reference (g) discusses current aviation support planning for the LPH.

h. Reference (h) represents the equipment procurement authority for units and aircraft by model and series.

4. Discussion

a. Marine Corps ground and air elements are embarked aboard amphibious assault ships for the purposes of deployment, training or combat. Marine Corps light, medium, and heavy helicopters will normally be based aboard LPHs or LHAs for direct support when amphibious troop units are embarked for the foregoing purposes. Helicopters based aboard the LPH/LHA will also provide support for accompanying ships of the task force and embarked Marine units on amphibious ships equipped with suitable helicopter platforms such as LPDs, LSDs, and some LKAs, LPAs, and LSTs.

b. LPHs and LHAs were designed to transport helicopters to the objective area and to provide aeronautical supplies and maintenance support for sustained helicopter operations.

c. While LPDs and LSDs, and some LKAs and LSTs are equipped with helicopter platforms and thus have the capability of supporting the landing of troops, supplies, and equipment by heliborne means, they were not designed as primary helicopter transport carriers. Space accommodations and aeronautical facilities available in these ships vary depending upon the type, class, or individual ship modifications. Neither singly nor in combination are they capable of providing the sustained aeronautical support as prescribed by the Naval Aviation Maintenance Program, reference (f).

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5. Policy

a. The determination to embark Marine Corps helicopters aboard amphibious ships rests with the Fleet Commander in Chief based upon the advice of the Fleet Marine Force Commander, the Amphibious Force Commander, and the Naval Air Force Commander (for aviation support matters). The decision will take into account the best possible task organization for the mission assigned to the embarked USMC force and the operational and logistical feasibility considerations discussed in paragraphs 3 and 4 above.

b. In the absence of LPHs or LHAs, Fleet Commanders in Chief are authorized to embark Marine Corps helicopters on other ships in support of embarked troops of the landing force for deployment, training, or combat operations when facilities available aboard, or conveniently located ashore, are adequate to maintain appropriate aviation standards within the deployed detachment and parent Marine aircraft group.

6. Marine Corps Applicability. This instruction has the concurrence of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Marine Corps activities shall take such actions prescribed in this instruction which are not contradictory to specifically expressed policies of the Commandant of the Marine Corps.



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