



United States Marine Corps
Press Release



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Marines to return to Iraq, Afghanistan

WASHINGTON--The Marine Corps is preparing to send units to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2 and Operation Enduring Freedom 5 respectively.

The Corps' contribution of forces for OIF-2 will be approximately 21,000 Marines and Sailors. Marines participating in OEF-5 will be one infantry battalion, which will bring the total number of Marine forces in Afghanistan to approximately 1,000.

The current plan is to send a division-sized Marine Air Ground Task Force to Iraq with the preponderance of units coming from the I Marine Expeditionary Force, headquartered at Camp Pendleton, Calif. These forces will primarily replace the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division.

Marine units, as always, will deploy with their full complement of combat capabilities. Marine forces will primarily deploy to Iraq in two 7-month rotations. The first rotation is expected to be from March to September of 2004. The second rotation is expected to be from September 2004 to March 2005.

There will be approximately 21,000 Marines in each 7-month rotation. The reserve component of the first 7-month rotation will be approximately 1,500 Marines and the second rotation will be approximately 4,500.

In support of OEF-5 the Marine Corps will send an infantry battalion from the 2nd Marine Division to Afghanistan for a planned seven-month deployment.



The Marine Corps always has forces forward deployed and is currently supporting other commitments around the globe, such as the recurring Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments and the Unit Deployment program in Okinawa and Iwakuni, Japan.

In light of those commitments, the Marine Corps is looking closely at how to strike an effective balance between those and the OIF-2 and OEF-5 missions. Marine Corps leadership feels this rotation cycle is best when considering operational readiness, unit morale and family separations. Most importantly, it will allow the Marine Corps to accomplish the mission in Iraq while sustaining other commitments in Afghanistan and around the globe.

The Marine Corps' role in Operation Iraqi Freedom-2 and Enduring Freedom-5 is another example of the Marine Corps' continuing importance to the conduct of national security missions, by providing combatant commanders the forces required to effectively prosecute the Global War on Terrorism.