



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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MCO 1700.23G
IGI
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MARINE CORPS ORDER 1700.23G

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: Distribution List

Subj: REQUEST MAST PROCEDURES

Ref: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations
(b) Marine Corps Manual
(c) MCO 5430.1A w/ Admin CH
(d) Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
(e) MCO 1900.16 CH 2
(f) JAGINST 5800.7F CH 1
(g) MCO 5354.1E w/ADMIN CH
(h) 10 U.S.C. §1034
(i) SECNAVINST 5370.7D
(j) SECNAV Notice 5210
(k) SECNAV M-5210.1
(l) MCO 5210.11F
(m) 5 U.S.C. 552a
(n) SECNAVINST 5211.5E

Encl: (1) Request Mast Procedures Manual

1. Situation. This Order promulgates request mast policy and procedures for the Marine Corps.

2. Cancellation. MCO 1700.23F and NAVMC Directive 1700.23F.

3. Mission. To preserve the right of every Marine to seek assistance from, or communicate grievances directly to, their commander or commanders up to and including a Commanding General (CG) within the chain of command at the same base or immediate geographical location, as established in reference (a) (Articles 0820c and 1151.1) and reference (b) (paragraph 2805), through the use of the formal request mast process.

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release;
distribution is unlimited.

4. Execution

a. Commander's Intent and Concept of Operations

(1) Commander's Intent. This Order promulgates policy and procedures for the commander's request mast program. All commanders down to the lowest administrative level shall institute a request mast program that conforms to this Order. All personnel shall be informed of the contents of this Order upon publication.

(2) Concept of Operations. Request mast applications must be submitted in writing using guidance contained in enclosure (1) via the chain of command to the commander with whom the Marine is requesting an audience.

b. Subordinate Element Missions

(1) Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (CG MCCDC). Develop or revise, as appropriate, any instructional courses and materials that pertain to the request mast program.

(2) Commanders

(a) Institute and maintain a commander's request mast program.

(b) Ensure that all personnel are familiar with request mast policy and procedures contained in this Order.

(c) Offer to process and resolve a Marine's request mast without delay. **There should be no more than one working day delay from when the request is presented to when the Marine has an audience with the commander. This applies at each level of the command.**

(d) Provide Marines the opportunity to request mast in person unless extraordinary circumstances preclude such an appearance.

(e) Establish, monitor, and document follow-up procedures to ensure that each request mast is processed in a timely manner, that the disposition is being executed, and that no adverse or prejudicial action is taken against a Marine as a result of exercising the right to request mast.

(f) When matters cannot or should not be resolved using the request mast program due to other appropriate forms of redress, explain to the Marine why action will not be taken to attempt to resolve the grievance and advise the marine as to the proper avenue of redress, if there is one. The commander shall annotate that the request mast was denied in Part II, Section 9 (if the commander is the audience sought or agreed to by the Marine) and state the reason explained to the Marine for the denial in Part III, Section 10 of NAVMC Form 11296, "Marine Corps Request Mast Application."

(g) When matters are beyond a commander's authority to resolve, the commander shall forward the request mast to the next higher commander for consideration and appropriate action.

(h) Exercise appropriate disciplinary or administrative action if a Marine commits or attempts to commit interference or reprisal against any Marine exercising his or her right to request mast. Subsequent to the final disposition, ensure the Marine submitting the request mast is briefed on his or her rights associated with retaliation.

(i) Administratively support Marines in the production and submission of the **NAVMC 11296.**

(3) Inspector General of the Marine Corps (IGMC)

(a) Conduct requests mast on behalf of the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) while conducting formal inspections, as provided in reference (c), or at other times as appropriate.

(b) As part of the Independent Command Inspection Program and Comprehensive Command Inspection Program, and in accordance with reference (c), the IGMC shall inspect and review request mast programs.

(c) Publish and maintain the currency of this Order with applicable laws and policy.

c. Coordinating Instructions

(1) This Order describes the process and procedural aspects of the request mast program and is the single request mast directive for the Marine Corps. **Command request mast orders are no longer required to be produced or published.**

(2) This Order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

5. Administration and Logistics

a. Records Management

(1) Records created as a result of this Order shall be managed according to National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)-approved dispositions per references (j) and (k) to ensure proper maintenance, use, accessibility and preservation, regardless of format or medium. Refer to reference (l) for Marine Corps records management policy and procedures.

(2) Request mast records shall be properly safeguarded and maintained separately from service records.

(3) The command shall manage request mast records in accordance with record schedule 1000-34. Records schedules may be located at:

<https://portal.secnav.navy.mil/orgs/DUSNM/DONAA/DRM/Records-and-Information-Management/Approved%20Record%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

b. Privacy Act. Any misuse or unauthorized disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) may result in both civil and criminal penalties. The Department of the Navy (DON) recognizes that the privacy of an individual is a personal and fundamental right that shall be respected and protected. The DON's need to collect, use, maintain, or disseminate PII about individuals for purposes of discharging its statutory responsibilities shall be balanced against the individuals' right to be protected against unwarranted invasion of privacy. All collection, use, maintenance, or dissemination of PII shall be in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (reference (m)) and implemented per reference (n).

c. Forms Management. NAVMC 11296 may be located on Naval Forms Online at: <https://forms.documentservices.dla.mil/order/>.

d. Functional Area Checklist. The request mast functional area checklist can be referenced at: <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/igmc/Resources/Functional-Area-Checklists/>.

6. Command and Signal

a. Command. This order is applicable to the Marine Corps Total Force.

b. Signal. This order is effective the date signed.



M. G. DANA
Director, Marine Corps Staff

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Chapter 1

Scope

1. This Order contains instructions for executing the commander's request mast program and procedures for processing request mast applications. Only those procedural exceptions provided for in this Order are authorized. Any individual who impedes adherence to these procedures may be subject to disciplinary action, including the Marine requesting mast.

2. Request mast is the primary way for a Marine to formally seek assistance from, or communicate a grievance to, his or her commander. Although a Marine's request mast may not be resolved to his or her satisfaction, the Marine shall be afforded the opportunity to address the issue with the commander. Personnel outside the official chain of command shall not conduct request mast. Only designated commanders as outlined in chapter 1 of this Order will conduct request mast. Other personnel such as subordinate officers, civilians, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), or staff non-commissioned officers (SNCOs) must not delay the request mast process in order to address the grievance or issue themselves. They will focus their efforts on making the Marine available to the commander and provide assistance to ensure the entire process is efficient and completed without delay.

3. Request mast is not intended to be used for the purpose of harassment where the request mast has no merit or systemic issue able to be resolved by the commander or commanders, avoiding assigned duties, or intentionally interfering with the commander's ability to carry out the functions and mission of the command. Furthermore, request mast should not replace established staff functions or supplant discourse with the chain of command.

4. A commander may deny a request mast application if there is another specific avenue of redress available to the Marine, such as:

a. Actions under the UCMJ. Reference (d) provides for the protection of the rights of a Marine at every stage of disciplinary action and for investigations through final review or appeal. Therefore, a commander may deny a request mast that includes an element of disciplinary action, whether contemplated, pending, in progress, or final. Request mast is not to be used as a means of collateral attack against the

proceedings, punishment, findings, or sentence resulting from disciplinary action brought under the UCMJ.

b. Involuntary Administrative Separations. Reference (e), chapters 4 and 6, contain provisions for the protection of the rights of Marines being processed for involuntary administrative separation. Accordingly, commanders may deny a request mast that has at its core a grievance involving involuntary administrative discharge proceedings, whether contemplated, pending, in progress, or final.

c. Complaints under Article 138, UCMJ and Article 1150, U.S. Navy Regulations. Chapter III of reference (f) contains guidance for the preparation, submission, and processing of complaints under Article 138, UCMJ, and Article 1150 of reference (a). **Commanders may deny a request mast if its subject is an ongoing Article 138 or 1150 investigation.** Commanders should consult with their supporting staff judge advocate in such instances.

5. **Only the commander with whom the Marine is requesting an audience can deny a request mast.** Commanders should carefully evaluate each request mast to determine if other peripheral issues should be addressed. Accordingly, commanders should make every attempt to hear the Marine's presentation of matters before making a decision to deny a request mast. The commander shall explain to the Marine why the request mast is denied and if appropriate, what procedure must be followed to resolve the issue. The authority to deny a request mast includes authority to refuse to further process the request mast. **Whenever a commander denies a request mast, he or she shall forward a report of the denial to the first GO via the chain of command within five working days.** The correspondence shall include the basis surrounding the denial and affirmation that the Marine understands why the request was denied. **No such report needs to be made in cases where the commander denying the request mast is the first GO in the chain of command;** however, the request mast must be processed in accordance with paragraph 4.b.(2)(f) of this Order.

6. Reference (g) describes the primary methods for submitting and adjudicating complaints concerning harassment (to include sexual harassment), unlawful discrimination and abuse, wrongful distribution or broadcasting of intimate images, and certain dissident and protest activity. A Marine may use request mast to present these types of complaints as an alternative, but the procedures described in reference (g) remain the primary means.

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7. A Marine does not have to disclose the subject of the request mast to anyone in the chain of command except to the commander with whom the Marine is requesting mast.

8. The senior local commander within the Marine's chain of command shall forward the request mast application intended for a commander not located on the same base or geographic location as the Marine requesting mast. The request mast should then be addressed with the Marine in person, by telephone, and/or in writing, as deemed appropriate by the commander addressed in the request mast.

9. When the operational commitments of a Marine's command, whether for training or deployment, interfere with the procedures set forth in this Order, the right of the Marine to petition for request mast to a commander above the level of the immediate commander may be suspended by the CG for the duration of the operational commitment. Given communication methods presently available, the need to suspend request mast should rarely be invoked and then only to the extent required to ensure the accomplishment of the command's immediate mission.

10. Although a Marine has the right to forward an application for request mast to higher commanders, such as the highest GO in the Marine's chain of command, there is no vested right for a Marine to request mast with commanders higher than his or her immediate GO.

a. Any GO higher than the first GO in the chain of command between the Marine's immediate CG and his or her most senior CG may establish policies and procedures as they desire for processing requests mast addressed to them, including that such requests may be returned without any action taken.

b. The IGMC will process appropriate request mast applications to the IGMC in accordance with procedures set forth in appendix A when conducting unit inspections.

11. Nothing in this Order is intended to expand or abridge the rights of Marines otherwise guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, federal law, or applicable Department of Defense, Navy, or other Marine Corps regulations.

12. CGs may coordinate with one another to provide for the availability of another CG to conduct requests mast whenever circumstances require an exception to the provisions of this Order. Additionally, the authority to conduct request mast may

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be delegated to a deputy or assistant commander who is a GO, or a colonel/Navy captain exercising GCMCA when appropriate.

13. Any interference with a Marine's right to request mast or any attempt to retaliate against a Marine who has requested mast is strictly prohibited. Any attempted violation, or soliciting another to violate this Order by interfering with or restricting a Marine's right to request mast, subjects involved personnel to disciplinary action under Article 92 of the UCMJ. Per reference (i), violations should be reported to the chain of command.

Chapter 2

Procedural Guidance

1. NAVMC 11296 is the Marine Corps Request Mast Application. Electronic files shall be treated equivalently as paper media as described in paragraph 1(h) and paragraph 3 of chapter 5 in this order.

1. All commanders down to the lowest administrative level with NJP authority shall institute the commander's request mast program in accordance with this Order. Commanders shall ensure all personnel are informed of request mast policies and procedures.

2. Request mast applications shall be submitted using NAVMC 11296 via the chain of command to the commander with whom the Marine desires to request mast. In addition to processing this form as a hard copy document, NAVMC 11296 has the capability of being digitally signed and has expandable text boxes where Marines and commanders can enter data pertaining to the request mast.

3. Each intermediate commander, up to the commander with whom the Marine desires an audience, will offer to resolve the Marine's request mast, but must do so without intimidation. In general, there should be no more than one working day delay at any level of command and the request mast will be heard at the earliest reasonable time. Explanations for delay shall be provided in writing on the NAVMC 11296 and acknowledged by the commander and the Marine. When considering request mast, commanders should focus their attention on the subject or systemic problem of the request and not necessarily on the requested outcome or remedy. Often the two do not match or the requested remedy in itself has no impact on solving the underlying issue. The onus is on the commander to seek clarification in such cases and to seek corrective actions, where applicable, in order to address the Marine's grievance. The essence of the request mast process is to address the subject and attempt to solve the grievance, not to attempt to reach an arbitrary level of satisfaction with the Marine requesting mast. Commanders shall hear emergency cases as soon as identified. To determine whether a request mast is an emergency case, commanders must consider the following:

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a. Whether a Marine is subject to an ongoing hardship (e.g., pay, family emergencies, if the well-being of a person is in jeopardy, etc.).

b. The severity of the hardship.

c. If the issue is time sensitive and will remain unresolved upon a certain date, time, or expected event in the immediate future.

4. Commanders shall make every effort to provide Marines an opportunity to request mast in person. If a personal appearance, to include telephonic or video communications is not practical, the commander shall respond in writing to the Marine. Additionally, the commander shall provide an explanation of why a personal appearance was not practical and annotate such on the NAVMC 11296.

5. Commanders who receive legitimate grievances or requests for assistance via request mast shall forward those beyond their authority to resolve to the next higher commander for resolution.

6. Marines confined in correctional facilities have the right to request mast. A request mast marked "to be opened by the commanding officer/CG only" shall not be opened by correctional facility personnel. Only the commanding officer, CG, or if applicable, the designated Request Mast Review Authority (RMRA) may open a request mast labeled "to be opened by the commanding officer/CG only."

Chapter 3

Procedures for Request Mast with the Marine's Immediate
Commanding General

1. Request Mast to Immediate CG

a. A Marine who desires to request mast to his or her immediate CG shall prepare a NAVMC 11296 that includes the reasons for the request mast and attach supporting documents as required. Additionally, the Marine may include a list of witnesses, with a summary of the expected testimony of each witness.

b. The Marine should submit the completed NAVMC 11296 and any supporting documents to the Marine's first commander in his or her chain of command, who shall offer to resolve the issue. Each intermediate commander will offer to understand and attempt to resolve the issue or grievance. If an intermediate commander is unable to resolve the issue, that commander shall provide a written statement as to his or her understanding of the request mast and then forward the request mast to the next higher commander in the Marine's chain of command.

c. When a request mast addressed to the CG is resolved at a lower level, the Marine shall make an annotation in block 11 of the NAVMC 11296 indicating that he or she voluntarily disclosed the request mast to a commander who was subordinate to the commander originally requested in Block 5a and the Marine fully understands and accepts the disposition of the grievance. The Marine and a witness will jointly sign and date this statement.

d. Upon conclusion of the request mast, the Marine shall initial the NAVMC 11296 to indicate that he or she has had the opportunity to communicate directly with the CG and was informed of any action(s) to be taken by the CG regarding the request mast.

2. Cases of Request Mast "to be opened by the CG only"

a. Any Marine requesting mast to his or her CG has the option to do so confidentially. If the Marine does not desire to reveal the subject of the request mast to subordinate commanders in the chain of command, the Marine must include a statement as to why the subject was not revealed in the request mast. The Marine shall place the NAVMC 11296 and any supporting

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documentation in a sealed envelope marked "to be opened by the CG only."

b. The Marine's first commander in his or her chain of command shall receive any request mast sealed and marked "to be opened by the CG only." Each intermediate commander shall offer to understand and attempt to resolve the issue or grievance. If the Marine maintains that he or she does not desire to reveal the subject, each of the Marine's commanders in his or her chain of command shall forward the request mast to the next higher level of command until it is delivered to the CG or the RMRA.

c. If a Marine desires to submit a confidential request mast "to be opened by the CG only," no documentation is required on the NAVMC 11296 and intermediate commanders shall continue routing the request mast.

3. Establishing Internal Request Mast Procedures. When establishing internal request mast procedures, CGs may authorize a specified individual to act as the CG's RMRA. For example, a CG may designate a local command inspector general (CIG) to review requests mast, to include those that are sealed and marked "to be opened by the CG only." If approved by the first GO in the chain of command or CG, only the RMRA may open and read a "to be opened by the CG only" request mast. To maintain the integrity of the request mast that the Marine desires, the following restrictions apply:

a. A RMRA may neither respond to nor deny a request mast on behalf of the CG, but may make appropriate recommendations to the CG that pertain to the request mast application.

b. A RMRA may consult with the Marine requesting mast to administratively support the Marine and ensure the NAVMC 11296 is correctly and sufficiently developed.

c. If a CG designates a CIG as the RMRA, any lawful communication made to a CIG will also constitute a protected communication under the Military Whistleblower Protection Act. Therefore, in addition to the protection afforded to a Marine for exercising his or her right to request mast under reference (a) and this Order, further protection is afforded to the Marine under reference (h), as implemented by reference (i).

APPENDIX A

Request Mast with the Inspector General of the Marine Corps
(IGMC)

1. The IGMC or designated representative shall provide Marines the opportunity to request mast to the office of the IGMC while conducting unit inspections. Prior to IGMC inspections, unit commanders shall publish a command bulletin which notifies Marines of the opportunity to request mast with the IGMC or the designated representative.

2. In every case, the IGMC or designated representative will make efforts to determine whether or not Marines being heard have attempted to exercise the right of request mast within the command. If not, the reasons should be explored. Conversely, the IGMC or designated representative should ascertain any impediments to the Marine's ability to request mast, including personal reasons, command interference, or faulty processes.

3. The following information/instructions should be used by commands any time a request mast is conducted by the IGMC:

a. Request mast will be conducted for all Marines desiring to do so that belong to units inspected as part of the IGMC Inspection Program. All personnel who desire to request mast with the IGMC are subject to the limitations set forth in this Order.

b. Efforts to solve problems should be made at the lowest level possible; however, during visits by the IGMC, no special attempt should be made to solve a problem to the Marine's satisfaction solely for the purpose of avoiding request mast with the IGMC or representative. **No Marine will be required to explain the subject of their request mast prior to having an audience with the IGMC or the designated representative.**

c. Some Marines may bring up the same problem in different forums hoping for a favorable decision. The majority of such cases heard by the IGMC or the designated representative are returned to the command for resolution, with the IGMC being briefed of the final disposition of the case.

d. Part I of NAVMC 11296 is to be prepared by the Marine requesting mast. The Marine will deliver the application to their chain of command in accordance with instructions contained in the command bulletin which notifies Marines of the

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opportunity to request mast with the IGMC or the designated representative. The request can be sealed in an envelope marked "to be opened by the IGMC only" or unsealed, depending on the Marine's desires. The command shall deliver the request mast application to the IGMC or the designated representative as soon as possible. If the Marine requesting mast has marked the envelope "to be opened by the IGMC only," only the IGMC or the IGMC representative shall open the request mast. The command will deliver any supporting documentation, as necessary, when the request mast occurs. A request mast about disciplinary action under the UCMJ, legal matters, or involuntary administrative separation will not be considered by the IGMC or the designated representative. This includes all matters, whether contemplated, pending, in progress, or final,

e. The command shall provide the IGMC or designated representative an area with sufficient space for privacy to accommodate Marines requesting mast. Commands shall support the IGMC or representative with administrative, telephone, and/or video capability if needed.

f. When the time and venue have been determined for request mast with the IGMC or designated representative, a command bulletin shall be published. See template bulletin provided at: <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/igmc/Units/Inspections-Division/>.

(1) The subject of the bulletin will be: "REQUEST MAST WITH THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE MARINE CORPS (IGMC)/OR DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE."

(2) The text in the bulletin must contain the following:

(a) Every Marine who is a member of the inspected unit will be afforded the opportunity to appear before the IGMC or the designated representative to request mast.

(b) Marines who, in good faith, wish to appear before the IGMC or designated representative at request mast may do so without fear of retaliation or prejudice to their interests.

(c) Marines desiring to keep the subject of the request mast private must seal the request mast in an envelope and mark it "to be opened by the IGMC only."

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(3) The date, time, and location of the request mast shall be published in the bulletin along with specific instructions for routing the application.

4. Following the request mast, the Marine concerned should clearly understand the disposition of the request mast, whether resolved on site by the IGMC or the designated representative, referred to the local commander, or referred to Headquarters Marine Corps.

5. For requests mast with the IGMC, the original NAVMC 11296 shall be retained by the office of the IGMC and a copy will be provided to the Marine. The form shall be annotated to show what action or proposed action is to be taken. The Marine and witness(es), if applicable, shall finalize the form by completing part IV. The command will receive official correspondence from the IGMC regarding the disposition. The IGMC shall retain requests mast in accordance with paragraph 5.a.(3) of this Order.

APPENDIX B

Definitions

1. Marine. The term Marine includes all active and reserve Marines who are assigned to Marine Corps commands, including those attached or serving on temporary additional duty, as well as Marines confined in correctional facilities. Uniformed members of other services assigned or attached to Marine Corps commands may also exercise the right to request mast. Marines attached to joint or other service commands will exercise request mast through their Marine Corps administrative chain of command.
2. Commander. The term commander includes the Marine's immediate commanding officer with non-judicial punishment (NJP) authority and every commanding officer in the chain of command up to and including the Marine's immediate CG. It also includes inspector-instructors and officers-in-charge (OIC), provided the OIC is vested with NJP authority. Commander also includes General Officers (GOs) that are the first level of command for NJP authority.
3. Commanding General (CG). The term Commanding General (CG) is defined as the commander exercising general court-martial convening authority (GCMCA) over the Marine. The immediate CG is normally the first GO in the chain of command that exercises GCMCA over the Marine, though there are exceptions to this rule. Where the GCMCA is not a Marine officer, the separation or show cause authority for administrative separations will be the immediate CG for request mast purposes. CG is interchangeable with commanders and deputy commanders that are GOs, such as commanders and deputy commanders of component commands. Additionally, the authority to conduct request mast may be delegated to a colonel/Navy captain exercising GCMCA when appropriate.
4. Communicate. With regards to request mast, the term communicate is defined as an opportunity to appear personally before a commander, to correspond with that officer in writing, and/or speak with that officer by telephone or video teleconference as provided for in this Order.

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5. Request Mast Reviewing Authority (RMRA). A person designated by a CG to examine requests mast that are sealed and labeled, "to be opened by the CG only." The RMRA may review the materials for accuracy and sufficiency but may not deny the request mast on behalf of the CG.