

MCRP 3-02C

Marine Combat Water Survival



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FOREWORD

Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 3-02C, *Marine Combat Water Survival*, provides Marine Corps combat water survival techniques, procedures, and training standards. This publication also teaches Marines to cross water obstacles and perform water rescues correctly and safely.

This publication is the foundation for teaching Marines correct water survival techniques and procedures that are used throughout the Marine combat water survival program (MCWSP). Once an individual or a unit has completed the MCWSP, this publication can be used as a refresher course before water operations.

MCRP 3-02C supersedes Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication (FMFRP) 0-13, *Marine Combat Water Survival*, dated 16 September 1991.

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

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MCRP 3-02C Marine Combat Water Survival

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Throughout history, water has posed special challenges to Marines and Sailors during times of both peace and war. Therefore, the inherent dangers associated with waterborne operations demand that Marines and Sailors receive proper water survival training. Combat units that are confident in their ability to work in and around water can use the water to their advantage in combat, and history is filled with examples of how the proper preparation or training for survival in water reduced or averted disaster.

USS Indianapolis

On Sunday, 29 July 1945, the heavy cruiser *USS Indianapolis* (the *Indy*) was en route to the Philippine Sea. Shortly before midnight (about 39 hours out of port), the *Indy*, running blacked out and unescorted, was rocked by two explosions on her starboard side. With communications smashed, the ship could not signal its distress and sank within 15 minutes.

Three life rafts and a floater net supported a few survivors, but the rest of the survivors drifted about, held up by rubber life belts or Mae Wests. About 60 seamen died the first night. Survivors assumed the ship would be reported overdue in Leyte, and that they would be rescued within 2 days. By Monday evening, however, panic began to set in as some life jackets lost their buoyancy from the long immersion. Some men even fought over life jackets, which resulted in at least 25 deaths. No one dared sleep for fear of losing his jacket.

Throughout the next several days, in-transit aircraft flew nearby without spotting the desperate seamen. As best they could, the men kept together, some tying long ropes to each other, floating like corks on a net.

Not until late Thursday morning, 3 1/2 days after the ship sank, were the men discovered. Luckily, a plane on a routine flight over the area spotted the survivors. When ships picked them up that night, the survivors learned they had never been reported overdue. Every one of the 1,196-man crew was a casualty; 880 crewmembers were listed as dead or missing. Although many lives were lost, the innovative and expedient use of flotation devices and float techniques employed by the survivors helped save hundreds of lives.

USS America

On Thanksgiving eve, 23 November 1995, the *USS America* made its way through the Arabian Sea. Twenty-year-old, Marine Lance Corporal (LCpl) Zachary Mayo was unable to sleep and, wanting some fresh air, made his way onto an open-air platform near the aircraft hangar bay, which was three levels below the sleeping quarters. While he was on the platform, the ship veered suddenly, throwing LCpl Mayo through the platform's protective bars and into the sea, 30 feet below.

Frantic, LCpl Mayo called out in vain to the watchmen on the flight deck, which was 64 feet above him. It soon became clear to him that the *USS America* would keep its course into the Gulf of Oman until his absence was discovered at morning muster. The LCpl took a moment to consider his situation. Since land was at least 100 miles away, swimming was suicide; he would have to stay afloat until a search party found him.

Using the techniques he had learned during combat water survival training, LCpl Mayo made a flotation device out of

his coveralls and tried to relax. Meanwhile, business continued as usual aboard the USS *America*. Since LCpl Mayo was on special assignment with the hazardous materials division, his absence went unnoticed until a petty officer asked several Sailors if they had seen their shipmate recently. By the time a roll call had been completed, LCpl Mayo had been adrift at sea for over 24 hours. Although three, fixed-wing Viking aircraft were deployed to search for LCpl Mayo, most people aboard ship feared the worst.

After 34 hours at sea, LCpl Mayo was discovered by fishermen on a Pakistani fishing boat. LCpl Mayo's survival is a testament not only to his incredible physical courage, but also to the soundness of the lifesaving training and techniques he received during combat water survival training.

Chapter 1

Survival at Sea

As a Marine, you face a variety of potential water emergencies whenever you cross expanses of water: ships, watercraft, and amphibious assault vehicles (AAVs) can sink; aircraft can crash into the sea; or you can accidentally fall into the water. However, there are some basic precautionary measures you can take to protect your safety and reduce your chances of becoming a water casualty. Determine the following information as soon as you board any type of vessel. Your knowing the following information may save your life or the life of your fellow shipmates.

- How many life preservers and lifeboats/rafts are on board?
- Where are the life preservers and lifeboats/rafts located?
- What type of unit survival equipment is on board?
- Are individual survival kits issued to each person on board?
- How much food, water, and medicine do the survival kits contain? When was the last time the contents were inspected for proper quantities and shelf life expiration?
- Is there sufficient survival equipment available for the number of personnel?
- How many other personnel are there on board, and where are they located?
- What are the egress procedures for the ship, boat, watercraft, AAV, or aircraft?

Abandoning Ship

When you embark on a Navy ship, you will receive abandoning ship instructions from Navy personnel. If given the order to abandon ship, report to your designated assembly area and put on a life preserver. DO NOT inflate the life preserver until you are clear of the ship. Torn life preservers will not inflate and inflated life preservers can block you, and those behind you, from exiting the ship. A flotation device that has been inflated may also burst if you jump from a significant height. See pages 1-15 through 1-35 for staying afloat with and without a life preserver.

DO NOT remove your clothing, boots, or shoes before abandoning ship. Your trousers and blouse may be the only flotation devices available if your life preserver is faulty or becomes damaged, and your clothes can provide some insulation from the cold water. However, remove your soft cover and place it in a cargo pocket for later use. The soft cover is both lightweight and a good protection against sunburn caused by the sun's rays reflecting off the water.

Jettisoning Equipment

Equipment should be kept properly packed and waterproofed in case you have to abandon ship. If entering the water from a height greater than 30 feet, wearing your equipment (e.g., pack, helmet, gas mask) could cause injury. Upon impact with the water, the helmet will "cup" air inside of it. The chin strap may also create a "hanging effect" as you submerge from the force of the fall. Therefore, you should remove your helmet and gas mask before abandoning ship.

If you are unable to maintain buoyancy due to the amount of equipment secured to your pack and body, then jettisoning some of