

The Role of Joint Services in Counter Insurgency Operations

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Thesis: Combined arms operation that is inclusive of the joint services is a critical component for success in the future of counter insurgency operations.

I. The role of the Marine Corp

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II. The role of the Air Force

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The military services individually have maintained overwhelming arms superiority over any conceivable enemy that would oppose the United States. This distinct technological advantage has caused our enemies to counter our military power with the ancient art of insurgency in an attempt to achieve their goals and objectives. To effectively counter insurgency well into the Twenty-First Century, an all combined arms operation with the capability to master land, air, and sea objectives are a necessity. Moreover, combined arms operations that are inclusive of the joint services are a critical component for success in the future of counter-insurgency operations.

The United States Marine Corps' combat power, capabilities, and joint mission in many areas are mirrored by those of the Army when it comes to ground operations. As of 2005, the Marine Corps had a little over 180,000 on active duty and some 40,000 reserve. This personnel strength makes it the smallest of the United States' armed forces within the Department of Defense. Though the Marine Corps do not bring any unique combat arms capability to the battle, it has mastered the capability of rapidly deploying a combined-arms task force to almost anywhere globally when called upon within a few days. The core structure of any deployed units is the same, a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Under the MAGTF structure, there is integration of air combat forces, ground combat force, and a logistics support element under a single command component. The Marine Corps is skillful in its ability to maintain and integrate multi-element task forces that fosters a smooth implementation of the combined-arms warfare principles. The MAGTF structure reflects a historical battle principle of the Marine Corps which is focused on self-sufficiency and a commitment to combined arms. These essential elements are key factors to an expeditionary force which must sometimes act independently in prudent, time-sensitive combat scenarios.

The Marine Corps employs a wide range of missiles and direct-fire rockets in order to support the infantry with a defensive and offensive anti-armor fighting capability. With the use of unguided rockets such as AT4s and Shoulder-Launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon or SMAW as it is commonly known, gives the user the ability to destroy armored vehicles and stationary defensive targets up to a 500 meter range. Should the enemy decide to use tanks, the Corps can employ the Predator Short Range Assault Weapon (SRAW), the man-portable Javelin launcher, which fires the FGM-148D advance missile, and finally the vehicle mounted BGM-71F TOW2a. These anti-tank guided missiles are devastating on the battle field and make an effect member of the combined arms arsenal. The three anti-tank weapon systems utilize advanced fire-and-forget capability. While the Predator is a lighter missile with a shorter range of 600 to 2,000 meters, the Javelin and TOW are heavier missiles that are

effective well past the 2,000 meters range. This longer range provides the force with an offensive capability to seek and engage all armored tanks treats. To aid in the survivability of the user, all three weapon systems are versatile and can utilize top-attack techniques in order to avoid the frontal profile of heavy armored tanks.

The overwhelming threat from improvised explosive devices and land mines employed by insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan has brought on a stronger need for force protection of our warriors. In order to combat these guerrilla tactics, the Corps began purchasing Buffalo and Cougar heavy armored vehicles which are better equipped to withstand the devastating effects of these weapons. This equipment is part of a new fleet of innovative troop protection vehicles under the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle program. The Marine Corps has placed orders for over 1900 of these MRAP vehicles for expedient delivery to the battle field to lessen troop casualties. The Marine Corps plans to eventually replace all of its combative role HMMWV fleet with MRAP vehicles to patrol the areas outside the compounds of Iraq and Afghanistan. Another innovation that will add advanced firer power to the Marine's combined arms arsenal is the new M777 155mm howitzer. This weapon has a range of 22.5 – 30 km and a range of 30-40 km with rocket-assisted munitions. Unlike the Army's field artillery that will utilize this weapon as a general support for its light forces, the Marines Corps use the weapon as a direct support weapon to the MAGTF. Also, the Marine Corps will expand its artillery make-up which included the High Mobility Artillery rocket system (HIMARS). The HIMAR is a truck-mounted rocket artillery system with a range 45kms with a basic rocket and 70kms with extended range rockets. Both the M777 and the HIMARS are capable of firing guided munitions for more precise targeting missions.

The key role of the Air Force under joint operations and their primary mission focus is concentrated on air superiority within the area of operation. As of 2006, the Air Force personnel strength was 334,200 on active duty, 120,369 reserves and 107,000 within the National Guard. With a fleet comprised of over 7,500 (USAF active, national guard, and reserves) of the most technologically advanced manned aircrafts, makes the U.S. Air Force the largest and most sophisticated air force in the entire world. Many of the aircrafts are well equipped with the versatility to support ground and air operations in counter insurgency operations. Technologically advanced bombers, fighters, and reconnaissance planes are pivotal in maintaining our air superiority over the skies. Aircrafts such as AC-130H Specter gunship, which is a heavily-armed ground attack airplane and A-10 Thunderbolt that provides close air support of ground forces, compliment the joint combined armed forces. The Air Force also

utilizes unmanned combat and intelligence gathering aircraft to give it more flexibility to operate under any discrete missions that may arise.

Air Force fixed-wing aircraft employ various munitions that have the capability to be highly effective in both air-to-air and air-to-surface combat missions. In air-to-air engagements, the Air Force utilizes the radar guided AIM-120 advanced medium-range air-to-air missile (AMRAAM) or the heat-seeking AIM-9 Sidewinder missile. In the event the aircraft must engage close range dog fighting, missiles become ill-effective. For this situation, combat aircraft are armed with a Gatling-gun style cannon called the M61-Vulcan. This weapon will ensure the aircraft has the upper advantage and also can be used to support ground operations. For air-to-surface targets, Air Force aircraft can be equipped with a lethal combination of basic bombs, smart bombs, and missiles to neutralize a target or threat. Basic bombs are unguided munitions of any various type, size, and cluster bombs configuration. Smart bombs are any GPS or laser-guided equipped munitions and air-to-surface missiles are items such as the Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response (SLAM-ER), the Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW) and the Maverick just to name a few. This combination of various types of munitions rounds out the Air Force arsenal and can be launched from many of its fixed –wing aircraft.

The United States Navy holds the primary responsibility for executing naval missions and operations throughout the world when called upon. The U.S. Navy is the largest in the world with about 279 active ships in service; of these, 11 of which are supercarriers that carry various fighter aircrafts and other combat asset that represents a strong peacetime deterrence to any force that would contemplate challenging our nation. The navy personnel strength is about 340,000 active duty and close to 128,000 that are apart of the reserves. A aircraft carrier when regionally prepositioned as a battle group with cruisers, destroyers, littoral combat ship, and amphibious assault ship, makes a powerful force that can respond rapidly to areas in crisis. American foreign and defense policy can hinge on a strong navy with the potential to project its power onto the littoral regions of the world.

The Navy has modernized nearly all its shipboard large guns and replaced it with missiles as its primary weapon system. These weapons can be used in both an offensive and defensive posture. The role of these missiles systems in an offensive posture is to effectively strike targets from long ranges with precision and accuracy. For this mission of land targeting, the navy primarily use the long range BGM-109 Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile.

The Tomahawk missile has in the navy's inventory since the mid 1980s, but it is continually being modified and updated in order to increase its effectiveness and capabilities. The latest version of the Tomahawk missile has a range of 1104 km or 690 statute miles making it a lethal weapon to deploy. The role of these missiles in a defensive posture will use to neutralize enemy missile attacks. The navy utilizes the Aegis combat system to coordinate all its defense countermeasures. The Aegis is a combat and control system that integrates powerful computers and advanced radar tracking to destroy enemy missiles. For Medium to long range defensive measures, the navy uses the Standard Missile 2 (SM-2) that has a range of 46-104 statute miles. The SM-2 has a dual role as the primary shipboard anti-aircraft weapon and being further modified a theater ballistic missile defense weapon. For Short range defensive measures, the navy uses the MK 15 Phalanx Close-In Weapons System (CIWS) which was developed in the mid 1980s. The range of this weapon is classified, but the weapon uses an M-61A1 20mm Gatling that fires at a rate of 3,000 rounds per minute. In 2004, the USS Chafee was fitted with a newly developed missile defense system, the RIM-162 Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile (ESSM) that cause possible be a replacement for CIWS. The ESSM has a range of approximately 50 plus km. Finally, in the event of a small watercraft attack such as the one used on the USS Cole, the navy employs the AGM-119 Penguin air-to-surface missile with a range of 34 plus km and the AGM-114 Hellfire air to surface missile with a range of 0.5. 8 km.

The Navy has expanded its role from sea operation to supplementing and augmentation to ground forces within the borders of Iraq. This action is historic in naval history and shows the flexibility of the Navy in order to support GWOT. Currently, there are over 4, 300 Naval personnel stationed in Iraq performing various ground operations. These new ground roles for sailors include bomb disposal, medical operations, security and detention operations throughout the area of operations.

In conclusion, I have presented a general background on the roles, mission, and capability of the Marine Corps, the Air Force, and the Navy. Collectively these branches of service provide a well rounded and lethal force that possesses the ability to conquer and win. The need for a collective military in 1986 fostered the creation of joint commands under the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The legislative act had greatly improved the inter-service coordination between the U.S. military services and had set the stage for future operation posture that we are now in. To maintain our military superiority well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, joint operations must become the norm in order to sustain our highly effective military forces in the future wars on counter insurgency.

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