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14. ABSTRACT The Marine Corps has a history of maintaining a flexible, rapidly deploying force. In the years leading up to World War II the Corps would more specifically define the it's role, direction and priorities concerning its capabilities. The Marine Corps re-task organized and created specified units to accomplish a defensive requirement in the Pacific. It was the defensive mission that set the stage for the Marine Corps to develop the 2nd, 5th, and 6th Defense Battalions and their role as a part of the island hopping campaign of the Pacific. They are the examples of the evolution of primary coastal defense artillery to antiaircraft battalions, which after the war would be deactivated. The Marine Corps is fighting to remain relevant and prepared to combat an elusive and offensive minded enemy. Force projection, base defense forces, and the amphibious capability have all been included in its long-term plan. Looking back to the Defensive Battalion construct used in World War II demonstrates the Marine Corps' flexibility and adaptability to re-organize and respond to diverse missions on a modern and dynamic battlefield.					
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USMC Defensive Battalions of the 1930s: A Forgotten Construct

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Executive Summary

Title: USMC Defensive Battalions of the 1930s: A Forgotten Construct

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Thesis: Employing the concept of the Defensive Battalions was effective on the battlefields of the late 1930s, yet defensive mindedness still has its place in today's global environment against an uncertain and offensive minded enemy.

Discussion: The Marine Corps has a history of maintaining a flexible, rapidly deploying force. It has successfully demonstrated the ability to adapt and respond to varying missions. The years leading up to World War II would more specifically define the Marine Corps' role, direction and priorities concerning its capabilities.

Many key leaders before World War II saw the primary or solitary mission of the Marine Corps as an offensive amphibious capability. This role was studied and developed during the years leading up to the Second World War, often overshadowing the Marine Corps' ability to function as a defensive capability. Responding to defensive missions demonstrates the flexibility of the Corps to task organize in a way which allows units of a specific specialty to prove more versatile. It was the defensive mission that set the stage for the Marine Corps to develop the 2nd, 5th, and 6th Defense Battalions and their role as a part of the island hopping campaign of the Pacific. They are the examples of the evolution of primary coastal defense artillery to antiaircraft battalions, which after the war would be deactivated.

With the U.S. recently engaged in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Marine Corps is fighting to remain relevant and prepared to combat an elusive and offensive minded enemy. Force projection, base defense forces, and the amphibious capability have all been included in its long-term plan. Looking back to the Defensive Battalion construct used in World War II demonstrates the Marine Corps' flexibility and adaptability to re-organize and respond to diverse missions on a modern and dynamic battlefield.

Conclusion: The Marine Corps must reflect and implement lessons learned from the 1930's Defense Battalion concept in current and future operational planning. Many aspects of this concept directly relate to current issues faced by the Marine Corps, to include adapting in a fluid operating environment to preserve relevance as a military power in the 21st century.

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Preface

In the years leading up to the Second World War, the United States turned to isolationism. The United States was bruised from the First World War, but not excessively bloodied; the country no longer wanted significant involvement in global problems. An offensive minded military force was no longer envisioned and the United States turned to protecting what it already had. This thinking led to how the United States Marine Corps planned and initiated the defensive battalion construct adopted in the 1930s. Despite the creation of these specialized units, the Marine Corps never lost focus of being a flexible and agile force. How Marine Corps managed the transition between missions near the outbreak of World War II (WWII) demonstrated its adaptability for fighting in both defensive and offensive operations.

The defensive battalions created and employed by the Marine Corps is nearly forgotten and often a misunderstood concept. During the Second World War these units had many successes during the Pacific Campaign. This paper will highlight this construct and explain why it was successful and can continue to be incorporated into today's operational planning. The Marine Corps showed the necessity of adjusting to meet the needs created by the current enemy and situation in order to continue being a relevant military resource. *Expeditionary Force 21* (2014) was published to shape and guide the modern Marine Corps in order to maximize mission readiness and immediate response to an enemy. Using *Expeditionary Force 21* as a framework, this paper will highlight the characteristics pulled from the defense battalion concept of the 1930's and integrated into current doctrine.

I was attracted to this topic after looking at many other different topics. I did not have any prior knowledge of the defense battalions and wanted to understand this relatively lesser-known part of Marine Corps history. Multiple sources were used in this paper. Historical accounts of defense battalions were used to gain insight from initial creation to serve in combat. Personal papers from key leaders at the time were used for a more in-depth understanding of the thinking that went into developing these units. Examining the Inter War period helped shape the context of the environment in which the defense battalion concept was created. Finally, guidance from the Commandant, General James Amos, was reviewed to see if and how this concept is incorporated into the vision for the Marine Corps in the 21st century.

I would not have completed this paper without the support of my mentor, Dr. Donald Bittner. I appreciate his guidance, insight, and extensive knowledge base, which encouraged me to investigate this topic.

Prologue: Wake Island – A Historical Example

Events on December 8, 1941 would prove to not only direct the course of American history, but also reshape the full impact of World War II across the globe. Most Americans know the significance of this date as the surprise attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. However, almost simultaneously another attack by Japanese military forces was ensuing on a Pacific island not far from Hawaii. The battle for Wake Island began December 8, 1941 ended on December 23, 1941 between the Japanese Navy and a contingent of U.S. Marines and civilians. The events leading up to the attack on Wake Island show how the focus of the United States was to maintain a defensive position at all costs. The Marine Corps served in defensive capacities throughout the Pacific to support this focus. As early as 18 April 1941, Admiral Husband E Kimmel, the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet commented being, “fully aware of the strategic situation of Wake” and had become “alarmed over its defenseless condition.”¹ Wake Island was part of Japan's "outline Plan for the execution of the Empire's National Policy, a plan to expand the outer perimeters so wide that her enemies would not be able to attack by air against the home islands or the rich natural resources that Japan sought to acquire.”²

Wake Island was one of the first opportunities for the Marine Corps to test out the new task organization of its units in a purely defensive capacity. Wake Island was defended by elements of the 1st Marine Defense Battalion positioned to fight off attacks from the air and sea. This reflected the Marine Corps’ commitment to adapting based on operational needs to succeed during the Second World War. Marine leaders in the defense battalion were trained to analyze the terrain from a defensive perspective, and

they successfully identified several key features that would help support defending the small island. Of significance, they noted the island's triangular shape; division of the atoll into three islands; extensive coastline, and dense vegetation (leading to few fields of fire); all contributed to an ideal situation for defense.³ These considerations helped the 1st Defense Battalion (-) plan and execute an effective defensive plan to stave off the Japanese for two weeks. The mass of the Japanese attack force without any U.S. reinforcement, would ultimately force the island defenders to surrender on December 23, 1941.

To understand the mindset of Marine Corps leaders preparing a Defense Battalion one must look at the interwar period for this major organization development. Employing the concept of the defensive battalions was pertinent to the 1930s; yet defensive mindedness still has its place in today's environment against an uncertain enemy.

Setting the Stage during the Inter-War Period

Following the First World War, much of the United States remained in a state of awe from the magnitude of that conflict. Global powers fell into an era known as the Interwar period, or the time from the end of World War I to beginning of World War II. During this time, events such as the Great Depression forced the U.S. to focus inward from the international stage to cope with this grave economic disaster. The Marine Corps also focused internally during the 1930s, ultimately making changes to align with a nation that experienced severe challenges and changes, to include its security policies.

"Leave me alone," seemed to be America's attitude toward the rest of the world in the 1930s.⁴ The average American after 1929 had little concern for territories outside its

own borders. Not-so-distant memories of the First World War had influenced public opinion to focus internally before having to deal with devastation from the stock market crash and resulting economic and social consequences. The United States began taking steps to isolate itself from the rest of the world. Tactics were implemented as a barrier to foreign interaction, such as with the Hoover Administration which, “set the tone for an isolationist foreign policy with the Hawley-Smoot Tariff,”⁵ placing a highly protective tariff on over 20,000 imported goods. The following Roosevelt administrations continued these policies till 1940 keeping in line with the U.S.’s desire to be removed from the global stage and protect its assets.

The Marine Corps ascertained its role in a future conflict as the United States Navy, since 1905, developed war plan Orange, with its focus on Japan. Hence, the Corps “viewed the Pacific as a probable theater of operations and began to refine amphibious warfare techniques.”⁶ General John H. Russell, Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1934 – 1936, had the foresight in the early 1900s that the Marine Corps would have to develop a doctrine to combat future threats. Emphasis was placed on development of the doctrine for the Marine Corps to refine its offensive capability. “In November of 1933, all classes of the Marine Corps Schools were suspended and the students and faculty, including a sprinkling of Navy officers were directed to concentrate their efforts on developing a manual to give guidance on the conduct of amphibious operations. The decision was not purely the Marine Corps decision, The Naval War College in Rhode Island had been exchanging ideas with Quantico on the subject for more than a decade.”⁷

As a result, in 1934 a team headed by Colonel Ellis B. Miller would publish the *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*. Col Miller’s simple recommendation to the

Marine Corps was, “when the Marine Corps itself is completely saturated with the subject, as it should be, and eats, sleeps dreams, thinks, acts and exudes advanced bases, there will be a marked advancement. My advice is to make advance bases and shore operations for the fleet your Bible.”⁸ The changes he imposed on the Marine Corps, “laid the essential foundation for much of its effectiveness in the war which was to come.”⁹ While serving as the Assistant Commandant, General Russell recommended to then Commandant General Ben Fuller that, “the Marine Corps renamed its Marine Expeditionary Force to the Fleet Marine Force.”¹⁰ It then split the renamed organization into an Atlantic and Pacific tactical segments. This split would poise the Marine Corps to better execute the unknown in the next conflict.

In 1939, defense battalions were authorized, and “these 1,000 man units would be created to defend temporary advanced naval bases, and were equipped with antiaircraft and larger caliber guns.”¹¹ Reorganizing to support a defensive mission allowed the Marine Corps to remain relevant in the evolving and uncertain international environment without abandoning its primary amphibious mission. Many leaders knew the primary mission had to be preserved and maintained, as amphibious operations were imminent to counter any possible action from discontent mounting in Pacific nations. The Corps understood the nation’s desire to preserve isolationism and did not want to broadcast its primary role being offensive in nature. After the First World War, Marine Corps leaders recognized this attitude in its strategy to remain relevant and decided to support changing the way some of its units were task organized and what their mission would be.

In the Pacific, small islands scattered throughout the area were vital to controlling the vast areas. Gaining control of these islands would extend the operational reach of any

country's military force. One of these islands, Wake Island, was ideally shaped to the advantage of an occupying defensive unit.¹² The Marine Corps focused on ensuring serving defense battalions, such as on Wake Island, had the capability to fight any advancing adversaries in the Pacific. This occurred while the Corps maintained its primary mission as flexible, offensive, and expeditionary but the defense battalions would also have a role in this aspect of future operations.

During the interwar period, the United States' priorities did not change even as things became more volatile in the world. The theme of focusing on domestic issues remained paramount in United States' policy vice turning towards increasing international concerns. While the nation's leaders at the time maintained distance from international interests, they still strove to avoid potential external conflict. Historians looking back at this time period have reflected on, "the missed chances of American diplomacy: the failure to join either the League of Nations or the World Court; the failure to maintain amicable Anglo-American, Franco-American, or Soviet –American relations."¹³ In an effort to limit the global threat of foreign power, the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 established by U.S. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes sought to limit the navies of nations that had global interests, especially in the Pacific and Far East.¹⁴ The conference resulted in a series of agreements that encouraged countries to scale down their naval assets, while Japan would later secretly build up its maritime power. Japan's intent was clearly laid out in the 1936 document *Hirota Cabinet's National and Foreign Policies*. Informally reported to the Japanese Emperor on 15 August 1936, the country listed four basic goals and then described in detail the countries intent. In the section titled "National Defense and Armament, it stated, "naval

rearmament will be brought to a level sufficient to secure command of the Western Pacific against the United States Navy.”¹⁵ The document further stated, “appropriate measures will be taken for the rapid expansion of aviation and shipbuilding industries.”¹⁶

The transition of the United States foreign policy took place under the Roosevelt administration. “During the early part of [President F. D. Roosevelt’s], administration focused on domestic issues. However, in his second administration Roosevelt pushed the country to prepare for a possible war and switched the foreign policy of the US “from a neutrality to nonbelligerently.”¹⁷ The Marine Corps’ also began a transition to support the changes of U.S. foreign policy. Before the outbreak of WWII, the Marine Corps developed a defensive construct in the form of defense battalions following a newly published doctrine still rooted in expeditionary methods. Successfully executing a defensive stance during the island hopping campaign, the Marine Corps defense battalions can be seen as an adaptive force while the main effort still pushed forward with an amphibious assault capability, maintaining tempo with the fleet, island after island.

Following major conflicts when a nation’s military is reinforced and mobilized to counter a threat, there is often a subsequent draw down of forces. The Interwar period in the U.S. was no different. In 1918, the Marine Corps’ was manned with 52,000 personnel for WWI. During the Interwar period, the Marine Corps drew down to 16,068 troops¹⁸ and reduced funding to match personnel reductions. When the Great Depression hit, a greater strain was put on the Marine Corps to reduce its size. These issues were also contributing factors driving the Marine Corps to rethink it’s task organization and adjust it to meet the present need and threat but with an eye to the future. With limited

resources and significant constraints, the Marine Corps developed a distinct capability to defend key terrain in this case in the Pacific.

Key Actors in the Interwar Period

Leading up to WWII, there were a number of key actors who would shape the development and the ultimate eventual deactivation of the defense battalion construct, developed by the Marine Corps. These leaders would develop a task organized, flexible, and adaptable force that would contribute to the war in the Pacific. The leaders of the Marine Corps would continue adapting to the dynamic situation in order to successfully meet the threat posed by the Japanese both offensively and defensively.

General Thomas Holcomb served as the Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1936 to 1943. General Holcomb was, “instrumental in “directing the Corps’ expansion including the creation of the heavily armored defense battalions.”¹⁹ However, as he stepped into position as Commandant, many daunting issues would challenge and prevent him from achieving his goal of structuring the Corps for the possible looming war. He confronted a lack of funding, a nation still in a Great Depression, and a public mindset focused on isolationism. As historian David Ulbrich has written, “Commandant Thomas Holcomb was an excellent strategist, manager and publicist. Understanding his actions that help illuminate the mentality and institutions of military and government prior to World War II.”²⁰ General Holcomb knew the public and Congress would be reluctant to approve a Marine Corps strategy that implied offensive operations. In order to combat this, “Holcomb played the roles of salesman and politician”²¹ purposely and repeatedly emphasizing the word “defense” in order to ensure his message would not be misconstrued. As planning for operation RAINBOW 5 solidified, Holcomb became more

sure of the need for a force tailored for both base defense and amphibious offensive attacks. Perhaps Antonio Santaniell of the 7th Defense Battalion best summarized Commandant Holcomb role as, “a strong advocate of defense battalions...[fighting] to get more men and equipment, especially in the beginning of the war.”²² To this end, General Holcomb is credited as a major player making the defensive battalion concept a reality.

Colonel Charles D. Barrett and Lieutenant Colonel Robert H. Pepper were also considered instrumental in developing the defense battalion concept during the Interwar period. While working at the Marine Corps headquarters they, “turned concept into reality by drawing up detailed plans for organizations expressly designed to defend advance bases.”²³ These two officers set the stage by ultimately selling the necessity of defending advanced bases if war should occur. As General Holcomb noted, these two officers were also “aware that isolationism still gripped the United States in 1939” and “the two planners emphasized the defensive mission of the new units, stressing their ability to hold areas for the ultimate offensive operations of the Fleet.”²⁴ Col Pepper would later take command of the 3rd Defense Battalion, 15th Marine Regiment Fleet Marine Force defending Midway Island and later supporting the 1st Division’s attack on Guadalcanal. Both of these officers proved successful leaders fighting in the Pacific demonstrating how defensive units harnessed a very specific capability necessary during this period of the war.

Major Earl H. Ellis’s written contributions can be considered the foundation in which defense battalions were built. Major Ellis published two works on the importance of manning bases and on U.S. Naval strategy in the Pacific. Major Ellis “believed that

successful maintenance of outlying bases insured a successful Naval campaign.”²⁵ He supported the notion of Japan being part of the next large conflict and the necessity of the United States having the capability to seize territory and defend it. The prominent historian and author David J. Ulbrich stated, “Ellis’ *Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia* served as a companion work to *Naval Base Operations* outlining a strategy for seizure and defense of islands in the Pacific.”²⁶ While Major Ellis’s writing would be published years before the next large scale conflict, his ideas shaped the offensive and defensive roles of the Marine Corps decades later.

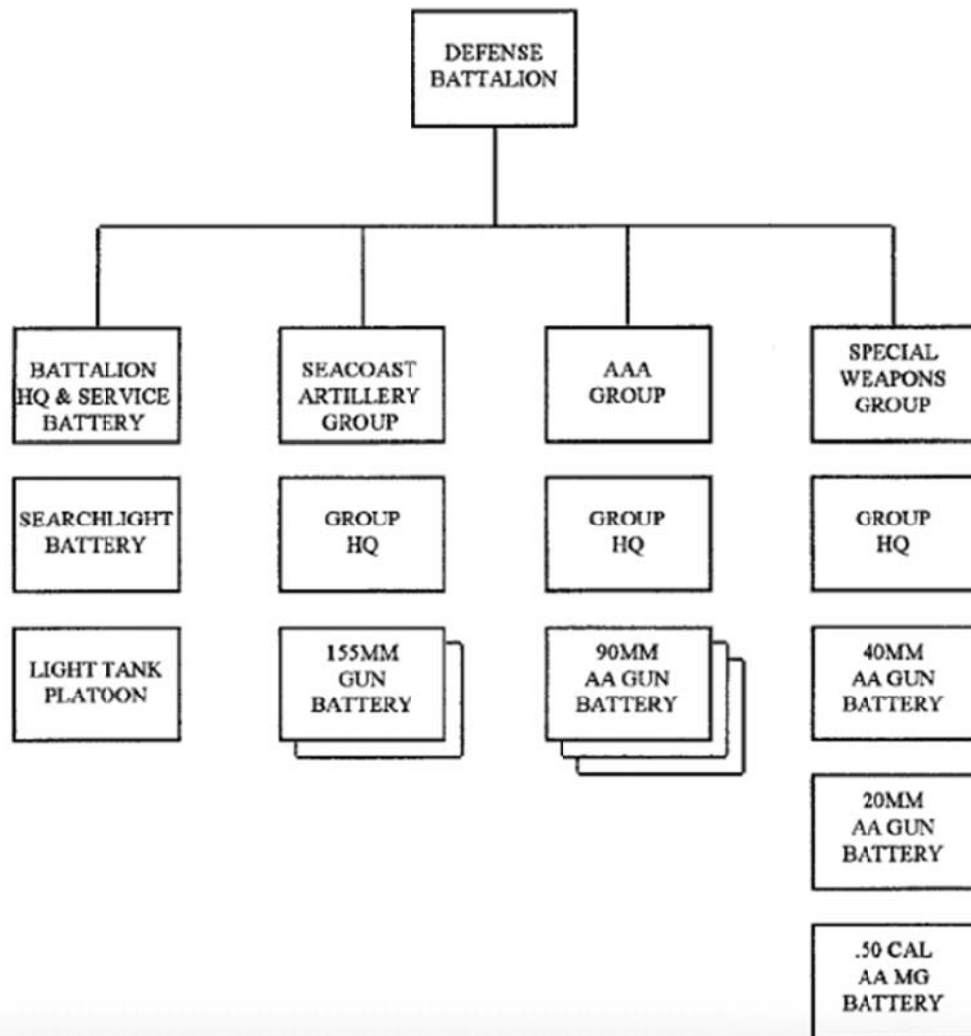
The Defense Battalion: 2nd, 5th, and 6th Defense Battalions

According to military historian Albert Nofi, the Defense Battalion was “a self contained unit designed to provide coast defense for critical locations.” The defense battalions were “a formation specialized for holding islands or other valuable coastal points.” At the height of the war the Marine Corps stood up twenty defense battalions comprised of 26,685 Marines.²⁷ This figure does not include the various replacement drafts that kept them at or near the authorized strength. The battalions had a specific purpose, which called for a number of heavy weapons. These included (12) 90mm AA guns; (30) 0.30 machine guns for beach defense; (16-30) 0.50 machine guns for antiaircraft use; and (6-8) 5"-7" (127mm-178mm) coastal defense guns with searchlights. Each of these units had different specialties and uses, however, their common purpose was to hold friendly terrain and defend against enemy sea or air attacks.

Throughout the war, these twenty battalions were shifted to different locations as to support operations as they moved across the Pacific. They also evolved in organization, mission and employment. The Marine Corps did so to keep the defense

battalion model relevant depending on the threat the Japanese posed on the American force. After the threat of attack from Japan was neutralized, many of the battalions were deactivated or converted into Anti Aircraft Artillery Battalions. These units reflected flexibility the ability to adapt based on the mission, as seen in three of the twenty defense battalions.

Illustration A- Typical Task Organization 1939



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2nd Defense Battalion. Much like the 5th Battalion, the 2nd Defensive Battalion experienced multiple movements throughout the war. Raised at Camp Pendleton in 1941,

the battalion first deployed to Hawaii and then to America Samoa. Throughout this short period the battalion was commanded by five different officers making stability of command a problem. The 2nd Defense Battalion saw operations in Tarawa in 1943 and in 1944 were re-designated the 2nd Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion. Following this re-designation it supported operations in Guam before landing on Okinawa. Deactivation occurred shortly after the end of the war. ²⁹

5th Defense Battalion. The 5th Defense Battalion, which was activated in December of 1940 and deactivated in April of 1944. It is a good example of the adaptation that took place during the course of the war was deployed prior to the United States involvement in World War II. The 5th Battalion was stood up in South Carolina under the command of Colonel Lloyd L. Leech. In June 1941 it moved to Iceland and attached to the 1st Marine Brigade consisting of an infantry regiment and an artillery battalion.³⁰ The brigade's mission was to help defend Iceland from possible German attack in cooperation with the British. Major Charles Melson, who wrote extensively on the significance of the defense battalions, wrote specifically about the 5th Defense Battalion. He wrote "the defense battalion and the other Marines assumed responsibility for helping keep open the Atlantic sea lanes to the United Kingdom"³¹ which played an important role on the eastern front. In March 1942, the battalion was relieved and returned to the States only to be redeployed again in July to the South Pacific where one detachment was split between Noumea, New Caledonia, and Tulagi in the Solomons. The rest of the battalion was deployed to Ellice Islands it remained until January 1943.

Part of the 5th Battalion was re-designated the 14th Defense Battalion while the rest re-designated the Marine Defense Force, Funafuti. Finally, in 1944, the Marine

Defense Force Funafuti was redeployed to Hawaii and became the 5th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion.³² Ultimately, it participated in the battle for Okinawa of 1945. The 5th Battalion had a unique experience in that it deployed to multiple locations and adapted to evolving threats by various enemy forces. Early in the war, the unit had a more defensive seacoast artillery focus while in the latter part it shifted to anti-air. The ability of the unit to be split up and operate independently demonstrated the flexibility that the battalions were intended to have. This force multiplier allowed for this particular unit to take on multiple mission sets where decentralized command and control was a prerequisite to operate in this environment.

6th Defense Battalion. Another vital isle that planners recognized early in the Interwar era was Midway Island. Lt Col Robert D. Heinl, the director of the United States Marine Corps Historical Division from December 1946 to June 1949 stated “Midway Island is in fact a circular atoll, about six miles in diameter, enclosing two islands, Sand and Eastern. Both were originally sand patches covered by sparse, tough shrub. Shortly after surveys by the U. S. S. WRIGHT (CVL- 47) February 1934, Pan American Airways, quick to realize Midway's importance from the viewpoint of Pacific air operations, commenced development of a commercial seaplane base, likewise on Sand Island.”³³ Years later, in 1938, the United States military recognized the strategic importance of Midway and began to make efforts to plant its flag on the island. Lt Col Robert D. Heinl, stated, “in 1938, the famous Hepburn Report, dealing with United States requirements for naval bases, had this to say: From a strategic point of view, an air base at Midway Island is second in importance only to Pearl Harbor. The Board, which derived its name from the senior member, Rear Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN,

accordingly recommended immediate development of Midway as a naval air and submarine base”³⁴

There would be two Defense Battalions that would help defend the base at Midway in 1939 and 1940. Ultimately the 6th Defense Battalion would be the unit on the island during the crucial days that would result in a successful defense during the battle of Midway. The 6th Battalion originated at Camp Pendleton. In 1941, the 6th Defense Battalion (34 officers and 750 enlisted) had reached Pearl Harbor in the U.S.S. Wharton *AP-7* on 22 July. After some training in Hawaii, it sailed for Midway on 7 September. On 11 September, the main body arrived under command of Colonel Raphael Griffin. LtCol Robert Heintz Jr noted during the infancy of the defense battalion concept, “the defense of advanced bases, the artillery, both seacoast and antiaircraft, represented only part of the rounded whole, and aviation was realized to be essential for balanced defense of a base such as Midway.”³⁵ The leaders of the 6th Defense Battalion knew they were a specialized force to help defend the island from Japanese attack. From September 1, 1941 to June 9, 1942, the 6th Defense Battalion with reinforcements held off Japanese assaults from land and air. Unlike the other defense battalions, the 6th was reinforced in order to ensure success.

As described by in *The Japanese Story of the Battle of Midway*, the effect of the force that was stationed on the island effectively warded off attacks and destroyed several enemy destroyers.³⁶ The Japanese attack force underestimated the defense on Midway and it proved to be a difficult assault. The emphasis on command and control and unity of effort demonstrated by the defensive forces aboard Midway set the stage for other battalions to utilize throughout the war.

Throughout these three examples the defense battalions were tailored to the operating environment in order to counter Japanese's desire to maintain a defense in depth in order to maintain stand off from the main land. Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the leaders of the Marine Corps identified that the initial years of the conflict would be a race to either hold or acquire territory; regardless, such sites had to be defended and held. The defense battalions were created to do just that. When the Japanese had lost the offensive capability the Marine Corps adjusted the mission, hence these specified units. They were given different weapons that would make them focus on the Antiaircraft threat closer to the main land of Japan. The adaptability and flexibility of tailoring these units contributed to the successful island hopping campaign. They demonstrated another instance where the Marine Corps had to adjust to remain a relevant effective fighting force.

Illustration B: Transition to Anti Aircraft (AA)/Anti Aircraft Artillery (AAA) Battalions

Bn	Activated	Redesignated/Deactivated
1st	1 Nov 39 San Diego ¹	redes 1st AAA Battalion 7 May 44 Majuro
2d	1 Mar 40 San Diego	redes 2d AA Battalion ² 16 Apr 44 Kauai
3d	10 Oct 39 Parris Island	redes 3d AAA Battalion 15 Jun 44 Guadalcanal
4th	1 Feb 40 Parris Island	redes 4th AAA Battalion 15 May 44 Vella Lavella
5th	1 Dec 40 Parris Island	redes 5th AA Battalion 16 Apr 44 Kauai
6th	1 Mar 41 San Diego	redes MB, NOB, Midway Is 1 Feb 46; deact 31 Oct 49
7th	16 Dec 40 San Diego	redes 7th AA Battalion 16 Apr 44 Kauai
8th	1 Apr 42 Tutuila, Samoa	redes 8th AA Battalion 16 Apr 44 Kauai

9th	1 Feb 42 Parris Island	redes 9th AAA Battalion 1 Sep 44 Guam
10th	1 Jun 42 San Diego	redes 10th AAA Battalion 7 May 44 Eniwetok
11th	15 Jun 42 Parris Island	redes 11th AAA Battalion 16 May 44 New Georgia
12th	1 Aug 42 San Diego	redes 12th AAA Battalion 15 Jun 44 Russell Islands
13th	25 Sep 42 Guantánamo Bay	redes 13th AAA Battalion 15 Apr 44 Cp Lejeune
14th	15 Jan 43 Tulagi, Guadalcanal	redes 14th AAA Battalion 1 Sep 44 Guam
15th	1 Jan 43 Pearl Harbor, TH	redes 15th AAA Battalion 7 May 44 Roi-Namur
16th	10 Nov 42 Johnston Island	redes 16th AA Battalion 19 Apr 44 Kauai
17th	22 Mar 44 Kauai, TH	redes 17th AA Battalion 19 Apr 44 Kauai
18th	1 Oct 43 New River	redes 18th AAA Battalion 16 May 44 Cp Elliott
51st ³	18 Aug 42 New River	deact 31 Jan 46 Cp Lejeune
52d ³	15 Dec 43 Cp Lejeune	redes (new) 3d AAA Bn (Composite) 15 May 46 Cp Lejeune (see 3d AAA Bn under Antiaircraft Battalions)

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Illustration C –Chronology – Deactivation of Anti Aircraft (AA)/ Anti Aircraft Artillery (AAA) Battalions

Bn	Activated	Deactivated/Redesignated
1st	7 May 44 Majuro	deact 15 Nov 44 Majuro; react see 9th AAA Bn
2d	16 Apr 44 Kauai	deact 28 Nov 45 Cp Pendleton; react see 18th AAA Bn
3d	15 Jun 44 Guadalcanal	deact 15 Dec 44 Guadalcanal; new 3d AAA Bn (Comp) react 15 May 46 Cp Lejeune; deact 17 May 47 Lejeune
4th	15 May 44 Kauai	deact 9 Jun 45 Guam
5th	15 May 44 Kauai	deact Nov 45 Cp Pendleton
7th	16 Apr 44 Kauai	deact 2 Aug 45 Guam
8th	16 Apr 44 Kauai	deact 27 Nov 45 Cp Pendleton
9th	1 Sep 44 Guam*	redes 1st AAA Bn 12 May 46 Cp Lejeune; redes 1st 90mm AAA Gun Bn 30 Nov 49; redes 2d 90mm AAA Gun Bn 21 Aug 51 (new 1st activated); deact 15 Sep 56

10th	7 May 44 Eniwetok	deact 25 Nov 44 Kauai
11th	16 May 44 New Georgia	deact Dec 44 Guadalcanal
12th	15 Jun 44 Russell Islands	deact 22 Sep 45 Peleliu
13th	15 Apr 44 Cp Lejeune	deact 7 Sep 45 Pearl Harbor
14th	1 Sep 44 Guam	deact 30 Jun 45 Guam
15th	7 May 44 Roi-Namur	deact 25 Nov 45 Cp Pendleton
16th	19 Apr 44 Kauai	deact 30 Nov 45 Cp Pendleton
17th	19 Apr 44 Kauai	deact 6 Dec 45 Cp Pendleton
18th	16 May 44 Cp Lejeune	redes 2d AAA Bn (Composite) 16 May 46 Cp Lejeune; deact Sep 47 Cp Lejeune

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Current Operating Environment

In 2014 Commandant James E. Amos published *Expeditionary Force 21* outlining the direction for the Marine Corps in the second and third decades of the 21st century.

The Marine Corps had been involved in fighting two occupational land wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for 13 years; another example of the Marine Corps departing from a primary maritime mission to meet an existing and unexpected threat. The Commandant introduced several concepts in his publication that can be linked to that of the defense battalion concept. The primary and secondary mission of the Marine Corps during the Interwar period and during the Second World War demonstrated the Corps' ability to be flexible and necessary. The ability to perform both of these mission sets enabled the Marine Corps to be successful and showed its capability through tangible results.

In *Expeditionary Force 21* there are themes throughout the publication that can be linked directly to the concepts of the defense battalions. One of these is the idea of power projection. Power projection is the primary end state that expeditionary forces provide to the nation. In 2014 Marine General Charles W. Wilhelm stated, "Power projection is part of an expeditionary force, included in the 'sticker price.' An expeditionary force is like

the expeditionary warriors that man it. They have an expeditionary state of mind; they are comfortable with uncertainty and capable of handling adversity; they have the ability to adapt ‘out there’ and to improvise.’³⁹ These units operate in areas that are remote and ‘away from the flagpole.’ They have the ability to sustain themselves, clearly understanding the commander’s intent and the mission they are placed out there to accomplish. This was the case with the employment of the defense battalions during World War II. Battalions and sometimes detachments would be placed across the Pacific to combat the threat of Japanese forces to hold vital terrain that would allow them to project other Marine forces power forward.

A portion of the 3rd Defense Battalion was designated the Midway Detachment, Fleet Marine Force, “consisting of nine officers, 168 enlisted, and approximately one-third of the 3rd Defense Battalion's materiel, including one 5-inch battery (two guns). This detachment was to act in turn as an advance echelon of the whole battalion, personnel being rotated between Pearl Harbor and Midway on a four to six month basis.”⁴⁰ This sub-unit, like the units described in *Expeditionary Force 21*, were entrusted with a mission to protect a vital piece of terrain that would allow the United States to project its power forward. Without this island, the United States would be unable to have a strategic airfield that would allow it to span across the Pacific. The defense battalions stationed on such islands lived in some of the most austere conditions having to stretch their supplies to ensure they could sustain themselves and accomplish the mission.

This concept has continued throughout the history of the Marine Corps and is what the Commandants of the 21st century want to resonant in the current and future

missions of the Corps. With fiscal concerns continuing to limit what the Marine Corps can utilize for training and power projection, the units of today need to be lean without giving up any capabilities. In 2011 Lieutenant General Richard P. Mills commented on Sea Power Projection Forces to the Armed Service Committee. As he said, “the demand for amphibious forces has never been greater.”⁴¹ Having this capability provides the Marine Corps the ability to rapidly deploy forces to combat a threat that could occur in the most remote locations. These detachments must have a clearly defined mission and be task organized correctly to be a force multiplier for the nation. The defense battalions had a clearly stated purpose, although, at times they were not set up to counter an amphibious enemy. In the current operating environment, forward forces need to be capable of defending themselves from a very elusive enemy. This will impact current manpower concerns, especially in the light of the planned force reduction to 173,000 personnel. The units that are sent forward need to be manned appropriately so troop to task issues do not counter force projection or defense.

In the late 1930s, the Navy convened the Hepburn Board to develop a strategy to combat the threat to United States interests in the Pacific. The results of the final report ultimately would end with the establishment of the defense battalions. On June 7, 1944, Senator David I. Walsh, Chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs United States Senate, addressed Congress on the steps taken to rebuild the Navy to its present strength. He said, “the Navy’s Hepburn Board endorsed the fortification of Pacific Naval bases – especially Guam but also Midway, Palmyra, Johnston and Wake - in their report of December 1938. Specifically, the Hepburn Board recommend that these outposts be fully developed and equipped for use by submarines, aircraft and surface vessels.”⁴² This

capability that was recommended by the board to the Pacific would strategically place units at the forefront so when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor the Marine Corps would already have units that would be in contact with the Japanese Forces in the Pacific. Prior to the attack, however, these units were serving a different purpose. Officers firmly believed that this deterred Japanese expansion against the Philippines, Southwest Asia, Midway and even Hawaii. Agreement on this deterrent effect was not limited to the military. Historian David J Ulbrich noted, “Stanley Hornbeck, a Far East expert in the State Department during the 1930s, saw the presence of United States forces in the Western Pacific as having “done much to prevent an open conflict with Japan.”⁴³

Today’s Marine Corps remains an essential element in preserving U.S. interests on the global stage. As stated in *Expeditionary Force 21*, the Marine Corps will adjust its forces to incorporate “Expeditionary Advance Base Operations.” The Corps understands by “establishing such oceanic outposts” would require a modern-day capability similar to Defense Battalion organizations.”⁴⁴ This gives the Marine Corps the same deterrent effect that the defense battalions had but following direction from the current Commandant. According to General Amos, “This gives each Ground Component Commander the three-fold advantages of forward presence: the recurring dividends available from “soft power”; deterrence derived from credible and capable response; and the freedom of action created by expanded operational reach and tactical flexibility.”⁴⁵ This capability, just as it was pre-World War II, deters adversaries from either conducting attacks or seizing terrain around their borders. Understandably, at the outbreak of World War II Japan was not deterred by these units, but her offensives from December 1941 to mid 1942 occurred only after a significant military build up. Then Japan was prepared to

conduct coordinated attacks on these units spread across the Pacific, with short term success. As the war would run its course, the defense battalion concept were part of the island hopping campaign, reflecting, professionalism, adaptability, and flexibility in changing situations.

Despite the defense battalion concept offering insight relevant to current operational planning, there are limitations to it being directly implemented on today's battlefield. The Defense Battalions were forward deployed for a specific mission that focused solely on defending a piece of terrain. David J. Ulbrich stated, "the units played "static defense" roles by sacrificing tactical maneuver for strategic mobility."⁴⁶ A defense battalion's primary purpose consisted of securing an island base in the face of potential air, sea and land attacks. The defense battalions did not consist of a maneuver force capability to rapidly fight or defend once an enemy had made significant gains. According to the vision detailed in *Expeditionary Force 21*, modern Marine forces cannot focus on one specific mission set; they must be trained for offensive and defensive operations.

The current force must have force protection at the forefront of their mission. Expeditionary Force 21 states, "force protection needs increase as the force is positioned forward and disperses for littoral operations. Force protection is not the mission; rather it is an integrated aspect of MAGTF operations." Commanders must plan for this during task organizing and manning forward deployed units and at the same time follow the intent of "our expeditionary culture can be summarized simply: fast, austere, and lethal."

⁴⁷ The current Marine Corps strives to accomplish its mission, "by providing the right force in the right place at the right time."⁴⁸

Conclusion

The Marine Corps has a proud tradition steeped in honor, courage, and commitment. It prides itself on being adaptive and innovative. In order to continue to be relevant and successful, it will need to continue to execute this philosophy. The defense battalion concept of nearly 80 years ago may not be directly applicable in the current operating environment; however, its fundamentals of flexibility and adaptability are timely and relevant. In uncertain current and future operating environments, the defensive model highlights capabilities such as forward deployed forces and self-sufficiency that the Marine Corps must continue to support.

The defense battalion was specifically tailored to provide a defensive capability by holding terrain, ultimately sacrificing the ability to assume an offensive mission. While these units were not created to be an attack force, incorporating elements of force protection or a unit prepared to reinforce may have delayed the Japanese seizure. The adage ‘the best defense is a good offense’ should be considered when task organizing the units who are focused on force projection and strategic positioning to ensure that each one can be mutually supported. *Expeditionary Force 21* provides guidance without changing the core mission and intent of the Marine Corps. Every unit has vulnerabilities, however, lacking a fundamental offensive or defensive capability puts the Corps’ relevancy at risk. General Victor H. Krulak stated in his book *First to Fight*, “America doesn't need a Marine Corps, it wants a Marine Corps.”⁴⁹ In order for the Marine Corps to continue being a necessary force, it must strive to ensure it can meet its unique mission through the capabilities of its units.

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