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Historically, a majority of Marine Corps operations conducted can be considered to be within the realm of stability operations. Logic and the future security environment indicate that the Marine Corps will continue to find itself engaged in the conduct of stability operations, and on a more frequent basis. As the strategic context and emerging concepts of stability operations have evolved, so too must Marine Corps doctrine and training. To succeed in future conflicts and meet strategic intent, the Marine Corps must place a greater emphasis on stability operations through greater inclusion in its doctrinal publications and refinement of its Training and Readiness (T&R) standards.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:
Lest We Forget:
Elevating the Importance of Stability Operations in Marine Corps Doctrine and Training

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Executive Summary

Title: Lest We Forget: Elevating the Importance of Stability Operations in Marine Corps Doctrine and Training

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Thesis: As the strategic context and emerging concepts of stability operations have evolved, so too must Marine Corps doctrine and training. To succeed in future conflicts and meet strategic intent, the Marine Corps must place a greater emphasis on stability operations through greater inclusion in its doctrinal publications and refinement of its Training and Readiness (T&R) standards.

Discussion: The United States Marine Corps has a long history of conducting stability operations, with a majority of their operations being categorized as such. Furthermore, government and military leaders agree that future threats to US national security will emerge from areas of weak governance, requiring military intervention in the form of stability operations. The Marine Corps began to reinforce the importance of stability operations upon conclusion of the Cold War. National leadership made stability operations a strategic imperative, further emphasizing the need for the military to be prepared to conduct such operations, following the beginning stages of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. As such, the Marine Corps must ensure that its doctrine and training provide sufficient guidance to the force in order to prepare the force for future missions.

Conclusion: Historically, a majority of Marine Corps operations conducted can be considered to be within the realm of stability operations. Logic and the future security environment indicate that the Marine Corps will continue to find itself engaged in the conduct of stability operations, and on a more frequent basis. The Marine Corps can better prepare the force for this future reality by being more inclusive of stability operations in its doctrine and Training and Readiness standards.

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Stability operations are not a new subset of missions which the United States Marine Corps conducts. In reality, a majority of actions that the Marine Corps has participated in can be classified as a form of stability operations. In his paper *The US Military's Experience in Stability Operations, 1789-2005*, Dr. Lawrence Yates affirms this by stating:

In more than two centuries... American forces have fought 11 wars that were... predominantly conventional in nature. Of those conflicts, four were total wars in which America's existence or its way of life was considered to be at stake... The remaining seven wars were limited, in that an imminent threat to the country's survival or way of life was not apparent ... Throughout its history, the American military has focused the bulk of its attention on fighting, or preparing to fight, these kinds of conventional wars... If America's armed forces have fought fewer than a dozen major conventional wars in over two centuries, they have, during that same period, engaged in several hundred military undertakings that would today be characterized as stability operations.¹

A bulk of the operations that the Marine Corps has undertaken throughout its history has been short of war; however, the military as a whole has struggled to define exactly what these operations were.

Prior to 2011 the Marine Corps, nested with previous joint doctrine, classified these hundreds of other "military undertakings" as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). MOOTW was considered as the application of military capabilities during periods absent of armed conflict with the principal aim of maintaining peace.² As defined by the 2001 version of *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-0: Marine Corps Operations*, MOOTW consisted of those missions that fell short of "...large-scale sustained combat operations..."³ In the past these types of operations had commonly been referred to as "peace keeping" or "nation building" missions by military and government officials.⁴ Today, many of the missions once performed under the umbrella term of MOOTW are now classified as stability operations. The current version (2011) of *MCDP 1-0 Marine Corps Operations* defines stability operations as "...various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States. In

coordination with other instruments of national power, stability operations seek to maintain or re-establish a safe and secure environment and provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief."⁵ This definition is nested with the definition found in current joint doctrine.

One could assume that the Marine Corps places a strong emphasis toward stability operations in doctrine and training, due to the frequency with which they perform such missions. However, in his book *New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the US Military for Modern Wars* David Ucko states, "Although the U.S. military has spent more of its history fighting 'small wars' than conventional ones, it has generally opted not to institutionalize the lessons it has paid for with blood and treasure... commonly seen as a distraction from the more important business of preparing for major combat operations against comparable enemy forces... [it] is something of an affront to the organizational culture of America's military..."⁶ As the strategic context and emerging concepts of stability operations have evolved, so too must Marine Corps doctrine and training. To succeed in future conflicts and meet strategic intent, the Marine Corps must place a greater emphasis on stability operations through greater inclusion in its doctrinal publications and refinement of its Training and Readiness (T&R) standards.

This paper will examine the importance of stability operations and the strategic context of such in order to demonstrate the significance such operations have in the realm of national security. It will also examine the concept of the *Three Block War*, introduced by former Marine Corps Commandant General Krulak, to demonstrate the relevance that stability operations have in the future operating environment. Finally, this paper will explore current Marine Corps doctrine and concepts, as well as current Marine Corps training, in order to identify gaps that

currently exist as they pertain to stability operations, and propose refinements that can be made to close those gaps.

Why Stability Operations Matter

Throughout history the military and the government have failed to accept such tasks as a legitimate military function.

-Earl F. Ziemke in "The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946"

Historically, participation in war was for the most part limited to uniformed personnel acting on behalf of a sovereign nation. In the 21st century the United States has faced a new type of security environment different from that which it had doctrinally prepared for and trained to.⁷ This security environment has been characterized by weak and failing states that are incapable or unwilling to address the grievances of those that they are bound to govern. This failure to adequately address such issues has created fertile ground for nefarious non-state actors to grow and prosper.

The United States has identified that weak and failing states are a significant threat to US national interests and security. To counter these threats the US must commit itself to assisting countries in preventing or emerging from conflict. In his 2016 State of the Union address, President Obama reinforced this point when he stated, "I know this is a dangerous time. But that's not primarily because of some looming superpower out there, and certainly not because of diminished American strength. In today's world, we're threatened less by evil empires and more by failing states."⁸ As a result of this emerging security environment, the United States and the Marine Corps are less likely to be frequently engaged in conventional warfare in the future, and more likely to be engaged in stability operations.

Conventional warfare is typically understood as two or more nation states attempting to impose their will upon each other through the use of military force. Under the context of conventional warfare and based upon 20th century global security threats, the United States has

made vast investments in order to ensure that its military forces are capable of technically overmatching any potential adversary. This posture has left the US virtually without any military peer competitor. To counter this overwhelming military strength, the US witnessed adversaries in Iraq and Afghanistan utilize strategies and tactics that we now term irregular warfare (IW). Tactics commonly associated with IW include terrorism, insurgency, and organized criminal activity. IW is defined as "A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will."⁹ IW is not a new form of warfare; however, the emerging security environment lends itself to experience a proliferation of its use.

Non-state actors especially are likely to conduct IW, as they typically do not have the means to face an opponent with strong conventional weaponry and assets. IW allows them to "level the playing field" by employing tactics that negate the advantage of technologically advanced military hardware and mass. Actors that adopt IW garner their strength by properly influencing the population, through appeal or coercion. The ability to influence the population is more feasible in weak or failing states where the government has failed or is incapable to adequately address the needs of their populations.

The most effective way to gain victory in IW is to prevent the enemy from finding the "fertile ground" he seeks, in the form of a weak state. The United States cares about ruthless dictators and failing states because they threaten the interests of the Nation. By stabilizing these nations the United States not only prevents conflict by eliminating safe havens from which potential adversaries can operate; it also furthers the very ideals upon which the Nation is

founded.¹⁰ The importance of stability operations is magnified with an emerging security environment characterized by failing states, instability, and non-state actors. The notion of swift, decisive results attained through conventional means must strike a balance with the patience and resolve required of stability operations.

Three Block War

... our enemies will not allow us to fight the Son of Desert Storm, but will draw us into the step-child of Chechnya.

-General Charles C. Krulak, 31st Commandant of the United States Marine Corps

Prior to the end of the Cold War, little consideration was given to IW. The military saw the world through a bi-polar lens and prepared a conventional force for unlimited war against a state actor.¹¹ In the late 1990's the Marine Corps recognized the changing characteristics of warfare and described its vision for what it thought future warfare would entail. This was expressed in a concept called the *Three Block War*. This concept acknowledged that tasks related to stability operations, such as humanitarian assistance and providing civic security, would be occurring simultaneously during intense combat operations. The *Three Block War* was built on a premise that future conflict would most likely occur in urban terrain and that the nation's future adversaries may not always be state actors. Initially, there were some who believed that the central themes of the concept urged the military to prepare for protracted urban fighting and to further empower small unit leaders for the rigors of such conflict. Even though the *Three Block War* was describing a future consisting of increased urban warfare and the necessity to better prepare small unit leadership, it should be understood to represent something deeper. Instead of providing a narrative of where the Marine Corps had been and where the leadership believed it was going, the concept "... represent[ed] both a broad operational concept and a new strategic imperative."¹² The *Three Block War* was announcing to civilian and military

leadership that the military must be prepared to conduct stability operations across the entire range of military operations.

The 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Charles C. Krulak, first introduced the concept of the *Three Block War* during a speech he presented to the National Press Club.¹³ In his speech he described what the future operating environment would entail and how it would affect the way in which the military would perform their assigned missions. He detailed how Marines would be operating across the entire range of military operations in urbanized terrain. “In one moment in time, our service members will be feeding and clothing displaced refugees, providing humanitarian assistance. In the next moment, they will be holding two warring tribes apart – conducting peacekeeping operations – and, finally, they will be fighting a highly lethal mid-intensity battle – all on the same day... all within three city blocks.”¹⁴ The environment that General Krulak described was not only intended to serve as a warning for future warfighters, it was grounded in previous events that began to shape military thinking.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Marine Corps found itself engaged in limited contingencies, typically of short duration. These operations included interventions in Somalia and Haiti, as well as peacekeeping operations in Bosnia.¹⁵ It was during the conduct of these operations that the Marine Corps recognized that it would need to redefine its primary mission.¹⁶ No longer would a sole focus toward a conventional style war leave the Marine Corps prepared to face the threats and challenges they were sure to face in the future. The concepts presented in the *Three Block War* served as a forecast to the force, encouraging an examination of the way it organized, trained, and fought, to ensure that it would be prepared for the conflicts it would face in the future.

The Marine Corps began to incorporate some of the principles and ideas contained in the *Three Block War* concept into its training and publications shortly after it was introduced. An emphasis was placed on better preparing Marines for the rigors of urban fighting through improved training and equipment. However, with operations in Afghanistan commencing in 2001 followed by operations in Iraq in 2003, Marine Corps leaders were initially discouraged from drastically altering the way Marine units trained and prepared.¹⁷ The swift and decisive actions that the Marine Corps took against enemy forces in Afghanistan and Iraq solidified the current doctrine of maneuver warfare and "... bore the hallmarks of a large-scale conventional military operation against an organized national army."¹⁸ In short time though, the Marine Corps and the nation would realize "... that operations in Iraq would require a range of skills and tactics more in line with those entailed within military operations other-than-war."¹⁹ This realization led to an emphasis being placed on the conduct of stability operations, beginning with strategic level guidance and instruction.

Strategic Context

The US military culture has failed to look beyond war fighting in defining the role and responsibility of the US military.
-Anthony Cordesman "The Iraq War; Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons"

As events unfolded in Iraq and the US military found itself embroiled in an insurgent conflict, strategic decision makers were beginning to re-learn and emphasize the relevance of stability operations. As such, several documents were published to stress the importance of stability operations related to overall national security. These higher level documents would provide the foundation on which the US Government and the military would approach stability operations moving forward.

In 2005, President Bush signed *National Security Presidential Directive 44*. This directive was a formal acknowledgement that US national interests were directly affected by the

instability of foreign nations stating, “The United States has a significant stake in enhancing the capacity to assist in stabilizing and reconstructing countries or regions...”²⁰ As such, the directive called for government agencies, to include the military, to strengthen their capabilities in order to perform stability operations.

In concert with this Presidential Directive, the Secretary of Defense signed *Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 3000.05, Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*. *DoDD 3000.05* provided the military with the specific guidance to conduct stability operations and to consider such operations with equal importance as combat operations. Unambiguously, *DoDD 3000.05* stated, “Stability operations are a core US military mission that the DoD shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations.”²¹ Stability operations were no longer a conceptual function or secondary task that the military may possibly have to perform. *DoDD 3000.05* elevated the status of stability operations, necessitating a change in the manner the military would think of and prepare for such operations.

In 2009 *Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 3000.05, Stability Operations*, was signed and reemphasized the importance of stability operations, reaffirming that such operations were to be a core capability of the military. *DoDI 3000.05* charged the military with being capable of 1) conducting stability operations “throughout all phases of a conflict and across the range of military operations”; 2) supporting stability operations efforts conducted by other US Government agencies; 3) leading stability operations activities until able to transition responsibility to other agencies.²² Additionally, *DoDI 3000.05* listed four specific lines of effort the military must pursue in order to accomplish the conduct of stability operations; 1) establish civil security; 2) restore or provide essential services; 3) repair critical infrastructure; 4) provide

humanitarian assistance.²³ The instruction concluded with the statement, "The DoD Components shall explicitly address and integrate stability operations-related concepts and capabilities across doctrine, organization, raining, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and applicable exercises, strategies, and plans."²⁴ The issuance of *DoDI 3000.05* was a mandate to the military services that stability operations must be further engrained into the culture of the military in all that it does, to include doctrine and training.

The military published *Joint Publication (JP) 3-07 Stability Operations* in 2011, in response to the strategic direction provided, grounded in lessons learned and experience gained from the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. *JP 3-07* is the joint doctrinal publication that serves as the highest doctrinal authority on stability operations for the military. As such, the publication defines stability operations as, "...encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief."²⁵ *JP 3-07* continues by stating the five activities of stability operations are: (1) establish a secure environment, (2) provide humanitarian relief, (3) provide emergency infrastructure, (4) promote rule of law, and (5) assist governance.²⁶ The definition and activities provided by *JP 3-07* give each of the military services adequate guidance in order to publish their service specific doctrine and develop their service's training.

As an expeditionary force that is forward deployed and postured to respond to global crises, the Marine Corps must be prepared to carry out these activities as an initial response force. The Marine Corps may not possess overly robust systems and organizations that can conduct stability operations for long duration. However, the Marine Corps cannot afford to

ignore the importance of these activities. A perception of inactivity by the United States, vis a vis a first to respond Marine Corps unit, could create a larger discontent amongst the populace of a deteriorating state and could strengthen the narrative of opposing forces. Sound concepts and doctrine, coupled with adequate training, will posture the Marine Corps for the successful conduct of stability operations.

Concepts and Doctrine

If we cease to refine, expand, and improve our profession, we risk becoming outdated, stagnant, and defeated.
-General Alfred M. Gray, Jr., 29th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps

The military introduced concepts and doctrines structured toward fighting a large conventional war in the years following Vietnam, in an effort to avoid a future conflict similar to the one fought in Vietnam.²⁷ Even though the military had gained considerable experience fighting in an IW environment during the Vietnam conflict, military leadership was reluctant to adapt the forces and preferred to remain postured for conventional warfare. Instead of codifying lessons learned in what is now considered stability operations, the military focused its doctrine and training on defeating a military peer-like competitor. The military found itself conducting stability operations in several small scale contingencies with a force built on the premise of conventional warfare over the next thirty years since Vietnam. The Marine Corps must ensure that the importance and difficulty in conducting stability operations is adequately reflected in its concepts and doctrine as it looks to develop the future force.

The Marine Corps started to reorient the force toward an increased amphibious posture as operations in Afghanistan and Iraq concluded. In March 2014, the Marine Corps published its capstone concept entitled *Expeditionary Force 21 (EF 21)*. *EF 21* articulated how the Marine Corps envisioned the force would be employed over the course of the next ten years, and “...does not change what Marines do, but how they will do it.”²⁸ It was introduced in an effort to

provide clarity and adequate guidance in the pursuit of capability and capacity development. However, much of the development recommended is related to highly technological pieces of equipment geared toward conventional warfare, such as the Joint Strike Fighter, Amphibious Combat Vehicle, and future afloat platforms.²⁹ Similar to the *Three Block War*, *EF 21* describes the future operating environment characterized by weak and failing states and the rise of non-state actors.³⁰ Though *EF 21* describes an environment envisioned in higher-level strategic documents, its emphasis remains geared toward a conventional style conflict.

EF 21 is reminiscent of how Gordon Rudd describes *Joint Vision (JV) 2010* in his book *Reconstructing Iraq*. *JV 2010* was a concept developed by the DoD and published in 1996. It detailed how the future operating environment would be characterized and emphasized various concepts such as precision strike and dominant maneuver as the means by which the military would succeed on the future battlefield. Rudd stated, “Such notions had the greatest utility in conventional operations oriented against an adversary with inferior ships, planes, and tanks... The pamphlet had no pictures or reference to US operations in Somalia, Haiti, or Bosnia, where American forces had more recently been deployed.”³¹ Four years later DoD published a revision to *JV 2010*, entitled *JV 2020*. *JV 2020* made reference to stability operations and interagency coordination over the course of two pages; however, its focus remained on building a technologically superior military in order to counter the threats of the future.³² *JV 2020* signaled that “...the Pentagon remained focused on conventional opponents, despite recent experiences in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans.”³³ As the military would soon discover in Afghanistan and Iraq, the concepts contained in *JV 2020* did not provide a complete vision of the operations that the military would be called upon to perform.

Just as *JV 2010* and *JV 2020* “... remained devoted to the themes of technology for enhanced weapons systems aligned against a platform-centric adversary”, so too does *EF 21*.³⁴ The Marine Corps needs to make a more concerted effort to describe and confront the challenges its forces are sure to face in the future, by providing a more balanced approach toward combat and stability operations. The Marine Corps will be provided with an opportunity to be more inclusive of stability operations as *EF 21* goes through subsequent revisions. This could better inform the force and those responsible for capability and capacity development.

Besides conceptual publications, doctrine is another area in which the Marine Corps could emphasize the importance of stability operations. One particular area would be in the joint phasing model. The joint phase model divides military operations into six phases within a sequential framework.³⁵ The six phases are as follows; Phase 0 – Shape; Phase 1 – Deter; Phase 2 – Seize the Initiative; Phase 3 – Dominate; Phase 4 – Stabilize; Phase 5- Enable Civil Authority. Within this framework stabilize follows domination, or defeat, of the enemy. This model provides planners with a conceptual framework to utilize for planning purposes. However, often there is confusion distinguishing the difference between stability operations and Phase 4 – Stabilize.

Many view stability operations as a function conducted during post-conflict, that is, after hostilities have ceased and there is a permissive environment. The joint phasing model reinforces this notion due to its linear framework. As observed, Stabilize follows Dominate. What is not well understood is that there is a difference between the concept of Stabilize in the joint phase model, and the actual conduct of stability operations. Often, the terms stability operations and Phase IV are interchanged. This leads to the perception that stability operations are something to be conducted after the fighting has ceased. Based upon the joint phasing model

it is not clear that the conduct of stability operations “... across the full spectrum of conflict is necessary because the transitions between pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict are not always apparent or linear.”³⁶ As it is the role of doctrine to provide “...the basis for harmonious actions and mutual understanding”, a distinction must be articulated between stability operations and the Stabilize phase as envisioned in the joint phase model.³⁷

The Marine Corps could aid in bringing about the clarity needed during an upcoming Joint Doctrine Working Party (JWDP). The JWDP consists of representatives from each of the services that meet on a semi-annual basis. Their task is to discuss, draft, and update joint doctrine.³⁸ An initiative that could be discussed is to change the language of the joint phasing model, specifically re-termining Phase IV – Stabilize. One suggestion would be to re-term Phase IV as Post-Conflict Actions. This would still allow the joint phasing model to maintain a linear conceptual framework for planners to utilize, better capture what the force is conducting along the linear framework, and remove the notion that stability operations is something conducted only after the defeat of the enemy.

The Marine Corps should also address its own doctrine, in addition to joint doctrine. As stated above, in 2009 *DoDI 3000.05* charged the military services to integrate stability operations into their doctrine. Prior to this instruction, the Army had most recently published current stability operations doctrine in 2008 entitled *Field Manual (FM) 3-07 Stability Operations*; however, the Marine Corps did not contribute nor sign this doctrinal publication. In 2011 the joint force published *JP 3-07* which introduced the first joint publication concerning stability operations. The Army published a new version of *FM 3-07 Stability Operations* in 2014 as a result of *JP 3-07*, lessons learned from Afghanistan and Iraq, and an internal reorganization of doctrinal publications.³⁹ Again, the Marine Corps did not sign this doctrinal publication.

This is not to suggest that the Marine Corps has ignored its responsibilities to incorporate stability operations into its doctrine as mandated by *DoDI 3000.05*. In 2012 the Marine Corps, in partnership with the US Navy and US Coast Guard, published *Marine Corps Interim Publication (MCIP) 3-33.02 Maritime Stability Operations*. *MCIP 3-33.02* was published to expand upon the doctrinal basis contained in *FM 3-07*, directly address the unique challenges associated with stability operations within the maritime domain, and to satisfy the DoD requirement of incorporating stability operations into service doctrine.⁴⁰ Considering the maritime domain within the context of stability operations is an important and necessary measure. However, *MCIP 3-33.02* is written as a conceptual tool to “... inform military and civilian planners concerning the unique aspects of the maritime stability operations...”⁴¹ instead of “... providing tactical guidance on the conduct of operations focused on stability”⁴² in the manner that *FM 3-07* does. The Marine Corps should provide its forces the necessary tactical guidance for stability operations via doctrine, by adopting the current Army doctrine as a Marine Corp Warfighting Publication (MCWP), and contributing to and signing future Army versions of *FM 3-07*.

Though the Marine Corps maintains the ability and knowledge to operate from the sea, stability operations conducted by the Marine Corps will most likely be conducted on land. Current Army doctrine adequately addresses the challenges and complexities associated with such operations. However, Marine Corps leaders at the tactical level are not the audience of this doctrine and *FM 3-07* does not apply to them.⁴³ *FM 3-07* can be used as a useful resource by Marine Corps leadership; however, the Marine Corps should reinforce and emphasize the guidance within by signing *FM 3-07*. There are several doctrinal publications published as a combined Army/Marine Corps venture due to the similarities of the domain in which the two

services operate, and the manner in which they operate. A recent example is *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* which was published by the Army and Marine Corps in 2014. *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5* provides the doctrinal foundation to Army and Marine Corps tactical leadership in countering an insurgency.⁴⁴ As the domain and principles in which countering insurgencies are conducted are nearly identical, the two services are able to formulate and disseminate the doctrinal publication through a joint venture. Stability operations are no different. The Marine Corps would be able to provide adequate guidance on the conduct of stability operations to its tactical leaders by adopting *FM 3-07* as a MCWP.

Training

While a visceral appreciation for our core values is essential, it alone will not ensure an individual's success in battle or in the myriad potential contingencies short of combat. Much, much more is required to fully prepare a Marine for the rigor of tomorrow's battlefield.
-General Charles C. Krulak, 31st Commandant of the United States Marine Corps

The Marine Corps has and will continue to perform stability operations in dangerous and challenging environments. In these environments they will face a variety of tasks to include maintaining or restoring peace and order, providing humanitarian assistance to affected local populations, and assisting local governments with providing essential services such as water and electricity to the population. Proper doctrinal guidance is one step in preparing the force to conduct such tasks. Just as important as doctrine is proper training grounded in these doctrinal principles. During peacetime, training is the primary mission of the Marine Corps in order to ensure forces are prepared to succeed in combat.⁴⁵ In concert with this, the first Marine Corps Training Principle is to train as you fight.⁴⁶ Not only is it important for Marines to train and prepare for offensive and defensive tasks related to combat, they too must concurrently train to conduct stability related tasks within a combat environment. In an effort to ensure Marines are prepared for the challenges of stability operations in the future, the Marine Corps must review

and refine its Training and Readiness manuals to ensure that sufficient emphasis is placed on stability related tasks.

The Marine Corps utilizes Unit Readiness Planning (URP) as the system to codify and implement the training programs of Marine Corps units. This system establishes the link between the proficiency of such tasks to the operational mission requirements that these units are anticipated to encounter. The overall intent of the URP is to provide commanders with a system that "ensure[s] all Marines and Marine units attain and sustain combat readiness."⁴⁷ A main component of the URP is Training and Readiness (T&R) programs. T&R programs are what identify the specific training requirements, which if satisfied, will prepare units to successfully support MAGTF and combatant commanders in the execution of their operations.⁴⁸

The T&R program establishes T&R manuals for each specific type unit that the Marine Corps has. For example, there is an infantry T&R, an engineer T&R, an artillery T&R, and so on. These T&R manuals are managed by subject matter experts within that field and periodically reviewed and updated as needed, to ensure that pertinent and relevant training tasks associated to that unit's overall mission are included. As the foundation, T&R manuals provide individual level and collective level events that units must utilize to prepare for combat related missions and to be considered combat effective.⁴⁹ As the name implies, individual level events are skills trained at the individual level, based upon the Marine's military occupational specialty and grade. The training of these skills begins at a Marine's entry level schools and the training continues throughout the service of that Marine. These individual skills are important as they function as building blocks which allow units to operate cohesively. Collective level events are unit focused vice individual focused. Collective level events are those events that are deemed necessary for a specified type and sized unit be able to perform in order to be effective. These specific sized

units range from the smallest unit, a fire team, up to the regimental size unit. Each smaller sized unit's collective events serve as building blocks for larger sized units events. Collective level events are performed through drills and exercises and measure the proficiency of the unit as a whole, rather than as individuals.⁵⁰

As a sum total, collective level events identify all capabilities a specified unit may have to perform. Understanding that not all capabilities will be required, and taking into account that some capabilities are of a higher priority, select collective level events are given a higher classification. These events are termed Evaluation Coded, or E-coded events. E-coded events are the events "that the Marine Corps has determined that that a unit MUST be able to perform, if that unit is to be considered fully ready for operations. These E-coded events represent the irreducible minimum or the floor of readiness for a unit."⁵¹ This is not to suggest that those collective events not E-coded are not important tasks to train to, rather E-coded events give commanders and evaluators a benchmark to determine readiness.

Another means in which commanders and evaluators establish a benchmark is through the use of sustainment intervals. Each individual level and collective level event has an associated sustainment interval, understanding that many skills are perishable, units experience personnel changeover, and that certain skills are more important than others. A sustainment interval is period of time, expressed in months, in which each training event must be retrained and/or evaluated.⁵² Typical intervals assigned are three, six, twelve, eighteen, or twenty four months in length. Sustainment intervals apply to E-coded and non E-coded events alike. Accurately determining the length of time for each sustainment interval, and strictly adhering to these intervals, is vital in order to ensure that individual Marines and units maintain the level of proficiency necessary to be successful.

Developers of T&R manuals have a direct influence on the type and frequency of training conducted by units based upon the importance they “assign” an individual level or collective level event through E-coding and sustainment intervals. Training planners will always be constrained by resource availability such as time, training budgets, personnel, and range scheduling. As such, these resources are first allotted toward those events that are deemed operationally critical and the events that need to be refreshed due to training intervals. Sustainment intervals and E-coded events assist those tasked with establishing training plans by demonstrating each event’s priority and relevancy.

The importance of stability operations training can be determined by closely examining current T&R manuals with a basic understanding of the Marine Corps’ Unit Readiness Programs, the function of T&R manuals, and some of the important components within the manuals. For the purpose of this paper the Marine Corps *Infantry Training and Readiness Manual*, which was approved in 2013, will be used for several reasons. First, the Marine Corps is an infantry centric organization that establishes its doctrine and tactics focused on light infantry units.⁵³ Second, there are more Marines in the infantry military occupational specialty than any other specialty, and accounts for approximately 17 percent of the entire Marine Corps force.⁵⁴ Third, ground combat elements of Marine Air Ground Task Forces are typically comprised of infantry units. Therefore, future stability and combat operations conducted by Marines will most likely have a majority infantry density. More specifically, this paper will examine the collective level events assigned to an infantry company for two reasons. First, experience in Iraq and Afghanistan showed that infantry companies were the units engaged in stability operations on a continual basis throughout their battle spaces. Second, *Expeditionary Force 21*, the Marine Corps’ new

concept of how future operations will be conducted, has identified the infantry company as being more responsible for engagements in the future.⁵⁵

There are a total of sixty-one infantry company collective events distributed across seven basic categories: (1) Command and Control, (2) Combat Service Support, (3) Force Protection, (4) Fire Support, (5) Intelligence, (6) Maneuver, and (7) Training. From the sixty-one total events listed, seven are directly related to stability operations. These seven events are: (1) conduct Civil Military Operations, (2) support the establishment of civil control, (3) support the restoration of essential services, (4) support local governance, (5) support economic development, (6) restore civil security, and (7) train and mentor foreign personnel.⁵⁶ As previously discussed, joint doctrine states that the five activities of stability operations are (1) establish a secure environment, (2) provide humanitarian relief, (3) provide emergency infrastructure, (4) promote rule of law, and (5) assist governance.⁵⁷ It can be justly argued that the seven infantry company collective level events directly associated with stability operations, in combination with many of the other collective events that have a more conventional focus, satisfy the operational requirements necessary for stability operations.

However, when assessing the priority and importance placed on these seven events, through the lens of being evaluation coded and their sustainment interval, it appears that not enough emphasis is placed on stability operations training. Of the sixty-one infantry company collective level events, eighteen are E-coded; events that have been determined that an infantry company must be able to perform to be considered prepared for operations. Of these eighteen events only one of the previously mentioned seven events related directly to the conduct of stability operations, Conduct Civil Military Operations, is E-coded.⁵⁸ The lack of E-coded stability operations events sends a signal to those responsible for the planning of training that

these events are not as important as the other, more conventionally based events. Additionally, it signals that the skills required of stability operations events are not as important to attain in order to be considered operationally capable.

In addition to the consideration of evaluation coding, the sustainment intervals assigned for each event can also be used as a measurement to determine the overall importance of an event. As previously mentioned, sustainment intervals determine the frequency of training events by establishing how often they must be performed and/or evaluated. There are three different intervals mandated for infantry company collective level tasks; six, twelve, and twenty-four months. Of the sixty-one events only one has a six month sustainment interval; process casualties.⁵⁹ Of the remaining sixty events, seven of them are given twenty-four month sustainment intervals. The importance of this is that six of the seven company collective events with a two year sustainment interval are the stability operation related tasks. Considering this, the signal is that sustainment operations related tasks are not as important to train to as the conventionally focused events.

The sustainment interval is another important factor due to the lack of stability and cohesiveness found in infantry companies. Ideally a unit would be formed and remain together for training and deployments for several years. If this were the case, a two year sustainment interval for any event would not seem impractical. However, infantry companies, especially the officers and staff non-commissioned officers (SNCO) responsible for planning training, do not spend several years in one unit or billet. The typical length for a deployment is six to seven months and units are required to have all of their personnel a minimum of six months prior to a deployment. The result of this is that a training cycle for a company sized unit is parallel to that of the deployment cycle and that some company commanders may only spend one year with a

company before being rotated to another billet.⁶⁰ One effect of these personnel shifts is that many team skills require re-training upon forming the unit.⁶¹ Compounding this issue is that those responsible for planning the training for a unit, the officers and SNCOs, are often rotated before a unit's two year cycle is complete. This often results in a unit "starting over" in the training cycle. As unit training planners review the T&R manual to determine the training and evaluations they must conduct, events with a two year sustainment interval are going to be considered less of a priority. Additionally, if a unit's training cycle "restarts" every twelve to eighteen months depending on deployments, those events requiring training every two years may seldom occur.

One step the Marine Corps can take to ensure that stability operations are properly trained to, and at least trained to at the same level of conventional combat operations, is to review and refine the T&R manuals. By designating more stability operations related tasks as E-coded and by reducing the sustainment interval of these tasks, the signal would be sent to the training planners of the importance of such tasks, and stability operations training could then receive a higher priority. Lessons from the past and predictions for the future indicate the need for a stronger stability operations capability within the force. An important way to improve upon this capability is through the training Marines receive.

Conclusion

To offer a general recipe for victory, applicable to all nations, would be downright presumption on my part. My intention is simply to point out the best and most efficient way for our country to prepare for a probable future war.

- General Giulio Douhet

Throughout its history a majority of missions that the Marine Corps has conducted can be categorized under the current definition of stability operations. Additionally, the future security environment indicates that US national security will be at greater risk from enemies originating

in failing states, employing irregular warfare tactics, than the risk posed by conventional forces. Logically, the Marine Corps will find it conducting stability operations in the future. To that end, it is imperative that the Marine Corps prepares its force for the conduct of stability operations in the future through greater inclusion of stability operations in its doctrine and training.

To do so the Marine Corps could place more emphasis on stability operations capabilities, and less of an emphasis on finding ways to technologically overmatch future conventional threats in its concepts such as *EF 21*. It could also lead efforts to refine joint doctrine to allow for a better understanding of the difference between Phase IV operational planning and stability operations. Finally, from a doctrinal perspective, the Marine Corps could sign the Army's *FM 3-07* in order to provide its forces with a doctrinal foundation for the conduct of stability operations.

The Marine Corps must also emphasize the importance of stability operations through its training. An effective way to do so would be to refine Training and Readiness manuals and to incorporate appropriate stability operation related tasks. Further, these tasks should be given greater priority and importance by designating more of these tasks as E-coded and by reducing the sustainment interval of these tasks. This would demonstrate to the force the importance of preparing for such operations. Stability operations have been, and will be, a vital way in which the Marine Corps contributes to the security of the Nation. The lessons from such experiences cannot be forgotten, and must be incorporated in order to prepare for the future.

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