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The development and implementation of Expeditionary Advance Base Operations (EABO) concepts in support of Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE) within existing doctrine and strategy are crucial in establishing maritime superiority and defending the United States' interest in the Pacific Theater. The United States must be able to innovate and evolve its naval, air, and amphibious capabilities and adapt to the challenges presented in the space and cyber space domains by China. The innovation and evolution of naval, air, and amphibious warfare in the United States during the interwar years were critical in defeating the Japanese Combined Fleet during the Pacific War. Advance naval bases greatly extended the operational reach of the United States Pacific Fleet, Army, and Army Air Forces. EABOs will be critical in countering Chinese military strategy in the current operating environment. More attention must be paid to the logistics involved in support of EABO as it requires it to evolve into a more resilient, agile, and flexible force.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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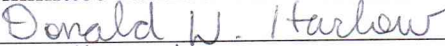
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## Executive Summary

**Title:** Expeditionary Advance Base Operations in the Pacific: Enabling the Establishment of Maritime Superiority through Sea Control and Area Denial in Preparation for Sustained Operations along the Littorals and Ashore in a Contested Environment.

**Author:** Major Gabriel D. Sanchez

**Thesis:** The development and implementation of Expeditionary Advance Base Operations (EABO) concepts in support of Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE) within existing doctrine and strategy are crucial in establishing maritime superiority and defending the United States' interests in the Pacific Theater.

**Discussion:** The rise and expansion of Imperial Japan through military force in the early 1900s became a major national security threat to the United States and its regional allies, which ultimately led to the expansion of the Second World War into the Pacific Theater. Decades of strategic planning and the development and evolution of naval, air, and amphibious warfare enabled the United States to execute a maritime campaign across the Pacific, where it defeated Japanese forces, and forced the unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire. Once again, the United States faces great power competition in the Pacific Theater. The unprecedented economic growth of the Chinese economy over the past 20 years has boosted its political, diplomatic, and military influence abroad. China is a challenge to the current balance of power in the Pacific Theater as it has created serious global security concerns for the United States and its regional allies. Through predatory lending practices across South and Southeast Asia and illegitimate territorial claims of disputed islands in the South and East China Seas to the buildup of anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities on artificial islands, China's revisionist and aggressive behavior has the potential to disrupt freedom of navigation along critical sea lanes of communications, international commerce, the peaceful development of democracies in Asia, and undermine the United States' role in the Pacific as the partner of choice. The proliferation of A2/AD capabilities along its littorals and the increased range of land based ballistic missiles require the United States to develop sound doctrine that is built around the concept of maritime superiority. As illustrated in figure 1, all major United States military installations in the Pacific, with the exception of Hawaii, are located within the Chinese' weapons engagement zone along the first and second island chains. This proximity is a critical vulnerability that requires a major shift in naval doctrine and strategy in order to create dilemmas for the enemy by building a more flexible, resilient, and capable naval force. The United States must develop existing doctrine, force structure, training, equipment, and systems in order to successfully counter Chinese threats.

**Conclusion:** Maritime superiority is critical in ensuring freedom of navigation, protecting international commerce, and promoting the development of democratic nations in the Pacific. The successful implementation of EABO concepts into existing doctrine and strategy will play a crucial role in extending the operational reach of United States' naval forces by providing responsive, agile, and resilient logistics capabilities to the Joint Force. The concepts under EABO are a step in the right direction as they will enable the Joint Force to project power from the sea and operate in multiple domains simultaneously with a minimal logistics footprint.

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## *List of Acronyms*

A2/AD – Anti Access/Area Denial

AAV – Amphibious Assault Vehicle

ARG – Amphibious Ready Group

CSG – Carrier Strike Group

DMO – Distributed Maritime Operations

EABO – Expeditionary Advance Base Operations

FARP – Forward Arming and Refueling Point

GERS – Ground Expedient Refueling System

HERS – Helicopter Expedient Refueling System

ITV – Internally Transport Vehicle

JFEO – Joint Forcible Entry Operations

JPADS – Joint Precision Air Delivery System

LCU – Landing Craft Unit

LHA/LHD – Amphibious Assault Ship

LMSR large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ships (),

LOCE – Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment

LPD – Landing Platform Dock

LSD – Landing Ship Dock

LST – Landing Ship Tank

LWPS – Light Water Purification System

MAWTS-1 – Marine Air Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1

MGB – Medium Girder Bridge

MPF – Maritime Prepositioning Force

STOM – Ship to Objective Maneuver

T-AKE – Dry Cargo/Munition Ship

T-AK – Break-Bulk Ships

T-AVB – Aviation Logistics Support Ship

T-EPF – Expeditionary Fast Transport

T-ESD – Expeditionary transfer dock

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## **1. Introduction**

The establishment of expeditionary advance bases in support of United States-led Coalition Joint Forces in the Pacific Theater will be one of the most critical tasks facing logisticians in the years ahead due to the rise of great power competition with China and its development of military capabilities.<sup>1</sup> As stated in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, the global security environment is increasingly complex, unstable, and competitive.<sup>2</sup> The United States faces great power competition in the Pacific Theater, which is an area of great interest to the United States due to the abundance of natural resources, growing economies, international commerce, and regional partners and allies. China is a threat to the stability and prosperity of friendly democracies across Asia as demonstrated by their illegal territorial claims in the South China Sea, predatory lending practices with governments of less developed nations worldwide, and the ongoing expansion of A2/AD capabilities across the South China Sea.<sup>3</sup> In order to curtail China's aggressive behavior, it is imperative that the United States continues, in coordination with regional partners, to enforce freedom of navigation of the commons, protect international trade, and foster the development of democracies in the Pacific.

The continued development of EABO capabilities will enable the United States' diplomatic, economic, and information efforts to promote security, cooperation, free trade, and peace in the Pacific. The concepts under EABO generate the virtues of mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration. They also create a more dispersed, resilient, and hard to target forward-basing infrastructure. Lastly, EABO creates more resilient continental United States / sea base-to-shore sustainment infrastructure capable of supporting distributed forces and operations and win the hider/finder competition. These concepts will be critical to the successful execution of sea control and area denial in within the enemy's weapons engagement zone.

Logistics operations will play a critical role in the successful execution of EABO in the Pacific as it did during the Pacific War. The establishment of advance naval bases during the Pacific Campaign in Second World War enabled the United States to deliver the full effects of its military against the Imperial Japanese forces. In addition, the prepositioning of critical supplies enabled the use of maneuver warfare through combined arms, which proved to be extremely lethal and effective against the formidable Japanese Combined Fleet. Creating a more lethal force relies greatly on forward force maneuver and posture resilience but these two concepts are highly dependent upon an affective concept of logistics that is resilient and agile. Sea control and area denial are integral to the establishment of naval superiority in a multi-domain contested environment. The concept of logistics in support of EABO operations must be resilient, low signature, and agile in order to survive in a contested environment.

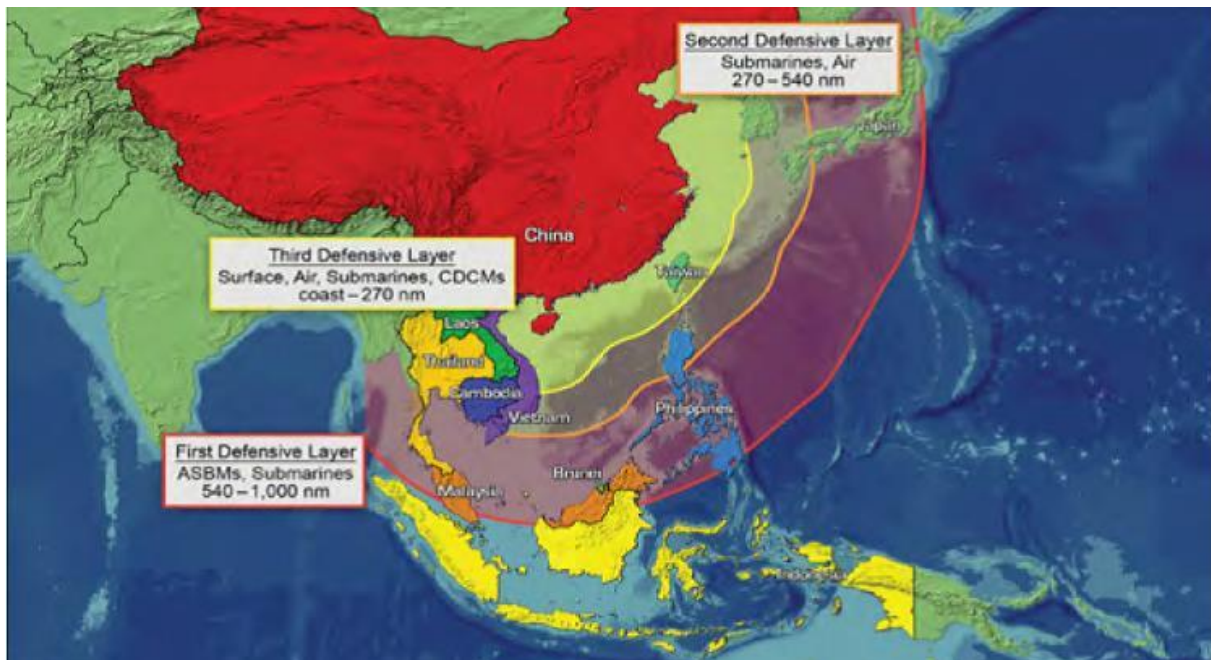


Figure 2. Chinese Active Defense Layers.

Source: Office of Naval Intelligence.



*The People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force has developed the capabilities to launch a preemptive strike as a defensive “counter-attack” to major U.S. military installation located within the first and second island chain depicted in figure 1. A ballistic missile attack on any of these locations could strike MPSRON 3 in Guam, III MEF and the 18th Wing in Okinawa, or the 7th Fleet at Yokosuka, Japan.*

Figure 1. Major U.S. Military Installations within the First and Second Island Chains.

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

## **2. The Innovation and Evolution of Naval, Air, and Amphibious Warfare in the United States prior to the Second World War in the Pacific Theater**

The combined employment of United States Navy and Marine Corps’ capabilities across multiple domains formed a naval expeditionary force in readiness which demonstrated to be capable of projecting power from the sea by the late 1930s.<sup>4</sup> During the interwar period, the United States Marine Corps’ role became distinct from the United States Army by focusing on advanced base force operations and littoral operations in a contested environment. The visionary leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Earl H. “Pete” Ellis revolutionized the Marine Corps by introducing the concept of amphibious warfare and forecasting future conflict in the Pacific Theater between the United States and Japan. Sea control and power projection played a crucial

role in enabling the strategic bombing campaign in the Pacific during the Second World War. The United States Navy continued to push the envelope with the modernization of aircraft carriers and the embracement of the air-sea battle concept. The United States Army Air Force further developed its strategic bombing capabilities and successfully incorporated close air support into the combined arms concept. Recognizing the need for a larger landing force, the United States Army trained alongside Fleet Marine Forces and adopted their amphibious doctrine. Despite constant service rivalry and budgetary constraints, the United States developed a military force with global reach capabilities and power projection before it entered the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> The development of doctrine involving maneuver warfare and combined arms across all domains, air, land, and sea, prepared the United States for future war against Germany and Japan. The interwar period proved that air and sea control as two separate lanes of effort are not sufficient to defeat a near-peer adversary. It also proved the relevancy and effectiveness of amphibious warfare in combined arms and maneuver warfare as well as sea control, area denial, and littoral operations in a contested environment, a focus that remains relevant today.

After the First World War, the mission to develop amphibious doctrine for the United States fell on the Marine Corps, which cemented its role as an amphibious expeditionary force and finally made it a clearly distinct service from the United States Army.<sup>6</sup> In 1920, Major General John A. Lejeune ordered then-Major Earl H. Ellis to conduct an analysis of amphibious operations requirements in support of War Plan ORANGE. Major Ellis' work produced Operations Plan 712, "Advanced Base Force Operations in Micronesia," which Major General Lejeune endorsed and became the foundation for Marine Corps' doctrine and training during the interwar years.<sup>7</sup> The complex nature of amphibious operations required the United States Navy and Marine Corps to be given clear roles and responsibilities, which Congress did. The United

States Marine Corps made significant investments in its officer education system and fleet landing exercises while experimenting with various ship-to-shore connectors and ship platforms. Famously, Pete Ellis advanced these ideas in detail, command relationships, naval gunfire support, air support, ship-to-shore movement, combat unit loading, and the shore<sup>8</sup> Ellis' thinking remained too Marine Corps specific, and it fell to other thinkers to disseminate this emerging doctrine. In 1934 the Marine Corps Schools published the *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*. Here, the need to utilize the ocean as maneuver space to conduct forcible entry operations utilizing naval gunfire and close air support to secure the lodgment and conduct offensive operations ashore, all underscored the focus on combined arms. The new pressing question was to ensure that operational imperatives, not simply tactical ones, were served by the new doctrine. Nonetheless, the United States' amphibious capabilities became well developed by 1937 when Japan began its military campaign in China.<sup>9</sup> The ability to secure advance naval bases would play a critical role in extending the operational range of strategic bombing capabilities and enabled the United States to conduct direct air strikes against the Japanese homeland.

Strategic bombing became more effective due to improvements in equipment, doctrine, training, integration, and leadership. The development of strategic bombing was affected by political, technological, geostrategic, and cultural factors.<sup>10</sup> The carnage experienced by soldiers in the trenches during the First World War drove politicians to the idea that strategic bombing could accomplish the same political objectives without causing unnecessary death and destruction on civilian populations. On the other hand, strategic bombing also enabled nations to attack centers of gravity of economic, political, and cultural importance. It also presented a geostrategic advantage over ground combat units due to its ability to reach military targets much

faster and precisely. The concept of strategic bombing opened the possibility to strike targets beyond the operational reach of navies. Despite the many advantages of strategic bombing, the United States did not feel that it was necessary to invest in a robust strategic bombing capability. Being surrounded by two oceans gave the United States a false sense of security. Fortunately, the civil air industry made up for shortcomings on the military side. The improvements in civil aviation, such as airframes and navigations systems, translated to the development of military aircraft in the late 1930s. The United States' strategic bombing capabilities greatly complemented sea and land operations as it shaped enemy actions well in advance of surface ships and ground troops. Strategic bombing and close air support had devastating effects on enemy coastal defenses or A2/AD capabilities. The introduction of strategic bombing changed future war because of its devastating effects and potential to unleash total war.

The United States Navy's transition from the battleship to the aircraft carrier as its primary air/surface warfare platform took place during the interwar years. The lack of operational experience caused the United States Navy to develop its doctrine at the Naval War College mostly through war-gaming and exercises. Unlike its European allies, the United States did not face an immediate naval threat from its neighbors. Japan was viewed as its most credible threat and it influenced United States' naval doctrine. The development and implementation of the aircraft carrier enhanced the lethality of the concept of employment of combined arms by supplementing amphibious warfare with naval air capabilities. Its aircraft extended the reconnaissance capabilities of the fleet out to about 200 nautical miles rather than the horizon and provided a more robust close air support capability to the landing force during amphibious operations. In addition, as described by Pete Ellis, the use of naval gunfire in coordination with aerial bombing provided covering fire for the landing force while softening enemy A2/AD

capabilities along enemy coastal defenses. The only capability Ellis lacked was a suitable landing craft to conduct ship-to-shore movements, and this came only on the eve of war once a tractor was modified for war purposes.<sup>11</sup> The lack of a separate air force branch in the United States made it easier for the Navy to operationalize its plan. The creation of naval air institutions such as the Bureau of Aeronautics, under the leadership of Admiral William A. Moffett, solidified the importance of having a separate air capability from the Army. Representative Carl Vinson also played a critical role in building up momentum within the United States Congress to support the development of naval aviation as separate from army aviation.<sup>12</sup>

The potential for another major armed conflict in Europe and Asia was inevitable due to the lack of interdependency and cooperation amongst the remaining great powers. The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 cemented this idea in President Woodrow Wilson. The great loss of American lives during the First World War and the Great Depression pushed the United States towards isolationism. In addition, Japan's foreign policy drastically changed and promoted radical ideas such as "Asia for the Asians" and the expulsion of all foreign powers and their influence from Asia. Despite budgetary constraints and the unpopularity of developing the post-war American military capabilities, the United States military branches continued to innovate, experiment, develop, and implement new warfighting concepts and capabilities. The United States Navy and Marine Corps formed the foundations of the Fleet Marine Force, a true expeditionary force in readiness.

Advances in strategic bombing and its success during the Second World War led to the creation of the Air Force as a separate branch. By the end of the inter-war years, the United States was prepared to fight Japanese aggression in the Pacific Theater and provided much needed support to its Allies in Europe. The interwar years proved that future wars will be fought

across all domains simultaneously. The United States must continue to innovate and to develop its military capabilities in space and cyberspace domains. Great fleets, land armies, or air forces will not be able to win wars alone. Interoperability, adaptability, maneuverability, and innovation will be critical to the success of military operations as an instrument of United States national power in the future. This timeless lesson will ensure that the United States' military capabilities remain relevant today and into the future

### **3. Case Study: The Strategic Role of Advance Naval Bases during the Second World War in the Pacific Theater**

The establishment of advance naval bases in the Mariana Islands proved to be crucial in the successful execution of follow-on missions in support of the United States' campaign plan in the Pacific Theater, which is most commonly known as the War Plan Orange.<sup>13</sup> The Battle of the Philippine Sea and the amphibious landings on the Mariana Islands in 1944 set the stage for the military defeat of the Japanese Combined Fleet in the Pacific Theater during the Second World War as predicted decades earlier during the development of War Plan Orange.<sup>14</sup> The United States Navy's Fifth Fleet, under the leadership of Admiral Raymond Spruance, successfully destroyed over 200 Japanese planes and sunk two enemy carriers during the first day of the battle. After securing the island of Saipan, elements of the Amphibious V Corps, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, continued to execute amphibious landings against heavily fortified Japanese outposts in Tinian and Guam through July 1944. By seizing the initiative and repelling the enemy from this key terrain, the United States was able to establish advance naval bases in the Mariana Islands capable of providing combat service support to United States Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Army Air Forces throughout the

Pacific Theater.<sup>15</sup> This logistics capability effectively extended the operational reach of surface, submarine, and strategic air assets against enemy targets in the Solomon, Caroline, Philippine, Ryukyu, and main Japanese islands. The United States' ability to execute maneuver warfare through combined arms placed the enemy in a dilemma by systematically destroying their critical combat capabilities, denying its ability to mass combat power, and ultimately disrupting Japan's sphere of influence in the Pacific. The plan to execute an invasion through the Central Pacific and into the Mariana Islands turned out to be the most effective approach.<sup>16</sup> The Central Pacific drive successfully disrupted Japanese lines of communications, thus forcing the Japanese Combined Fleet to engage in decisive naval battles against a superior opponent. Furthermore, the establishment of advance naval bases in the Mariana Islands provided the United States with strategically located airfields from which it could launch strategic air raids against the Japanese main islands, extend the operational reach of submarines to protect the U.S. Fleet, and support land operations in the Southwest Pacific area of operations.<sup>17</sup>

The air-naval battles in the Philippine Sea between the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet and the Japanese Combined Fleet and the United States Marine Corps-led amphibious assaults on the Japanese-held Mariana Islands reflected pre-war planning efforts conducted by the United States Army and Navy planners at the Joint Board since 1929.<sup>18</sup> As the War Plan Orange series continued to be refined, there were key components that remained fairly consistent throughout its various iterations and became key tasks of the final plan that received the approval of the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the Casablanca Conference in 1943. The plan to defeat Japan relied on the United States' ability to isolate the main Japanese Islands from the rest of their outposts throughout the Pacific. The plan assumed that the Japanese would invade the first and second island chains to include the Philippine and Mariana Islands. Therefore, United States Navy

planners insisted in focusing the main effort in driving through the Central Pacific and into the Philippines, destroying the Japanese Navy, isolating mainland Japan, and establishing advance naval bases in the Mariana, Philippine, and Ryukyu Islands in order to extend the operational reach of strategic bombing capabilities and stage amphibious forces in preparations for a possible land campaign in the Japanese main islands. This plan was more offensive in nature than Prime Minister Churchill originally envisioned. Especially considering that War Plan Rainbow 5, the overarching campaign plan to defeat the Axis Powers, placed a greater emphasis in defeating Germany in Europe and Africa first, then Imperial Japan in the Far East.<sup>19</sup> The great success of naval, land, and air operations against the Japanese Combined Fleet and its supporting advance naval bases and airfields proved to the Allies that the United States could win the war in the Pacific front without diverting resources from the European Theater. Just as American planners had predicted decades earlier, the systematic destruction of the Japanese Navy, through the execution of combined arms and maneuver warfare tactics, contributed to the demise of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the reestablishment of American dominance in its place.

A major turning point during the war in the Pacific took place after the Japanese Combined Fleet suffered a crippling naval-air battle defeat in the Philippine Sea.<sup>20</sup> The more experienced and better trained American pilots proved to be a much superior fighting force than the Japanese pilots. In addition, the introduction of the F4U Corsair fighter posed a much more difficult challenge for the Japanese Zero fighter. The F4U Corsair fighter was able to provide close air support to the ground troops, escort strategic bombers, and conduct air-to-air interdiction missions. Its increased payload, range, speed, and durability enhanced the combat effectiveness of the carrier.<sup>21</sup> After losing the vast majority of experienced pilots at the naval-air

battles at Midway and Coral Sea and the prolonged fighting in the Solomon Islands, the Japanese decided to deploy newly trained pilots in an effort to contain the American advance towards the Philippines Islands. The tactical decision to launch a desperate attack against Admiral Spruance's Fleet proved to be a devastating strategic mistake. The devastating and unexpected loss of this critical combat capability forced the remainder of the Japanese Combined Fleet to break contact on the second day of the battle and set sail west towards Ryukyu Islands, thus leaving behind critical Japanese outposts in the Mariana Islands without reinforcements, combined fires, and logistics support.<sup>22</sup> The Japanese Combined Fleet naval superiority in the Pacific was never re-established and the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet successfully secured the sea lanes of communications between Hawaii and the Philippine Islands, thus denying the Japanese freedom of navigation and isolating mainland Japan from the rest of its territories.

It is important to acknowledge that amphibious operations throughout the Pacific were extremely costly. Japan was fully committed in halting the American advance at all costs. The constant concern regarding kamikaze attacks against American aircraft carriers and the naval threat posed by the Japanese Combined Fleet often resulted in limited naval gunfire and close air support to the V Amphibious Corps during landing operations. The Fifth Fleet could not afford to engage in a decisive naval battle and support the V Amphibious Corps simultaneously. The United States suffered an estimated 6,700 killed and 22,400 wounded while securing the Mariana Islands.<sup>23</sup> The successful amphibious landings at Saipan, Guam, and Tinian enabled the United States to establish advance naval bases, airfields, and port facilities, which greatly increased the throughput of materiel and supplies to support the American advance through the Central and Southwest Pacific areas of responsibility. Once improvements and expansions were made by naval construction battalions to the existing infrastructure in the Mariana Islands, aircraft carriers

were able to expand their area of operations while land based aircraft patrolled the adjacent waters. Advance naval bases provided a place to receive, stage, and integrate combat replacements with their gaining units. These advance bases extended the operational reach of strategic bombers and increased the frequency of air raids against military targets in mainland Japan. Once rapid replenishment and arming points became operational, the extension of the operational range of submarines enabled the United States to secure commercial sea lanes and prevent Japanese supply ships from delivering war supplies to/from the mainland. Additionally, land based fighters were able to support carrier operations at sea, reconnoiter, conduct air-to-air interdiction, and support close air support missions. Securing Saipan forced the Combined Japanese Fleet to engage the Fifth Fleet in a decisive naval battle in the Philippine Sea, which as discussed earlier turned out to be a devastating tactical miscalculation that destroyed Japan's naval and air superiority.<sup>24</sup>

Securing the Mariana Islands was a critical requirement to the accomplishment of key tasks in order meet the strategic goals of the Pacific Campaign. The objectives of establishing advance naval bases, destroying the Japanese Navy, cutting of Japanese sea lanes of communications, and isolating the Japanese main islands were key components of War Plan Orange, which survived decades of study, refinement, and service parochialism.<sup>25</sup> The United States' military campaign in the Mariana Islands depended on the successful execution of combined arms through maneuver warfare. The deliberate amphibious landings against heavily fortified islands, while excessively costly, drew the Japanese Combined Fleet into a trap as they desperately attempted to provide reinforcements and delay the American advance. After the United States Navy destroyed all Japanese land based aircraft in the Mariana and adjacent island chains, the Japanese Combined Fleet was unable to mass sufficient combat power to match that

of the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet. Consequently, the United States established naval and air superiority, two critical components of an overarching strategy that systematically isolated Japanese forces across the Pacific and set conditions that led to the unconditional surrender of Japan and the rise of the United States as a global great power.

#### **4. The Current State in the Pacific Theater: Building Military Capabilities to Counter Chinese Military Strategy**

The 2018 National Defense Strategy highlights the importance of “building a more lethal force” by stating that the United States must be prepared to win in war in order to prevent one.<sup>26</sup> According to the EABO Handbook, “EABO is a future naval operational concept that meets the resiliency and forward presence requirements of the next paradigm of US Joint expeditionary operations.”<sup>27</sup> This new concept supports the strategic approach outlined in the 2018 National Defense Strategy. EABO is the solution to building a more lethal force capable of deterring foreign military aggression while simultaneously setting conditions to seize the initiative and dominate the enemy. The employment of EABO requires a significant departure from conventional tactics, operational, and strategy because it assumes that large bases, infrastructure, and platforms will be heavily targeted by near-peer competitors through the use of long-range precision fires.

As discussed earlier, the current operational environment in the Pacific Theater is highly contested due in part to the development, modernization, expansion, and implementation of the enemy's A2/AD capabilities. The construction of artificial islands and illegal seizure of existing islands in the South China Sea has further expanded China's A2/AD capabilities.<sup>28</sup> China has developed surface missile capabilities that can reach the second island chain in the Pacific

Ocean, which covers major United States military installations in the Republic of Korea, Japan, Okinawa, and Guam. EABO will be crucial in the successful execution of joint forcible entry operations (JFEO), a critical military capability that creates space and time for the other complementary instruments of United States' national power, diplomatic, information, and economic, to implement a whole of government solution to the conflict. The effective neutralization or destruction of enemy A2/AD capabilities through combined fires (anti-ship and surface and air delivered long range ballistic missiles from an expeditionary advance base) and ability to execute sea control and area denial as part of a maritime defense in depth strategy will serve as a deterrent to enemy aggression and as a sign of great power and global influence.

The combined use of EABO, JFEO, and LOCE concepts are integral in establishing a lodgment for follow on forces to execute phase three operations, then rapidly transition to security and stability operations, and set conditions to enable civil authorities to effectively take charge of the situation.<sup>29</sup> The establishment of advanced naval bases will be crucial in the successful execution of follow-on military operations, as well as the establishment of naval and air superiority, which are essential requirements for the introduction of the maritime prepositioning force (MPF) into the theater. Advanced naval bases will be crucial during regeneration efforts in order to maintain the operational tempo and the initiative. The joint task force (JTF) will need several advanced naval bases to conduct maintenance, replenish its supplies, exchange equipment, and reconfigure its load plan in order to support follow-on missions. Advanced naval bases, aside from being an unsinkable "ship", will bring essential supplies and combat service support much closer to the warfighter, support the momentum of combat operations, and contribute to the establishment of naval and air superiority.<sup>30</sup>

Reducing the proximity of logistics nodes from to the battle area and within the enemy long-range weapons engagement zone will be challenging but extremely necessary in order to establish a maritime defense-in-depth that is fully integrated and capable of inflicting greater damage to the enemy without depleting a significant portion of combat power or reaching a culminating point.<sup>31</sup> This endeavor will be logistically challenging due to time and distance but one that can be solved by establishing advanced naval bases. The combination of doctrinal concepts such as LOCE and EABO will play a significant role in increasing the survivability, resiliency, effectiveness, and agility of advanced naval bases.<sup>32</sup> As stated in the EABO Handbook 1.1, the following new operational imperatives will enable the future force to operate from within the A2/AD umbrella: 1) Generate the virtues of mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration, 2) Create a more dispersed, resilient, and hard to target forward-basing infrastructure, 3) Create more resilient continental United States / sea base-to-shore sustainment infrastructure capable of supporting distributed forces and operations, and 4) Win the hider/finder competition.<sup>33</sup> These imperatives demand a departure from existing doctrine.

A more agile and resilient logistics concept of support must divest itself from obsolete platforms as well as develop more relevant doctrine and establish new procedures. In order to support mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration, advanced naval bases must be established by utilizing a combination of existing islands and surface platforms such as the expeditionary transfer dock (T-ESD), dry cargo/munition ships (T-AKE), aviation logistics support ship (T-AVB), break-bulk ships (T-AK), large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ships (LMSR), amphibious assault ships (LHA/LHD), landing platform dock (LPD), landing ship dock (LSD), expeditionary fast transport (T-EPF), and associated ship-to-shore connectors. The experimentation with “lighting carriers”, an LHA/LHD platform augmented with F-35B aircraft,

and the further development of experimental seabasing capabilities, the naval capability to conduct select logistics functions at sea without infrastructure ashore, are significant steps towards a more agile and resilient force capable of enforcing sea denial/control, counter enemy A2/AD capabilities, and establishing naval and air superiority in a highly contested environment.<sup>34</sup>

The concept of advanced naval bases against a near-peer adversary in the Pacific Theater has critical challenges. The current inventory of amphibious, support, and prepositioning ships in the United States Navy is not sufficient to support enduring requirements in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East and emergent requirements such as countering Chinese military activities in the Pacific Theater.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the current amphibious readiness group (ARG) scheme of maneuver as part of JFEO missions assumed the establishment of a certain level of air and naval superiority, which is highly unlikely in a scenario against a near-peer competitor such as China.<sup>12</sup> The current fleet of ship-to-shore connectors are vulnerable due to their lack of speed and fire power. The Marine Corps' amphibious assault vehicles (AAV) also lack the speed and fire power necessary to quickly establish a lodgment for the assault follow-on echelons. The ever-increasing range of coastal defenses has pushed amphibious platforms further away from the littoral, thus increasing travel time of ship to objective movement (STOM). Significant capability augmentation will be required from carrier strike groups (CSG) in order to establish sea denial and control in preparation for initial JFEO missions and the subsequent establishment of advanced naval bases.<sup>36</sup> The development of smaller, faster, lighter, and more agile amphibious, support, and prepositioning ships, as well as ship-to-shore connectors will be necessary in future war as current large, slow, and vulnerable surface platform continued to be outpaced by enemy A2/AD capabilities. Perhaps, it will be necessary to look at the schematics

of previous amphibious ships such as the Landing Ship Tank (LST) in order to build a more responsive, agile, resilient, multi-role, and less expensive amphibious ship platform capable of delivering large amounts of troops, equipment, and materiel directly onto the beach. Drastic changes in amphibious, air, and surface warfare doctrine will be required as well. The future naval force must be integrated with strategic air assets capable of delivering munitions against enemy surface ships, air, and coastal defenses. Integrating naval surface based fires with strategic air power will enable naval forces to be less dependent on land based fires and expand the area of sea control and denial.<sup>37</sup>

The military strategy against disrupting China's military activities in the Pacific Theater will rely greatly on the United States' ability to effectively establish expeditionary advance bases capable of engaging in defensive and offensive operations within the enemy's weapons engagement zone.<sup>38</sup> Developing this capability will require the United States Navy and Marine Corps to change amphibious and surface warfare doctrines and make significant changes in the investment of future amphibious, support, and prepositioning ships as well as ship-to-shore connectors and AAVs. The survivability and resilience of advanced naval forces will rely on the Navy-Marine Corps Team's ability to establish sea denial and control while constantly adapting to the challenges across all domains. Strategic air power will play a significant role in extending the U.S. Navy's operational reach by being able to target enemy ships and coastal and air defenses. The use of existing ship platforms to conduct seabasing operations combined with the seizure of strategically located islands, and the forward prepositioning of critical supplies will enable the Joint Force to establish air and naval superiority, thus creating a dilemma for the enemy through the use of maneuver warfare and combined arms across the air, land, and sea domains.

## **5. Logistics Operations in Support of Expeditionary Advance Base Operations**

There is a current paradigm shift in the character of warfare.<sup>39</sup> The rise of revisionist powers such as China have rapidly eroded basic assumptions about the operating environment. The United States' ability to establish naval and air superiority as well as to maintain reliable communications across all echelons of command and control are rapidly eroding. A drastic change in current naval doctrine is necessary in order to maintain a competitive edge during the current era of great power competition.<sup>40</sup> In the near future, EABO will be interchangeable with the term amphibious operations within Marine Corps' lexicon. EABO has gained significant attention in the last couple of years because it focuses in defeating the enemy without having to destroy the entirety of its forces through the exploitation of critical vulnerabilities. The ability to capitalize on centers of gravity with a minimal expeditionary force and systematically render the enemy's capabilities less combat effective is a significant advantage to the Joint Force. This requires a resilient, agile, and flexible amphibious force capable of operating with a low signature and within the enemy's weapons engagement zone.

The United States Marine Corps must recapitalize its existing expeditionary logistics capabilities and divest itself from obsolete equipment, systems, and force structure.<sup>41</sup> A major emphasis must be placed in programs that are lighter, faster, resilient, multi-purpose, and durable. Furthermore, a drastic shift in the procurement of future systems and equipment is necessary to meet the future operational requirements of the strategic environment. Put in simply, the Marine Corps needs to be more expeditionary and be prepared to operate in austere environments that are within the enemy's weapons engagement zone.<sup>42</sup> The complexities of operating in this environment will require significant changes to the existing force design.

Minimum research has been conducted for how EABO will be supported by the logistics combat element. The establishment of large combat service support areas to conduct organic and intermediate levels of logistics support or naval bases to conduct pier-side or in-stream offload of materiel from MPF ships, while significantly critical to JFEO, will not be feasible until naval and air superiority are established.<sup>43</sup> The introduction of large logistics capabilities in a contested environment will create more risks to the Joint Force and will become highly lucrative targets that will be vulnerable to enemy long range precision fires. As stated in the 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps' Planning Guidance, "success will be defined in terms of finding the smallest, lowest signature options that yield the maximum operational utility."<sup>44</sup> Logistics capabilities must evolve to address the operational requirements of EABO by becoming a difficult target that is low signature, highly mobile, and reliable.

Logistics operations in support of EABO must be tailored to meet the mission requirements, which is not much different from current doctrinal logistics principles. In fact, there are low signature capabilities within the United States Marine Corps' inventory, such as the helicopter expedient refueling system (HERS), lightweight water purifications systems (LWPS), and the internally transportable vehicle (ITV). The anticipated logistics requirements to sustain a low signature expeditionary advance base will range from a forward arming and refueling point (FARP) to a highly mobile forward fire base capable of launching anti-ship surface missiles, surface to air missiles, and tactical ballistic missiles with a range of up to 300 kilometers.<sup>45</sup> The packaging of logistics capabilities to support EABO should be tailored to fit existing rotary and fixed wing assets as well sea-going connectors such as the landing craft utility (LCU) family of ship-to-shore connectors. The current air delivery capability within the Marine Corps' inventory has the potential to support EABO via the joint precision air delivery system (JPADS).<sup>46</sup> This

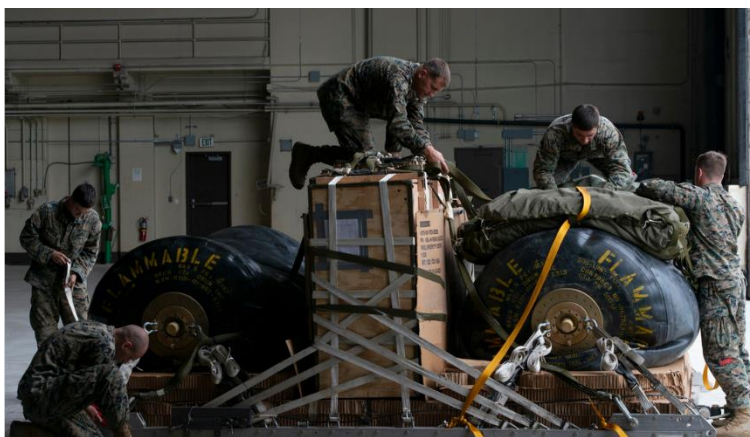
system is low cost and has been constantly tested by Marine Air Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 (MAWTS-1) at Yuma Proving Grounds and 3d Marine Logistics Group at Okinawa, Japan. The JPADS has proved to be highly reliable in delivering engineering assets such as the medium girder bridge (MGB), and ground expedient refueling system (GERS).



*The ITV can be internally transported using a CH-53 helicopter, MV-11 Osprey, and the AAV. The ITV can be outfitted with crew-served weapons and it can tow a trailer to carry additional supplies.*

Figure 3. Picture of ITV being offloaded from an AAV.

Source: United States Marines Corps.



*U.S. Marines with 3d Transportation Support Battalion, secure a HERS for air drop delivery using JPADS as part of training exercise Kodiak Mace at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, July 16, 2018.*

Figure 4. Picture of Joint Precision Air Delivery System Load.

Marines Source: United States Air Force.

Logistics planning in support of EABO requires logisticians to think well outside of the box. Given the highly contested environment where EABOs will operate, logistics delivery systems must be low signature and launch outside of the enemy's weapons engagement zone. A combination of precision air delivery, modified torpedoes, unmanned aerial vehicles, and unmanned surface vessels present a myriad of possibilities that may not require significant research and development funding if there is partnership with the United States' industrial base. The proliferation of unmanned systems in the civilian industrial sector is full of possibilities and will require logistics planners to deviate from existing doctrine in order to defeat the enemy's A2/AD.

## **6. Counter Argument**

There is much discussion about the survivability of forces in support of EABO in austere environments and operating within the enemy's weapons engagement zone.<sup>47</sup> Critics point to the defeat of the Japanese Combined Fleet at the hands of the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet and Japan's failure to defend its heavily fortified advance naval bases and airfield across the Gilbert, Marshall, Mariana, Solomon, Philippine, and Ryukyu island chains against the United States Marine Corps' V Amphibious Corps during the Pacific War.<sup>48</sup> The fact is that the Japanese committed a series of strategic miscalculations when they committed their carrier battle groups in the battles of Midway and Coral Sea. The Japanese never recovered from the significant loss of several carriers, battleships, destroyers, and the hundreds of airplanes. The significant gap in naval and air capabilities left the Japanese advance naval bases and airfields vulnerable to air raids, naval gunfire, and amphibious assaults.

EABO is not a repetition of the Pacific War strategy. EABO seeks to identify and exploit the enemy's critical vulnerabilities in a specific or across all domains simultaneously. The capabilities of the expeditionary advance base will depend on mission requirements. An advance base can be established for a specific role such as a temporary FARP or to disrupt the enemy's A2/AD by establishing a fire support/cyber operations detachment that can provide kinetic and non-kinetic fires. An example would be an advance base with anti-ship surface missiles, anti-air defense missiles, offensive cyberspace operations, and electromagnetic jamming capabilities.

## **7. Conclusions**

As stated in the *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*: "Naval forces operate forward to shape the security environment, signal U.S. resolve, protect U.S. interest, and promote global commons."<sup>49</sup> These timeless strategic principles will ensure that the United States continues to be the partner of choice and curtail China's aggressive behavior in the Pacific Theater. The central drive through the Pacific Theater that took place during the Second World War demonstrated the importance of seapower, advance naval bases, maneuver warfare, and combined arms in achieving naval and air superiority.<sup>50</sup> The use of the sea as maneuver space enabled the establishment of advance naval bases, which provided logistics support and extended the operational reach of naval and air combat capabilities. China's actions in the Pacific Theater today are a threat to the national security of the United States, its partnerships, global commerce, and the peaceful development of democratic Asian nations. It is imperative that the United States Navy-Marine Corps team is prepared to establish sea control and area denial in a distributed and highly contested environment across all domains. The establishment of expeditionary advance bases will be key in achieving a maritime defense in depth and extending

the operational reach of surface, air, and subsurface combat platforms in order to disrupt or destroy the enemy's A2/AD and coastal defenses.

The operational concepts under EABO will posture the United States to be able to build deterrence and shape the enemy's actions while maintaining the initiative until a whole of government approach is put into action to build a coalition, leverage alliances, and negotiate from a position of advantage. In other words, EABO provides the Commander in Chief with space and time to develop courses of action and make the right decisions while maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of the United States Navy and Marine Corps forces.

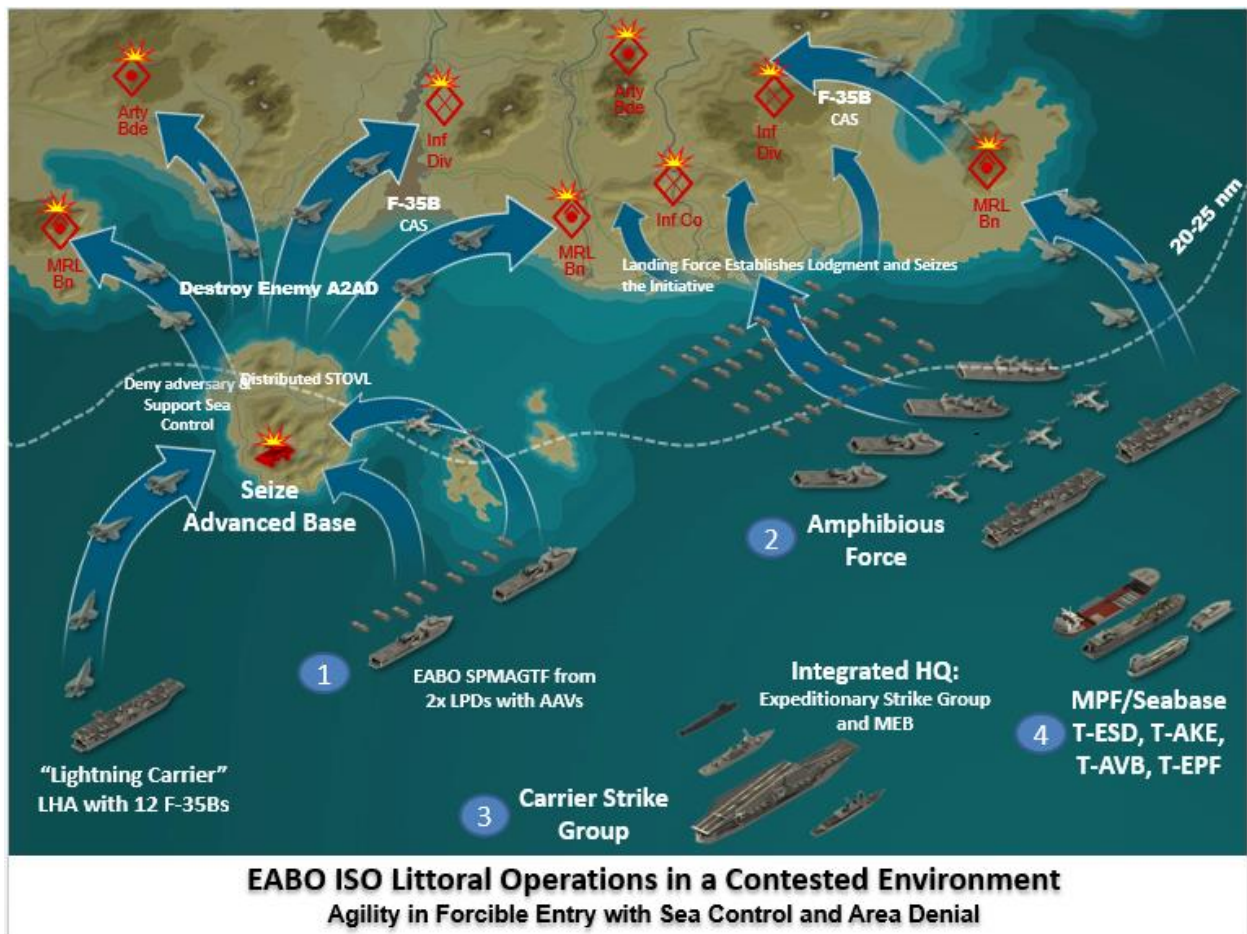


Figure 5. Notional EABO in support of LOCE.

Source: Author.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup>US Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2018), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Rand Corporation, *Developing a U.S. Strategy for Dealing with China-Now and into the Future* (Washington, DC: Rand Corporation, 2014) 1-5.

<sup>4</sup>W. Murray and A. R. Millett. *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>5</sup>Murray, 50.

<sup>6</sup>Murray, 71.

<sup>7</sup>Murray, 72-73.

<sup>8</sup>P. A. Crowl, and A. Isely, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 45-50.

<sup>9</sup>Murray, 96-100.

<sup>10</sup>M. Clodfelter. *Beneficial Bombing : The Progressive Foundations of American Air Power, 1917-1945* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2011) 35-40.

<sup>11</sup>Crowl, 46-47.

<sup>12</sup>Murray, 83.

<sup>13</sup>E. S. Miller. *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 312-315.

<sup>14</sup>P.A. Crowl. *Campaign in the Marianas* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1993), 1-4.

<sup>15</sup>Naval History and Heritage Command. *The Logistics of Advance Bases* (Washington, DC: Naval History and Heritage Command, 2017), 1-6.

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<sup>17</sup>P.A. Crowl. *Campaign in the Marianas* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1993), 44.

<sup>18</sup>P.A. Crowl. *Campaign in the Marianas* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1993), 32.

<sup>19</sup>P.A. Crowl. *Campaign in the Marianas*. (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1993), 3.

<sup>20</sup>US Marine Corps. *Central Pacific Drive: History of the United States Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: US Marine Corps, 1966), 355.

<sup>21</sup>US Marine Corps. *Isolation of Rabaul: History of the United States Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: HQMC Historical Branch, 1963), 462.

<sup>22</sup>P.A. Crowl. *Campaign in the Marianas* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1993), 119.

<sup>23</sup>C.A. Malkasian. *Charting the Pathway of OMFTS: A Historical Assessment of Amphibious Operations from 1941 to the Present* (Alexandria, VA: CAN Corporation, 2002), 12.

<sup>24</sup>US Marine Corps. *Central Pacific Drive: History of the United States Marine Corps Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: US Marine Corps, 1966), 232-233.

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<sup>26</sup>US Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2018), 4-6.

<sup>27</sup>A. Corbett, *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook: Considerations for Force Development and Employment* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, 2018), 5.

<sup>28</sup>Rand Corporation, *Developing a U.S. Strategy for Dealing with China-Now and into the Future* (Washington, DC: Rand Corporation, 2014) 1-5.

<sup>29</sup>US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-18, Joint Forcible Entry Operations* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2018), vii.

<sup>30</sup>Naval History and Heritage Command, *The Logistics of Advance Bases* (Washington, DC: Naval History and Heritage Command, 2017), 160-167, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room-title-list-alphabetically/1/the-logistics-of-advance-bases.html>.

<sup>31</sup>Corbett, 67.

<sup>32</sup>US Department of the Navy, *Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Navy, 2017), 9.

<sup>33</sup>Corbett, 24-25.

<sup>34</sup>Megan Eckstein. “Marines Test ‘Lightning Carrier’ Concept, Control 13 F35Bs from Multiple Amphibs.” US Naval Institute News, last modified October 23, 2019, <https://news.usni.org/2019/10/23/marines-test-lightning-carrier-concept-control-13-f-35bs-from-multiple-amphibs>

<sup>35</sup>Megan Eckstein and Sam LaGrone. “Failure of Two Ships to Participate in RIMPAC Highlight Amphibious Readiness Gap.” US Naval Institute News, last modified August 1, 2018, <https://news.usni.org/2018/08/01/failure-of-two-ships-to-participate-in-rimpac-highlight-amphibious-readiness-gap>.

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<sup>37</sup>US Department of the Navy, *Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Navy, 2017), 8.

<sup>38</sup>Corbett, 45-46.

<sup>39</sup>U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Renewed Great Power Competition: Implications for Defense-Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2020), 1.

<sup>40</sup>U.S. Department of the Navy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Navy, 2015), 27.

<sup>41</sup>D. H. Berger, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance* (Washington, DC: HQMC, 2019), 2.

<sup>42</sup>Corbett, 61.

<sup>43</sup>Corbett, 61-65.

<sup>45</sup>D. L. Wood, *Rebuilding America's Military: The United States Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, 2019), 27.

<sup>46</sup>P. Tucker, "Army Testing Robo-Parachutes That Don't Need GPS," *DefenseOne.com*, Feb 24, 2020. <https://www.defenseone.com/technology/2016/01/army-testing- robo-parachute-dont-need-gps/125151/>.

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<sup>48</sup>J. Lacey, "The Dumbest Concept Ever Just Might Win Wars," *Warontherocks.com*, 15 Jan, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/the-dumbest-concept-ever-might-win-wars/>.

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