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Great power competition has become the focus for the DoD, specifically China and Russia, and the Marine Corps is adapting to better support the Joint Force. The Marine Corps is shifting its focus to EABO, which will allow it to become more expeditionary. The Army already possesses this capability in its MDTFs. Redundant capabilities between the two services will cause an unneeded and wasteful battle for relevance, resources, and funding. The Army can scale this capability much faster and larger than the Marines, which eliminates the need for the Marine Corps. The Army has a long history of amphibious operations and is required by Joint doctrine to possess that capability. The Army has not trained amphibious operations in quite a while, but with a concentrated effort, the Army could train, equip, and organize itself to conduct amphibious operations within a short amount of time. The Joint Force cannot conduct large-scale amphibious operations against a peer-enemy with just the Marines. The Army will be needed because of its size to achieve mission success, which eliminates the need for the Marine Corps.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**TITLE:**

AN ANALYSIS OF WHY THE MARINE CORPS  
SHOULD BE ABSORBED INTO THE ARMY

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** An Analysis of Why the Marine Corps Should Be Absorbed into The Army

**Author:** Major Adrian R. Schaar, United States Army

**Thesis:** The Marine Corps should be absorbed into the Army because its major roles and capabilities of expeditionary and amphibious warfare are not unique to one service, allowing Congress to appropriate its funding to the other services.

**Discussion:** Great power competition has become the focus for the DoD, specifically China and Russia, and the Marine Corps is adapting to better support the Joint Force. The Marine Corps is shifting its focus to EABO, which will allow it to become more expeditionary. The Army already possesses this capability in its MDTFs. Redundant capabilities between the two services will cause an unneeded and wasteful battle for relevance, resources, and funding. The Army can scale this capability much faster and larger than the Marines, which eliminates the need for the Marine Corps. The Army has a long history of amphibious operations and is required by Joint doctrine to possess that capability. The Army has not trained amphibious operations in quite a while, but with a concentrated effort, the Army could train, equip, and organize itself to conduct amphibious operations within a short amount of time. The Joint Force cannot conduct large-scale amphibious operations against a peer-enemy with just the Marines. The Army will be needed because of its size to achieve mission success, which eliminates the need for the Marine Corps.

**Conclusion:** The Marine Corps' major roles and capabilities of expeditionary and amphibious operations do not belong solely to the Marine Corps. There have been previous attempts to end the Marine Corps, and those arguments have mostly been based on the redundant capabilities they possess when compared to the Army. The United States does not need a separate service that possesses redundant capabilities. The Army's MDTFs and the Marine Corps' EABO are similar capabilities that are aimed at defeating an enemy's A2AD capability. The Army also has a long history of amphibious operations. Specifically, in World War II, the Army conducted the two largest amphibious assaults of the war and had over three times the number of divisions in the Pacific theater when compared with the Marines. According to Joint doctrine, the Army is required to have an amphibious capability. With some concentrated effort, the Army could train, equip, and organize itself to conduct amphibious operations within a relatively short amount of time. Members of Congress are constantly looking for ways to better manage the defense budget. Eliminating a redundant service would free up almost \$50 billion a year. There would be an enormous amount of resistance to the idea of eliminating the Marine Corps, but it is an option to save money in the defense budget and not lose expeditionary and amphibious capabilities.

## DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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## *Preface*

I chose this topic after learning that the Marine Corps was divesting certain land-based capabilities and moving to a more expeditionary force. At the Marine Command and Staff College, I learned how the Marine Corps fights and what capabilities it provides. I realized the Marine Corps' capabilities were similar to the capabilities of the Army and wanted to research the need for a redundant force. I want the reader to know that this paper is not intended to degrade or diminish the history and accomplishments of the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps has a remarkable history and reputation that it should be truly proud of. The intent of this paper is to show the reader an objective look at the capabilities of the Marine Corps and the Army, and to show the advantage of folding one service into another.

I would like to thank Dr. Lynn Tesser and Lt. Col. Kenneth Jones for their guidance and insight on this topic. They were both instrumental in guiding the focus of this paper and helping me keep the writing objective. They encouraged me throughout the process that not only was I forming an argument for the Army, but I was also helping sharpen the Marine Corps' argument. I would also like to thank the Gray Research Center for its help with the initial research of this subject and the Leadership Communication Skills Center for its help with refining this paper.



## Introduction

Since the birth of the Marine Corps and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Marines' capabilities and existence have been scrutinized, suppressed, and attempted to be dissolved by the highest leaders and offices in the United States. These high-ranking military and government leaders saw the roles and capabilities of the Marine Corps as a redundancy that the other services already provided. This thesis is focused on answering the following research question: Can the major roles and capabilities of the U.S. Marine Corps be absorbed by the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force? I argue that the Marine Corps should be absorbed into the Army because its major roles and capabilities of expeditionary and amphibious warfare are not unique to one service, allowing Congress to appropriate its funding to the other services.

Regarding methodology, a qualitative secondary data analysis of the history of the U.S. Marine Corps' roles and capabilities was used to research this topic. A study of the previous attempts to dissolve the service was conducted. This thesis will provide a summary of past attempts to dissolve the Marine Corps. I will investigate the expeditionary and amphibious capabilities of the Marine Corps. Additionally, this thesis will investigate how these capabilities are what the Army currently provides or can provide again, and at a significantly larger scale. Finally, I will show that if Congress were to absorb the Marine Corps into the Army, it could appropriate that money as it saw fit.

In trying to determine what the future force design of the Marine Corps should look like and what its roles and capabilities are concerning future conflicts and war, two schools of thought lead the way. The first school of thought is that the Marine Corps must adapt to be a more expeditionary and naval-focused force that still conducts major operations and maintains its status as a separate service within the Department of Defense (DoD). This would include

divesting some of its capabilities, such as tank and cannon artillery battalions, that make it more of a land-based force and less expeditionary. According to the 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps' 2019 Planning Guidance, this also includes a bigger investment in unmanned systems that are "...suitable for reconnaissance, surveillance, and delivering lethal and non-lethal effects in the air, on land, and on and under the sea."<sup>1</sup> The second school of thought is to have the Marine Corps work more closely with the Special Operations Forces (SOF) mission of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, psychological operations, and foreign internal defense and be more of an intermediate force option for the U.S. Military, while still maintaining its status as a separate service within the DoD. This school would have SOF and Marines working together to conduct smaller, specialized missions to avoid larger and more expensive operations. The school also considers putting Marines on foreign territory to not be an act of war, as opposed to the Army, which would be considered an act of war.

The 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the United States Marine Corps (USMC), General David H. Berger, published his planning guidance on July 17, 2019. The Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) serves as the authoritative document and provides a common direction for the Marine Corps. General Berger concurs with the observation of the 37<sup>th</sup> Commandant, General Robert B. Neller. General Neller stated, "The Marine Corps is not organized, trained, equipped, or postured to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving future operating environment."<sup>2</sup> General Berger's intent for the Marine Corps is to "be trained and equipped as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness and prepared to operate inside actively contested maritime spaces in support of fleet operations."<sup>3</sup> In an effort to be prepared for the future conflicts of the next 5-15 years, General Berger does not want to retain outdated capabilities, organizations, doctrine, or force

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<sup>1</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 14.

<sup>2</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 1.

<sup>3</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 1.

development strategies. The Marine Corps has already divested some of its capabilities. It has divested all tank assets, which makes the Marine Corps more expeditionary. General Berger will continue to move the Marine Corps to an expeditionary force that works extremely close with the United States Navy (USN) as a Fleet Marine Force (FMF). This school of thought is echoed by Dakota Wood, a Senior Research Fellow for The Heritage Foundation. Wood writes that he supports the transition of the Marines from a second land army to an expeditionary and amphibious force. He supports General Berger's plan to focus the Corps on Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO). He also argues that Congress should fully fund the Marines' endeavor so that the U.S. Military has an option to operate inside of China's Anti-Access, Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities.<sup>4</sup>

As the Marine Corps evolves from conducting mainly land operations in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and moves its focus back to being an expeditionary and amphibious force, authors have written about this subject prior to the GWOT. Richard D. Hooker writes, "The United States has enjoyed the luxury of two overlapping land forces for years, the Army and the Marine Corps."<sup>5</sup> Hooker goes on to say that the Army is mandated by Congress to fight the nation's wars on land, and when combined with the cost of fielding a duplicate land force, "the time has come for the Marine Corps to return to its traditional mission of amphibious operations and forego major land operations."<sup>6</sup> Hooker writes that Marines need to be refocused on amphibious operations and non-combatant evacuations contiguous to littorals. He also states, "To preclude overt redundancies in land warfare, Congress, National Command Authorities, and Joint Staff should clearly demarcate roles and missions for the Army and Marine Corps based on

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<sup>4</sup> Dakota Wood, "The U.S. Marine Corps: A Service in Transition," The Heritage Foundation (2020), <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-us-marine-corps-service-transition>.

<sup>5</sup> Richard D. Hooker Jr., "America's Two Armies." *Joint Force Quarterly*, (Autumn/Winter, 1994-95), 38.

<sup>6</sup> Richard D. Hooker Jr., "America's Two Armies." *Joint Force Quarterly*, (Autumn/Winter, 1994-95), 38.

the principle of core business. For the Army, that means land warfare; for the Marines, that means amphibious warfare.”<sup>7</sup> General Berger solidifies this school of thought almost twenty-five years later by stating in his CPG, “We are not a second land army, nor do we aspire to be anything other than the world’s premier naval expeditionary force.”<sup>8</sup> General Berger realizes that if the USMC fails to adapt to what he sees as the future conflicts the U.S. Military will be involved in, then the USMC is simply duplicating the capabilities of the U.S. Army.

The second school of thought is to have the Marine Corps work more closely with the Special Operations Forces (SOF) missions of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, psychological operations, and foreign internal defense and be more of an intermediate force option for the U.S. Military, while still maintaining its status as a separate service within the DoD. This position is supported by Thomas C. Linn and C.P. Neimeyer<sup>9</sup>, and also by Brian J. Dunn<sup>10</sup>. Kevin D. Stringer and Katie M. Sizemore write, “the Marine Corps, considered a general purpose force in the DoD, operates on land, sea, and air, but is not optimized to dominate any of them.”<sup>11</sup> The USMC is not built to own the land, sea, or air domains; however, the USMC can operate with a smaller footprint in these domains and can keep the U.S. from costly, large formation deployments. SOF and USMC teams deploy to key regions in the world to train other nations’ militaries so that the host nation militaries can keep the peace and prevent larger conflicts. One example of the USMC being an intermediate force happened in Africa in 2011 with the 12<sup>th</sup> Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) 12. This unit sent “small training groups to partner with local militaries in an effort to indirectly blunt the spread of extremist

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<sup>7</sup> Richard D. Hooker Jr., “America’s Two Armies.” *Joint Force Quarterly*, (Autumn/Winter, 1994-95), 44.

<sup>8</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant’s Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas C. Linn and C.P. Neimeyer, “Once and Future Marines.” *Joint Force Quarterly*, (Autumn/Winter 1994-95).

<sup>10</sup> Brian J. Dunn, “Rethinking Army-Marine Corps Roles.” *Joint Force Quarterly*, (Autumn 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Kevin D. Stringer and Katie M. Sizemore, “The Future of U.S. Landpower: Special Operations Versatility, Marine Corps Utility.” *Joint Force Quarterly* 69, (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2013), 86.

groups.”<sup>12</sup> This example shows how the U.S. Military could creatively use its forces to achieve its goal, without being directly involved. Another example happened in Uganda when a team of Marines made up of force reconnaissance, infantry, and combat engineers taught Ugandan soldiers tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) on how to fight the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda and al-Shabaab in Somalia. Under Secretary of the Navy, Robert Work, called the team and its missions an example of the “low footprint, high payoff operations”<sup>13</sup> the Obama Administration was seeking. Stringer and Sizemore go on to say, “using a small group such as the one in Uganda could simplify the complex politics associated with deploying and hosting troops in a foreign nation.”<sup>14</sup> This shows that smaller teams can have significant impacts concerning military operations. This school of thought focuses on the U.S. Military using its land power in a way that is indirect and preventative. The school would have SOF and Marine Air-Ground Task Force[s] (MAGTF) prevent, deter, and contain threats to avoid large troop formation engagements. Should the SOF and MAGTF fail, then conventional land forces would be used.

Both schools of thought about the future force design of the Marine Corps have valid points and multiple examples of success. However, neither school of thought addresses the fact that the Marine Corps’ capabilities are a duplication in some form of what the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, and especially the U.S. Army already provide.

The Marine Corps does not provide a unique capability that the other services do not currently dominate or have not conducted in the past. SOF largely exists in the U.S. Army and

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<sup>12</sup> Kevin D. Stringer and Katie M. Sizemore, “The Future of U.S. Landpower: Special Operations Versatility, Marine Corps Utility.” *Joint Force Quarterly* 69, (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2013), 89.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin D. Stringer and Katie M. Sizemore, “The Future of U.S. Landpower: Special Operations Versatility, Marine Corps Utility.” *Joint Force Quarterly* 69, (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2013), 90.

<sup>14</sup> Kevin D. Stringer and Katie M. Sizemore, “The Future of U.S. Landpower: Special Operations Versatility, Marine Corps Utility.” *Joint Force Quarterly* 69, (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2013), 90.

has dominated that specific mission since its existence. Also, because of the size of the Army, the SOF community can maintain the mission tempo for the foreseeable future, without augmentation from the USMC.

In the current CPG, General Berger talks about the Marine Corps being more expeditionary. The USMC will accomplish this by being afloat in Marine Expeditionary Force[s] (MEF) around the world, with the intent of being geographically located close to the potential conflict. There is significant risk to Marine and Navy personnel if the MEF is in peer-enemy locations due to their A2AD capabilities, specifically China. General Berger says in the current CPG, "...our forces currently forward deployed lack the requisite capabilities to deter our adversaries and persist in a contested space to facilitate sea denial."<sup>15</sup> He does plan to remedy the current issues with possible forward deployed batteries of High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System[s] (HIMARS) armed with long-range anti-ship missiles. However, that means Marines are still well within the peer-enemy's A2AD capability and still at significant risk because HIMARS would be a high payoff target for the enemy. In this example, should China enable its A2AD weapon systems, the U.S. could lose thousands of personnel in one small conflict. With advances in aviation technology and the U.S. Air Force's ability to refuel in-flight, Army expeditionary units are postured in the continental U.S. for immediate deployment, anywhere in the world, in no more than eighteen hours from notification. This capability was recently used in January 2020, in response to Iran. From the security of U.S. land, a battalion of Army Soldiers was deployed to the Middle East within eighteen hours, followed by the rest of the brigade in the following days.

The Marine Corps takes extreme pride in being the nation's amphibious landing force. However, U.S. Army Soldiers were the vast majority of participants in the two largest and most

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<sup>15</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 3.

famous amphibious assaults in history during World War II (WWII). The Army also fought in the Pacific Theater during WWII. The Marine Corps, because it is built as a smaller sized unit, needed the Army to conduct amphibious operations alongside it to achieve mission success in the Pacific Theater. The Army had amphibious operation training facilities, doctrine, and three trained divisions during WWII. The Army eventually focused its resources on airborne and air mobile (assault) operations and conceded amphibious operations to the Marine Corps, although the Army is still mandated to be able to conduct Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO), which include amphibious operations. Going back to the Chinese A2AD example, U.S. forces would be extremely vulnerable to peer-enemy A2AD capabilities, as written by General Berger, “The ability to project and maneuver from strategic distances will likely be detected and contested from the point of embarkation during a major contingency.”<sup>16</sup> Should the U.S. Military decide that it will conduct an amphibious landing against a peer-enemy using only the Marines, the U.S. Military will suffer an enormous number of casualties and risk operational failure. The Marines simply cannot conduct large-scale amphibious operations against a peer-enemy without the Army and achieve mission success.

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<sup>16</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 4.

## History of Attempts to End the Marine Corps<sup>17</sup>

On November 10, 1775, the Continental Congress authorized two battalions of Marines, and the United States Marine Corps was born. The initial mission of the Marines was to provide security for the ships they were aboard. Providing security entailed helping the ships' officers enforce discipline and protecting them from mutiny. Sailors did not regard Marines as seamen or soldiers and looked upon them with distrust and hostility.

The Marines disappeared after the Treaty of Paris in 1783, were restored by the Frigate Act of 1794, and codified by law in 1798. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson proposed to Congress that the Marines should be merged with the Army. In 1833, the Board of Navy Commissions rewrote Navy Regulations, which laid out restrictions on Marine officers and made them subordinate to Navy officers. The Marine Corps Act of 1834 made the restrictions law. During the height of the Civil War, committees in the House of Representatives considered, but ultimately rejected the idea of transferring the Corps to the Army. Heavy debates occurred from 1866-1868 on proposals from the White House and the Army to transfer the Marines to the Army or to just abolish the Marines.

With the advancement of steel and steam in the Navy, Navy officers argued that properly trained sailors could execute the Marines' mission, and therefore, the Marines were not needed on Navy ships. In 1894 and again in 1896, William F. Fullam, a spokesman for the Navy, wrote an article in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* that suggested "the Marines would make more of a contribution if they were removed from the combat ships and organized in six ready expeditionary battalions to support the fleet or U.S. policy as needed." The Marines' role with the Navy was becoming harder to support, but with the 1898 war with Spain and the 1900 Boxer

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<sup>17</sup> The primary source for this section is Victor H. Krulak. *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984).

Uprising in China, the Marines were saved and given the chance to distinguish themselves in battle. The Marines also had success in the Philippine Insurrection and pacification of Cuba, which provided protection for the Corps for about fourteen years.

Led by now Commander Fullam, with support from the Secretary of the Navy Victor Metcalf and President Theodore Roosevelt, the Navy reiterated its argument from 1894-1896 that the Marines should be reorganized into an expeditionary force to support the fleet. Most Marine officers were not in favor of Fullam's idea; however, Marine officers Eli K. Cole, John A. Lejeune, and Dion Williams saw the opportunity for the Marine Corps to become the nation's premier expeditionary force. Although many Navy officers did not support Fullam's plan for the Marines, Navy leadership along with the Secretary convinced President Roosevelt to make the change via an executive order. To appease Marine Commandant George F. Elliot, the President allowed him to write a new charter for the Marine Corps. Lieutenant Colonel Eli K. Cole led a Marine staff group and wrote the new charter that detailed what the Marines did in defense of the United States. President Roosevelt accepted the charter and signed an executive order on November 12, 1908. Approximately sixteen days after the executive order was signed, Army Major General Leonard Wood, a favorite of President Roosevelt, supported the removal of Marines from Navy ships and wanted to take it a step further by absorbing the Marines into the Army. President Roosevelt agreed and said, "I do not hesitate to say that they should be absorbed into the Army and no vestige of their organization should be allowed to remain." In January 1909, a subcommittee of the House Naval Affairs Committee held hearings on the issue of shipboard Marines. Thomas E. Butler, father of Marine Captain Smedley D. Butler, presided over the committee. As expected, the committee greatly favored the Marines and ruled in their favor by exposing the Navy leadership's objection to losing the Corps to the Army. The

committee added a rider to the appropriation that withheld money until the Marines were back on Navy ships. Although Marines were back on ships, Fullam showed the Corps what its future would look like. The Marine leadership also realized the importance of its relationship with Congress. The Marines would have to call on that relationship in the near future.

In 1943, Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall presented a plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reorganize the services. General Marshall's plan called for a separate Air Force and a single chief of staff and a general staff to oversee the nation's military issues. The plan was brought to Congress, and in the name of efficiency and readiness, warfare was divided into land, sea, and air. The Army, Navy, and Air Force respectfully would be responsible for the elements. The Marshall Plan called for the creation of a Defense Department, which would be headed by a secretary, a single military chief, and each service would have its own chief of staff, along with a chief for Service of Supply. These military officers would be known as the United States General Staff. In Marshall's plan, there is no mention of the Marine Corps and when asked by Congress during testimony, Army witnesses dismissed the issue as not important. In 1944, Army Lieutenant General Joseph McNarney presented a plan similar to Marshall's to a House committee. McNarney's plan also did not include the Marine Corps, and when asked about this, McNarney chose not to comment. Both plans had support but were shelved until after the conclusion of the war.

In late October 1945, Marshall's idea of reorganizing the military reappeared in two bills in the Senate Military Affairs Committee. The Army spokesmen for the plan were General Marshal, now Secretary of War, and Lieutenant General J.L. Collins. Collins presented a more persuasive and articulate plan. The Collins plan showed the Marines not as a separate component of the Navy, but as a subordinate element. This plan would keep the Marines from having a

voice in matters that directly concerned them. Commandant Vandegrift and Lieutenant Roy S. Geiger delivered speeches to the Senate Military Affairs Committee that acknowledged that the Army was targeting the existence of the Marine Corps, that the Marines were prepared to fight, and that the committee needed to face a harsh reality that had been glossed over in the previous testimonies. In December 1945, President Truman sent a message to Congress supporting the War Department's reorganization plan and that the Marines should remain a part of the Navy. However, the President described the Marines as the Navy's "own little Army that talks Navy and is known as the Marine Corps." In late December 1945, the Joint Strategic Committee published a report on the subject of the *Missions of the Land, Sea, and Air Forces*. The report was part of a larger group of documents from the Joint Chiefs of Staff designated *JCS 1478 Series*. In these documents, two top Army leaders, Army Air Forces Commander General Carl Spaatz and Army Chief of Staff General Dwight D. Eisenhower described the Marines' accomplishments and capabilities from World War II as a duplication of what the Army does and recommended that the Marines not be larger than the size of a regiment. General Vandegrift sent a rebuttal memorandum that became an enclosure in the *JCS 1478* documents. On May 10, 1946, General Vandegrift delivered a speech and testimony concerning the reorganization of the War Department to the Senate Naval Affairs Committee. Nine days later, the leaders of the Senate and House Naval Affairs Committees jointly decided that the measure would never pass. In July 1946, the President acknowledged that the reorganization of the War Department was defeated. The Marines had survived another attempt at dissolving their existence.

On January 16, 1947, Secretary of the Army Patterson and Secretary of the Navy Forrestal sent a letter to the President that said they had reached an agreement for the way forward concerning the nation's national security organization. Their agreement was the basics

of the Collins Plan except for the single military commander. Specifically, it stayed with the idea of three military departments: the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The agreement also approved a Joint Chiefs of Staff with a supporting joint staff and a secretary of defense with authorities over the Joint Chiefs and military departments. The wording of the plan was left vague and said that the roles and missions of the military departments should be specified by Executive Order. The Army, Navy, and Air Force were covered by law, but Brigadier General M.A. Edson said, “a President, so disposed, could eliminate the effectiveness of the Marine Corps by the stroke of a pen.” The Marines realized that their roles, functions, and existence must be codified into law. They needed to educate members of Congress on why the Marines needed the protections of law. On February 26, 1947, a bill was sent to Congress that was essentially the agreement from Patterson and Forrestal and would give the Secretary of Defense a great deal of power. The Senate Armed Services Committee heard testimony from high-ranking leaders in the Army, Navy, and the Marines, but the committee ultimately favored the bill and it was passed in the Senate on July 9, 1947. The Marines then turned their focus on the House of Representatives and enlisted the help of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). The VFW, a two million-member organization, wrote a statement in the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Legislative Letter of May 1947 and took an official stance in support of the Marines. After days of testimony and weeks of committee business in the Senate and House, President Truman signed the bill into law on July 25, 1947. The National Security Act of 1947 described the roles and missions of all the armed forces and laid out the details of what the Marines would be responsible for.

The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the

fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.

In March of 1948, now Secretary of Defense Forrestal met with high-ranking defense officials. All services were represented except the Marines. The conference was held to determine what the services' roles and responsibilities would be. Regarding the Marines, the conference wrote what the Marines would not do; the Corps would not be permitted to expand beyond four divisions/wing strength in time of war, exercise command above the Corps level, or create a second land army.

Louis Johnson succeeded Forrestal as defense secretary and in his budget said that the Corps should be cut from 100,000 to 65,000, its infantry be cut from eleven to eight battalions, and its aviation from twenty-three to twelve squadrons. Congress had intended to avoid these "acts of exclusion and starvation" with the National Security Act of 1947. These events motivated members of Congress to support legislation that would make the Commandant of the Marine Corps a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Senator Paul H. Douglas and Congressman Mike Mansfield (former Marine) sponsored legislation that allowed the Fleet Marine Force to be made of four divisions and four air wings, and made the Commandant a member of the JCS. On June 20, 1952, President Truman signed Public Law 416, which complemented the National Security Act of 1947. The law gave the Marine Corps three combat divisions, three aircraft wings, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps membership at the JCS table. The National Security Act of 1947 safeguarded the existence of the Marine Corps and declared its functions, while Public Law 416 allowed the Marines to execute those functions. The

law also stated, “the U.S. Marine Corps was, and had been, a separate military service like all the others, serving within the Department of the Navy along with the U.S. Navy.”

In 1978, President Carter signed the Defense Authorization Bill, which, among other issues, gave full JCS membership to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This is where the Marine Corps stands today. The Marines have been involved in every major conflict or war in which the United States has been involved. Its roles and existence have been scrutinized and attacked since the birth of the Corps. Because of these attacks, the Marines have been able to adapt to changes in warfare and remain a relevant part of the nation’s military. The Corps continues to change to meet what it thinks the Nation will require in the next war. Authors, military experts, and former and current service members have written their opinions of what the roles and responsibilities of the Marine Corps should be.

#### Expeditionary Operations

This section will describe what capabilities the Marine Corps and Army are developing to combat an enemy’s A2AD capabilities. This section will then show that the Army already possesses these capabilities and continues to grow the number of units that execute these operations. Finally, this section will show the ineffectiveness of having redundant units between both services.

As noted earlier, the Marine Corps is shifting its focus to be “prepared to operate inside actively contested maritime spaces in support of fleet operations.”<sup>18</sup> Great power competition has become the focus for the DoD, specifically China and Russia, and General Berger is looking to adapt the Marine Corps to better support the Joint Force. One major way that General Berger is changing the Marine Corps is his focus on EABO, in which he is making significant changes to

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<sup>18</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant’s Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 1.

force design and future concepts. The Commandant of the Marine Corps Force Design 2030 states the following divestments and increases for the Corps:

**Total Fleet Marine Force (FMF) structure<sup>19</sup>**

- Reduction of approximately 12,000 Marines relative to the current Total Force by 2030

**Command Element**

- Divestment of 3 active component law enforcement battalions

**Ground Combat Element**

- 7 infantry regimental headquarters (divestment of 1 regimental headquarters)
- 21 active component infantry battalions (divestment of 3 battalions)
- 6 reserve component infantry battalions (divestment of 2 battalions)
- Redesign of remaining infantry battalions in the direction of greater lethality and flexibility, with reduced structure (a proposed reduction per infantry battalion of approximately 200 Marines)
- 5 cannon artillery batteries (divestment of 16 batteries)
- 21 rocket artillery batteries (increase of 14 batteries over current force)
- Zero tank companies (divestment of entire capacity of 7 companies and prepositioned capacity)
- 12 Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) companies (increase of 3 companies over current force)
- 4 Assault Amphibian (AA) companies (divestment of 2 companies)

**Air Combat Element**

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<sup>19</sup> The primary source for FMF is United States Marine Corps. *Force Design 2030*: United States Marine Corps, 2020.

- 18 active component fighter attack (VMFA) squadrons, with a reduction in the number of aircraft per squadron to 10
- 14 active component medium tiltrotor (VMM) squadrons (recommended divestment of 3 squadrons)
- 5 active component heavy lift helicopter (HMH) squadrons (recommended divestment of 3 squadrons)
- 5 active component light attack helicopter (HMLA) squadrons (divestment of 2 squadrons)
- 4 active component aerial refueler transport (VMGR) squadrons (increase of one squadron over current force)
- 6 active component unmanned aerial vehicle (VMU) squadrons (increase of three squadrons over current force)

The Marine Corps is transitioning to a more expeditionary force; however, the Corps is decreasing in overall size, and its focus is becoming more narrow. Concerning future concepts for the Marine Corps, the CPG states, “EABO enable naval forces to partner and persist forward to control and deny contested areas where legacy naval forces cannot be prudently employed without accepting disproportionate risk.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, EABO are a set of operations that employ specific capabilities to protect Joint Forces from and defeat an enemy’s A2AD capabilities and allow air and naval forces freedom of maneuver in the air and sea. General Berger goes on to say, “We will test various forms of EABO against specific threats and ask ourselves whether EABO contributions to the joint force are worth its logistics and security

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<sup>20</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant’s Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 11.

burden. This ratio should always be more favorable than other joint force options contributing a similar capability.”<sup>21</sup> That similar capability is what the Army already possesses.

The Army has been researching, developing, and testing expeditionary capabilities that it calls Multi-Domain Task Force[s] (MDTF). The pilot MDTF was assigned under U.S. Army Pacific Command in 2017 and has participated in several joint training exercises in the Pacific region that focused on penetrating an enemy environment. The Army gathered its lessons learned and began creating three MDTFs in 2019.<sup>22</sup> These MDTFs will also include Intelligence, Information operations, Cyber, Electronic warfare, and Space (I2CEWS) detachments that focus on defeating an enemy’s A2AD capabilities.<sup>23</sup> Colonel Joe Roller describes the capability as “...predominately network-focused targeting...it's not taking down the entire network, it's focusing on key nodes within that network to create targets of opportunity and basically punch a hole in the enemy's threat environment in order to deliver a joint force.”<sup>24</sup> Delivering a joint force refers to Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO) that will be discussed later in this paper. The MDTF can move small, highly survivable elements among the thousands of Pacific islands to conduct operations inside its capabilities. The MDTF, from land, can provide protection to the Navy and Air Force by intercepting missiles, shooting down enemy aircraft, and sinking enemy ships or forcing them into the open sea to fight a dominant U.S. Navy.<sup>25</sup> The Army is phasing the creation of these task forces with the pilot MDTF already established in September 2020 at

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<sup>21</sup> David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps*, July 17, 2019, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Sean Kimmons, “Army to Build Three Multi-Domain Task Forces Using Lessons from Pilot.” *Army News Service* (2019),

[https://www.army.mil/article/228393/army\\_to\\_build\\_three\\_multi\\_domain\\_task\\_forces\\_using\\_lessons\\_from\\_pilot](https://www.army.mil/article/228393/army_to_build_three_multi_domain_task_forces_using_lessons_from_pilot).

<sup>23</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., “Army’s Multi-Domain Unit ‘A Game-Changer’ In Future War,” *Breaking Defense* (2019), <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/04/armys-multi-domain-unit-a-game-changer-in-future-war/>.

<sup>24</sup> Sean Kimmons, “Army to Build Three Multi-Domain Task Forces Using Lessons from Pilot.” *Army News Service* (2019),

[https://www.army.mil/article/228393/army\\_to\\_build\\_three\\_multi\\_domain\\_task\\_forces\\_using\\_lessons\\_from\\_pilot](https://www.army.mil/article/228393/army_to_build_three_multi_domain_task_forces_using_lessons_from_pilot).

<sup>25</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., “Army’s Multi-Domain Unit ‘A Game-Changer’ In Future War,” *Breaking Defense* (2019), <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/04/armys-multi-domain-unit-a-game-changer-in-future-war/>.

Washington's Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the second MDTF being established currently in Europe in 2021, and the third MDTF set to be established in the Pacific in 2022.<sup>26</sup> The Army, because it is significantly bigger than the Marine Corps, has the ability and resources to build as many MDTFs as the situation dictates.

Having both the Army and Marine Corps continue to develop redundant capabilities “will inevitably lead to zero-sum interservice battles for relevance and resources that place the two services in competition with each other.”<sup>27</sup> Congress is also concerned about the increasing competition between the two services, “as indicated by the requirement in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act for the Department of Defense to submit a report that explains the Marine Corps’ and Army’s respective efforts to develop ground-based long-range fires.”<sup>28</sup> The interservice battle between the Army and Marine Corps for relevance and resources of redundant capabilities will inevitably lead to diminished military effectiveness and substantial opportunity costs.<sup>29</sup> Although the MDTFs will insert themselves onto land from the water, this is still a land-force operation, and the Army is the Nation’s land-force.

### Amphibious Operations

This section will describe amphibious operations and their composition. This section will also show through strategic documents and doctrine that the Army is expected to have an amphibious operations capability. This section will go on to give a brief history of the Army’s

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<sup>26</sup> Sean Kimmons, “Army to Build Three Multi-Domain Task Forces Using Lessons from Pilot.” *Army News Service* (2019),

[https://www.army.mil/article/228393/army\\_to\\_build\\_three\\_multi\\_domain\\_task\\_forces\\_using\\_lessons\\_from\\_pilot](https://www.army.mil/article/228393/army_to_build_three_multi_domain_task_forces_using_lessons_from_pilot).

<sup>27</sup> Jake Yeager, “Expeditionary Advanced Maritime Operations: How the Marine Corps Can Avoid Becoming a Second Land Army in the Pacific,” *War on the Rocks* (2019), <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/expeditionary-advanced-maritime-operations-how-the-marine-corps-can-avoid-becoming-a-second-land-army-in-the-pacific/>.

<sup>28</sup> Jake Yeager, “Expeditionary Advanced Maritime Operations: How the Marine Corps Can Avoid Becoming a Second Land Army in the Pacific,” *War on the Rocks* (2019), <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/expeditionary-advanced-maritime-operations-how-the-marine-corps-can-avoid-becoming-a-second-land-army-in-the-pacific/>.

<sup>29</sup> Jake Yeager, “Expeditionary Advanced Maritime Operations: How the Marine Corps Can Avoid Becoming a Second Land Army in the Pacific,” *War on the Rocks* (2019), <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/expeditionary-advanced-maritime-operations-how-the-marine-corps-can-avoid-becoming-a-second-land-army-in-the-pacific/>.

amphibious operations accomplishments and show that victory in the Pacific Campaign of World War II would not have been achieved without the Army. Finally, this section will suggest a way forward for the Army to absorb the Marine Corps' amphibious capability.

Joint Publication 3-02 (JP 3-02): *Amphibious Operations* defines amphibious operations as “a military operation launched from the sea by an amphibious force (AF) to conduct landing force (LF) operations within the littorals.”<sup>30</sup> JP 3-02 goes on to say that amphibious operations are inherently joint operations and requiring cooperation from all the Services because the operation requires “the unique ability to operate across air, land, and sea.”<sup>31</sup>

Amphibious operations is a broad term that combines several elements or components launching an operation from the sea. According to JP 3-02, the components that make up the overall larger amphibious operations include the naval task force, the preposition equipment force, the amphibious advance force consisting of Air Force aircraft and Special Forces elements, the landing or assault force, and the logistics elements. The Army is involved in each different component of the amphibious operation to some degree, but this section will focus on the assault echelon element of the landing force. JP 1-02 defines the assault echelon as “the element of force comprised of tailored units and aircraft assigned to conduct the initial assault on the operational area.”<sup>32</sup>The assault echelon is the first combat force on the beach.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) and the unclassified version of the National Defense Strategy (NDS) are two strategic-level documents that lay out an overall view of what the United States wants to project to the world and how it will accomplish its goals. The NSS

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<sup>30</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-02: *Amphibious Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), I-1.

<sup>31</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-02: *Amphibious Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), I-1.

<sup>32</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02: *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 16.

states the five pillars for the United States are security, prosperity, strength, values, and international order. These pillars are significantly interconnected, and the DoD plays a great role in the pursuit of their success. Security and international order are the two pillars in which the DoD, specifically the Army, plays the greatest role. The United States must possess the ability to project power and to deter and defeat threats globally to secure the United States and promote international order. Further, the United States must be able to project military power in contested areas despite A2AD challenges. An A2AD environment is where enemies combine strategies “to prevent US forces from entry into a theater of operations [anti-access], then...aim to prevent their freedom of action in the more narrow confines of the area under an enemy’s direct control [area denial].”<sup>33</sup> The United States is specifically focused on the A2AD capabilities of China; therefore, the DoD is focused on access and entry into China’s area of operations.

The Joint Concept document that derives from the overall guidance of the NSS and the NDS is the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC). The JOAC expresses a “concept for how joint forces will achieve operational access in the face of armed opposition by a variety of potential enemies and under a variety of conditions, as part of a broader national approach.”<sup>34</sup> The JOAC describes the future environment the military may face while conducting missions that enable access into a theater of operations. The publication states, “the essential access challenge for future joint forces is to be able to project military force into an operational area and sustain it in the face of armed opposition by increasingly capable enemies when U.S. overseas defense posture is changing and space and cyberspace are becoming increasingly important and

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<sup>33</sup> Andrew Krepinevich and Barry Watts. “Meeting the Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenge”. Center for Strategic Budgetary Assessments (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2003), ii.

<sup>34</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Operational Access Concept*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), i.

contested domains.”<sup>35</sup> To conduct operations successfully in the future environment, the Joint Force will use cross-domain synergy. The JOAC defines cross-domain synergy as “the complementary vice merely additive employment of capabilities in different domains such that each enhances the effectiveness and compensates for the vulnerabilities of the others.”<sup>36</sup> The JOAC lists operational access precepts that show how the Joint Force will operate to gain access in contested areas. The use of an airborne or amphibious force is how the Joint Force would gain access to a theater of operations. The Army has an established airborne identity; therefore, this paper will focus on the amphibious force. The JOAC defines an amphibious force as a “task force and a landing force together with other forces that are trained, organized, and equipped for amphibious operations.”<sup>37</sup> It defines a landing force as a “Marine Corps or Army task organization formed to conduct amphibious operations.”<sup>38</sup> The landing force definition is the first time in recent history any strategic document or Joint publication specifically names the Army as being expected to have the capability to conduct amphibious operations.

The JOAC provides the Joint Force with an overarching concept of obtaining operational access to an area of operations. The Joint Concept for Entry Operations (JCEO) is a supporting concept to the JOAC and describes how “Joint Forces will conduct entry operations in an environment of advanced area denial systems possessed by a variety of potential enemies and under a variety of conditions, as part of unified action.”<sup>39</sup> Four types of Joint Forces are required to conduct entry operations: “Support Forces, Initial Entry Forces, Reinforcing Entry Forces, and

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<sup>35</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Operational Access Concept*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), ii.

<sup>36</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Operational Access Concept*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), ii.

<sup>37</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Operational Access Concept*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 40.

<sup>38</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Operational Access Concept*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 43.

<sup>39</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 1.

Follow-on Forces.”<sup>40</sup> Support Forces set the conditions to conduct joint entry operations. Initial Entry Forces are first onto foreign territory through assault insertions that include air assault, amphibious operations, airborne assault, and airland operations. Reinforcing Entry Forces reinforce Initial Entry Forces soon after initial entry and are usually more heavily equipped “in order to increase the firepower, protection, mobility, or other required capabilities to support initial operations.”<sup>41</sup> Both Initial and Reinforcing Entry Forces can conduct operations immediately upon entry into the foreign territory. Follow-on Forces enter through existing lodgments held by the Initial and Reinforcing Forces and require some form of Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSO&I) activities before they are able to conduct operations. The JOAC and JCEO use the same definition for amphibious and landing forces, which specifically names the Army. This means the Joint Force expects the Army to have the capability to be a component of each of the four entry forces. The Army understands that it must possess the capability to conduct amphibious operations. The Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2014 states, “the Army mans, trains, and equips combat forces to conduct airborne (parachute), air assault (helicopter), and amphibious joint forcible entry operations to seize lodgments or other key objectives.”<sup>42</sup> The Army has chosen to focus more on the airborne and air assault capabilities since the conclusion of World War II, but it has a long and successful history of amphibious operations.

The nation has called on the Army to conduct amphibious operations throughout its 245 years of existence. The Army conducted river crossings and lake operations during the

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<sup>40</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 15.

<sup>41</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Publication: *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 16.

<sup>42</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2014*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 7.

Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. It conducted an amphibious assault on March 9, 1847 at Vera Cruz during the Mexican American War. The Union Army executed amphibious operations throughout the Civil War. The Spanish American War and World War I provided little amphibious experience.<sup>43</sup> The Army began substantial involvement in the 1920s, starting with Major General (MG) Charles G. Morton. In 1920, MG Morton was the commanding general of the Hawaiian Department for the Army. In *Landing in Force*, he gives a detailed account of Japanese amphibious operations on the Manchurian coast and the Korean Peninsula. MG Morton states, “a study of this subject [amphibious operations] is of material value to American officers, for our future wars may involve either landing in the face of an enemy or the defense off our own shores against similar actions.”<sup>44</sup> The Army continued to work on developing its amphibious capabilities through World War II and published Field Manual (FM) 31-5, *Landing Operations on Hostile Shores* in November 1944. Author Donald Boose points out that FM 31-5 was remarkably similar to the Marine Corps manual of *Tentative Landing Operations*.<sup>45</sup> In 1939, the Army’s 3d Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, and the Engineer School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia began conducting amphibious operations training. Soon after, the Army directed the 1st Infantry Division to conduct amphibious operations training. Part of the training for the Army’s 1st and 3d Infantry Divisions was joint training with the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions. The Army chose to separate from the joint training and establish its own training command. The separation was due to an unfavorable report on the status and effectiveness of 3d Infantry Division’s joint training that was submitted

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<sup>43</sup> Donald W. Boose, *Over the Beach: US Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Charles G. Morton, “Landing in Force,” *Infantry Journal* XVI, no. 12 (June 1920). 981, <https://books.google.com/books?id=edg2AQAAMAAJ>.

<sup>45</sup> Donald W. Boose, *Over the Beach: US Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 15, 28.

in April 1942 by Army Ground Forces Deputy Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Floyd L. Parka. The War Department issued a directive, and the Army established its Amphibious Training Center on May 20, 1942.<sup>46</sup> The Army was directed to develop doctrine and training for tactical units in all phases of amphibious operations and to train twelve infantry divisions in preparation for amphibious operations in Europe and the Pacific. The Army also trained Engineer Special Brigades that focused on clearing beach obstacles for amphibious landings. Throughout World War II, the Army conducted Operations TORCH, AVALANCHE, HUSKY, CARTWHEEL, DRAGOON, and OVERLORD. The Army successfully created doctrine, trained units, and conducted amphibious operations as part of its primary mission of conducting sustained land combat.<sup>47</sup> The Army planned to conduct land operations, and the amphibious operation was the first phase.

In the Pacific theater during World War II, the Marines and the Navy dominate the memories of the U.S. victory over Japan. The identity of the Marine Corps is built on its victories in Belleau Wood, Korea, and in large part the Pacific Campaign of World War II. The Marine Corps War Memorial is a depiction of Marines raising an American flag on Iwo Jima. The Marine Corps will forever be tied to its actions in the Pacific during World War II. However, the Marine Corps was made of only six divisions at its largest during the war.<sup>48</sup> The Army was made of over ninety divisions, and twenty-two of them were deployed to the Pacific theater.<sup>49</sup> The U.S. would not have achieved victory in the Pacific without the additional Army divisions. The Marine Corps was not big enough to effectively fight the Pacific Campaign and needed the size

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<sup>46</sup> Marshall Becker, *The Amphibious Training Center*, Study No. 22, Historical Section: The Army Ground Forces (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1945).

<sup>47</sup> Donald W. Boose, *Over the Beach: US Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 57-60.

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.usmcu.edu/Research/Marine-Corps-History-Division/Information-for-Units/Battle-Honors-of-the-Six-Marine-Divisions-in-WWII/>.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.armydivs.com/pacific-theater#ryuky>.

of the Army to achieve victory. The same problem exists today for the Marines. Today, the Marines stand at four divisions.<sup>50</sup> The Army stands at nineteen combat divisions.<sup>51</sup> If the U.S. were to get involved in a war with a major competitor and need a large-scale amphibious assault capability, the Marines would not be large enough to conduct this mission alone, and the Army would have to dedicate multiple divisions to the fight. However, the Army is not currently able to conduct amphibious assaults, at least not to the ability of the Marines.

The Army would have to first be capable of conducting amphibious operations as well as the Marines if they were to be absorbed by the Army. Even though the Army has not put focus on amphibious operations since the mid-twentieth century, the gap is not insurmountable. With some concentrated effort, the Army could train, equip, and organize itself to conduct amphibious operations within a relatively short amount of time.

## **Doctrine**

The Army lacks amphibious doctrine. It has not produced amphibious doctrine since the 1960s. Since World War II, the Army has been reliant on the Marine Corps' amphibious doctrine. The Marines have done an excellent job of continuously updating this doctrine throughout the years. Since 1962, the Army continues to use joint publications to provide fundamentals for amphibious operations. If the Marine Corps were to be absorbed by the Army, the Army would also absorb the Marines' amphibious doctrine and continue to use Joint doctrine for amphibious operations. Initially, Army personnel from Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) would integrate with Marines at Training and Education Command (TECOM) to learn the Marine Corps' process in developing their amphibious doctrine. The Army, with

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.defense.gov/Experience/Military-Units/Marine-Corps/#units>.

<sup>51</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_current\\_formation\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_current_formation_of_the_United_States_Army).

Marine subject matter experts, would eventually take the lead on updating doctrine for the Army and the Joint Force.

## **Training**

The Army has not conducted an amphibious training exercise that was designed to train on assaulting a contested beach since 1964. The closest the Army has come since was the Joint Forcible Entry Warfighting Experiment 2011. However, the Army's participation in the Joint Force training exercise was focused on airborne operations, not amphibious operations. The Joint Force training exercise did push the Army to start certifying its AH-64D Apache attack helicopters to conduct sea-basing operations from Navy amphibious ships in 2013. Ship-to-shore movements through the air are an important part of amphibious operations. With Army aircraft certified to conduct ship-to-shore movements, the Army could turn its attention to training soldiers to conduct amphibious assaults. With the absorption of the Marine Corps into the Army comes the education and experience of the Marines. The Army would benefit greatly from the knowledge of Marines on amphibious operations. As with doctrine, Army personnel from TRADOC would integrate with Marines to learn their process of training amphibious operations. TRADOC would then implement amphibious operation training for selected units and would have Marine advisors observe and coach during said training. Training paths for the selected units would specifically focus on amphibious operations and would involve direct training exercises with the Navy and the Marine Corps. The Army would use personnel from its trained amphibious units to train other Army units. Army leaders and soldiers have proven themselves to be flexible and innovative when faced with new challenges. During the beginning of the Global War on Terror, Army leaders and soldiers found themselves unprepared to conduct

counterinsurgency operations, but they quickly adapted to be successful at a new type of warfare. They can do the same for amphibious warfare.

### **Materiel**

The Army possesses an assortment of military watercraft that consists of Logistical Support Vessels (LSV), LCU 2000 vessels, and small numbers of LCM-8 MOD I & II watercraft. However, the Army's watercraft are only capable of supporting logistical operations. The Army does not have amphibious materiel that would support an initial amphibious assault. To conduct an amphibious assault onto a contested beach, the Army would have to rely on the Navy to support it. This is not an issue for the Army. Amphibious operations are inherently joint operations, and the Army has regularly depended on equipment and materiel from its Sister Services to conduct its ship-to-shore movements. If the Army absorbed the Marine Corps, the Marine equipment would come too.

### **Organization, Personnel, and Aviation**

The Army would have to dedicate at least three light infantry divisions to amphibious operations to make up for the loss of the Marine Corps. The organizational structure of the light infantry division would not involve any significant changes, as they are similar to the Marines' division structure. Personnel from the Marine Corps that had specific jobs operating and maintaining amphibious vessels, aircraft, and equipment would conduct the same job in the Army. Aviation assets and capabilities, whether rotary or fixed wing, would be taken over by the Army. The aviation assets and capabilities inside the MAGTF are critical to amphibious operations and the Army would inherit and use them in a similar fashion. For the Marine-specific aircraft like the V-22 Osprey, the Army would have to determine if it were necessary for amphibious operations. If so, the Army would incorporate the aircraft, pilots, and maintainers into the overall absorption.

The Nation expects the Army to fight and win its wars. The Army possesses many capabilities to achieve this expectation, as does its Joint partners. According to Joint doctrine, the Army is expected to have the capability to enter any theater of operation, and with force. The Army routinely conducts training in airborne and air assault operations and has whole divisions dedicated to these entry methods. However, the Army severely lacks the capability to conduct amphibious operations. This entry method has been left to the Marines since the mid-twentieth century. If the Army were to put focus on owning the amphibious entry method, like it does the airborne and air assault methods, it would possess the capability in a relatively short amount of time and eliminate the need for Marines.

#### Congress and the Marine Corps Budget

The most difficult barrier to having the Army absorb the Marine Corps is the U.S. Congress. As history has shown, when faced with downsizing the Corps to an insignificant number or outright trying to dissolve it completely, the Marine Corps has used its allies in Congress to shield it from extinction. Asking today's Congress to dissolve the Marine Corps and transfer its mission, personnel, and equipment to the Army's control is a next to impossible task. There are currently 535 members of Congress, and ninety-one of them are military veterans.<sup>52</sup> Of those ninety-one military veterans in Congress, fifteen are Marines. Of the fifteen Marine members of Congress, eight are members on their respective Armed Services Committees, two in the Senate and six in the House. The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) have legislative power over the Nation's military and would be the initial challenge to absorbing the Marine Corps into the Army. If the Marine Corps were faced with another attempt to eliminate it, it would have key allies that are well positioned

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<sup>52</sup> Leo Shane III, "Veterans In the 117th Congress, By the Numbers," *Military Times* (2020), <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/12/28/veterans-in-the-117th-congress-by-the-numbers/>.

to potentially stop the elimination attempt. There would have to be significant motivation for former Marines, each Armed Services Committee, and eventually the majority of Congress to vote to eliminate the Marine Corps. If Congress were to focus on reducing the defense budget, the Marine Corps is a worthy sacrifice.

A possible way to motivate Congress to eliminate the Marine Corps is to have it focus on the money that could be saved in the defense budget. The United States' defense budget has been a topic of debate in Congress for decades. Congress will take opportunities to decrease redundant or wasteful spending of funds when it is able. In 2013, Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2014 (NDAA, 2014). The NDAA, 2014, Sec. 352 states, "...Secretary of Defense shall eliminate the development and fielding of Armed Force-specific combat and camouflage utility uniforms... in order to adopt and field a common combat and camouflage utility uniform... to be used by all members of the Armed Forces."<sup>53</sup> Congress included this provision to reduce the billions of dollars wasted by each service developing and fielding its own service-specific uniforms.

As with most issues in Congress, it is divided on how much it wants to fund the DoD. Michael O'Hanlon writes, "...many who wish to defend the magnitude of Pentagon spending often point out that in recent decades its share of the nation's economy is modest by historical standards."<sup>54</sup> He continues with the opposing view, "...those who criticize the Pentagon budget often note that it constitutes more than one-third of all global military spending, and three times that of the number two global military power, China."<sup>55</sup> The United States' defense budget, at

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<sup>53</sup> US Congress, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014*, (Washington, DC: 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2013), 72, <https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ66/PLAW-113publ66.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Is the US Defense Spending too High, too Low, or Just Right?." *Brookings Institution* (2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/is-us-defense-spending-too-high-too-low-or-just-right/>.

<sup>55</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Is the US Defense Spending too High, too Low, or Just Right?." *Brookings Institution* (2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/is-us-defense-spending-too-high-too-low-or-just-right/>.

\$935.8 billion for FY20, was the second-largest item in the federal budget behind Social Security. Of the \$935.8 billion, \$704.6 billion was specific to the military. The \$704.6 billion breaks down further to \$633.3 billion for the base budget and \$71.3 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO).<sup>56</sup> The Marine Corps' budget for FY20 was \$47.47 billion,<sup>57</sup> which is approximately 7.5% of the Joint Force budget. Although the Marines account for the smallest portion of the Joint Force budget, they also account for the smallest amount of combat power when compared to the Army. The Army is the United States' land-based military force that numbered approximately 480,000 active duty personnel in FY20.<sup>58</sup> The Marine Corps is the United States' amphibious-based force that numbered approximately 186,200 active duty personnel in FY20.<sup>59</sup> Once Marines are inserted by amphibious means onto land, they conduct land-based military operations. However, the Marines conduct these operations at a much smaller overall scale, as the Army is over 2.5 times larger than the Marine Corps. Since the Army and Marine Corps conduct the same military operations on land, and the Army conducts its operations at a much larger overall scale than the Marine Corps, one could see the usefulness of the Army absorbing the Marine Corps and therefore eliminating the multitude of redundancies in the two military services. Eliminating the redundancies would lead to savings in the defense budget that Congress could use to bolster the budgets of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

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<sup>56</sup> Kimberly Amedeo and Thomas J. Brock, "US Military Budget, Its Components, Challenges, and Growth: Why Military Spending Is More Than You Think It Is," *The Balance* (2020). <https://www.thebalance.com/u-s-military-budget-components-challenges-growth-3306320#:~:text=Estimated%20U.S.%20military%20spending%20is,Defense%20alone2%EF%BB%BF%EF%BB%BF>.

<sup>57</sup> Erin Duffin, "Budget of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps from fiscal year 2001 to 2021," Statista (2020), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/239290/budget-of-the-us-navy-and-the-us-marine-corps/>.

<sup>58</sup> Mark F. Cancian, "U.S. Military Forces in FY 2020: Army," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (2019), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-military-forces-fy-2020-army#:~:text=The%20Army%20has%20had%20difficulty,hold%20steady%20in%20FY%202020>.

<sup>59</sup> Mark F. Cancian, "U.S. Military Forces in FY 2021: Marine Corps," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (2020), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-military-forces-fy-2021-marine-corps>.

If the Army were to absorb the Marine Corps, there would be some initial costs to plan, coordinate, and execute a transition of Marine personnel and equipment into the Army. Some costs would include uniforms, integration training, movement of equipment, and billeting. However, some of these costs would be overcome by the savings from several Marine Corps facility closures and the sale of Marine Corps equipment that the Army already has its version of. Although the elimination of the Marine Corps does not solve the Nation's problem of an ever-increasing defense budget, it is a start. Eliminating the redundancies and keeping the best parts of the Corps will free up funds that can be reallocated to the other services and increase their ability to protect the United States and its interests.

### Conclusion

The Marine Corps' major roles and capabilities of expeditionary and amphibious operations do not belong solely to the Marine Corps. There have been previous attempts to end the Marine Corps, and those arguments have mostly been based on the redundant capabilities they possess when compared to the Army. The United States does not need a separate service that possesses redundant capabilities. The Army's MDTFs and the Marine Corps' EABO are similar capabilities that are aimed at defeating an enemy's A2AD capability. The Army also has a long history of amphibious operations. Specifically, in World War II, the Army conducted the two largest amphibious assaults of the war and had over three times the number of divisions in the Pacific theater when compared with the Marines. According to Joint doctrine, the Army is required to have an amphibious capability. With some concentrated effort, the Army could train, equip, and organize itself to conduct amphibious operations within a relatively short amount of time. Members of Congress are constantly looking for ways to better manage the defense budget.

Eliminating a redundant service would free up almost \$50 billion a year. There would be an enormous amount of resistance to the idea of eliminating the Marine Corps, but it is an option to save money in the defense budget and not lose expeditionary and amphibious capabilities.

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