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The future security environment will be plagued by powerful irregular adversaries that threaten regional stability by challenging weak governments. That nature of combat against these threats will likely be in restrictive physical and/or human terrain. This environment requires robust ground forces to be effective. "Expeditionary Force 21" risks over-emphasizing MEBs and potential crisis response missions. MEBs are response and flexible but are limited against the irregular threats seen gaining strength in troubled regions. Too much focus on crisis response threatens to diminish the skills gained by Marine divisions fighting advanced irregular adversaries. Minimizing these threats will guarantee the Marine Corps' response is ad hoc and disorganized. To prevent this, the Marine Corps should consider emerging threats, look to its history, and rely on its flexible nature to consider a MAGTF larger than a MEB and smaller than a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). A ground-centric Intermediate MAGTF (IMAGTF) will be ideally suited to defeat the powerful irregular threats developing in vital regions.

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FUTURE WAR PAPER

Defeating Future Threats Requires an Intermediate Marine Air Ground Task Force

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Defeating Future Threats Requires an Intermediate Marine Air Ground Task Force

Author: Major Matthew A. Van Echo, USMC

Thesis: The future security environment will be plagued by powerful irregular adversaries that threaten regional stability by challenging weak governments. That nature of combat against these threats will likely be in restrictive physical and/or human terrain. This environment requires robust ground forces to be effective. A ground-centric Intermediate MAGTF (IMAGTF) will be ideally suited to defeat the powerful irregular threats developing in vital regions.

Discussion: Current trends in governance, demographics, energy, water, religion, corruption, disease, education, gender, and economics strain countries with weak governments. Nascent democracies are particularly vulnerable to the challenges presented by these changes. Irregular adversaries are currently exploiting this tension and threaten regional stability in pursuit of power and influence. Africa, the Middle East, and Asia are particularly vulnerable due the toxic combination of weak governance and the presence of advanced irregular organizations. This phenomenon must be considered by force planners preparing for future conflict. History provides good examples of task organized MAGTFs against similar threats. These MAGTFs were ground centric unlike the more balanced standing MAGTFs. This concentration of ground forces provided the opportunity to consolidate Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and Marine Division staffs during Operation Iraqi Freedom III. This ground based MAGTF looked like a division based IMAGTF that is larger than a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) yet smaller than a MEF. This historic formation provides a useful start point to examine the "right sized" MAGFT to defeat irregular threats. Three scalable IMAGTFs varying in size and weight should be developed to address the irregular threats in the three most at risk regions.

Conclusion: Expeditionary Force 21 overemphasizes the MEB's contribution to future conflicts by focusing too much on crisis response missions. When assessing the most likely and the most dangerous future threats, one cannot overlook the danger posed by powerful irregular adversaries. These threats will require the Marine Corps to balance its crisis response capabilities while remaining poised to send an IMAGTF to defeat more potent threats. To this end, the Marine Corps must begin force planning to determine capability shortfalls now in order to address deficiencies before conflicts develop. By doing this the Marine Corps will have the opportunity to improve the concepts contained in this paper and the concepts articulated in Expeditionary Force 21. This will ensure the Marine Corps remains balanced and ready to face an uncertain future.

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Introduction

The fall of the Soviet Union introduced the transition from a bi-polar world to a uni-polar world. In this environment the United States became the sole super-power. Instead of a period of peace and stability, the world became more chaotic. Non-state actors executed irregular warfare in the power vacuums that emerged following the global retreat of Soviet influence. Technology and the information age combined with areas of weak governance provided the circumstances for irregular threats to gain power, influence, and lethality.

In this setting, the Marine Corps has focused priorities on crisis response to prevent man-made and natural events from destabilizing regions. The Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), and more specifically, the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), became the workhorse for these crisis response missions. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan shifted the Corps' focus towards "steady- state" counter-insurgency for years. The completion of operations in Iraq and the reduction of operations in Afghanistan combined with dwindling budgets forced the Marine Corps to re-evaluate its focus. "Expeditionary Force 21", published in March 2014, reset the Marine Corps' priorities towards crisis response, this time with the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) as the force of choice.[1]

"Expeditionary Force 21" risks over-emphasizing MEBs and potential crisis response missions. While it is import to remain poised to rapidly respond to unpredictable crisis, it is equally important to prepare to defeat likely threats. MEBs are responsive and flexible but are limited against the irregular threats seen gaining strength in troubled regions. Too much focus on crisis response threatens to diminish the skills gained by Marine divisions fighting advanced irregular adversaries. Minimizing these threats will guarantee the Marine Corps' response is ad hoc and disorganized. To prevent this, the Marine Corps should consider emerging threats, look

to its history, and rely on its flexible nature to consider a MAGTF larger than a MEB and smaller than a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). A ground-centric Intermediate MAGTF (IMAGTF) will be ideally suited to defeat the powerful irregular threats developing in vital regions.

Threat Forecast

Studying various trends helps force planners make predictions about the future in order to determine required capabilities. Two detailed publications about the potential security environment analyzed trends to forecast probable near and long term security threats. The first of these studies, *2015 Edition of Flashpoints*, looked at trend data related to governance, demographics, energy, water, religion, corruption, disease, education, gender, and economics. Its analysis predicts a future characterized by transition, instability, shifting relationships, cooperation, and competition.[2] The second study, *2015 Marine Corps Security Environment Forecast*, provides additional insights into plausible future security challenges. This year's study "examines global patterns and trends, develops insights on the character of future conflict. "[3] These studies help planners hone in on specific "at risk" countries and forecast developing threats for the next 30 years. This analysis enables one to asses most dangerous and most likely threats that can be used to prioritize limited resources. Taking a deeper look at these studies can be used for force development.

Existing trends will lead to future instability. Weak governments are particularly threatened by the strain of poverty, disease, and corruption. Those without strong democratic institutions lack the resiliency to adapt to challenges in peaceful ways. The 2015 Flashpoints study noted that six of the ten countries most at risk for future conflict due to poor governance are in Africa.[4] Increasingly, intrastate instability contributes to regional instability. Regime

change in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt has not brought a period of peace and stability to North Africa. Syria and Yemen currently struggle with the chaos of civil war. Additionally, Iraq's nascent democracy is unable to control all of its territory. These trends led Flashpoints 2015 to conclude that 7 of the top 20 countries most at risk for conflict are in the Middle East and North Africa.[5] Current trends combined with weak governments create conditions easily exploited by irregular threats.

Irregular threats will take advantage of the fault lines caused by current trends. Instances of weak governance invite destabilizing elements that seek to undermine existing institutions for their own political or ideological ends. This has led to extremism in Africa increasing in recent years. Central Africa is particularly susceptible. Boko Haram conducts operations in Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Norther Cameroon.[6] East Africa is vulnerable to Al-Shabaab which threatens Somalia and Eritrea. More mature and advanced organizations in the Middle East take advantage of weak governments to gain power and influence. One has only to look at the front page of any major newspaper to see that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is active in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Lebanon.[7] Hezbollah, a more developed organization than ISIS, is also active in Syria and Lebanon as well as Cyprus.[8] Asia, as well, is not immune to destabilization at the hands of irregular threats . Dense jungle, isolated islands, and long coastlines have always made governing parts of Asia difficult. Combine with the interconnectedness provided by today's technology makes conditions ideal for non-state actors to gain influence. Even with the rise of China, state versus state conflict remains unlikely. Instead, the Marine Corps Security Environment Forecast of 2015 predicts that near peer competitors will avoid direct conflict and instead rely on proxies.[9] This means that not only will non-state actors in the region continue to take advantage to environment to increase their power, but they may be helped by a state sponsor

who will also gain from their ascent. Current trends that strain governments will be exploited by non-state actors seeking to gain power and influence. Powerful non-state actors in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia will increasingly cause future instability.

Analyzing the future security environment in three troubled regions helps force planners to assess current capabilities and make decisions about anticipated future requirements. First, the least intense threat exists in Southeast Asia. Here Marines will face a smaller adversary than in the other areas, yet the operating area will be more compartmentalized due to thick jungles, rough terrain, isolated islands, and dense urban area. This threat may result in low intensity conflict in severely restrictive terrain. Second, a mid-intensity threat endures in Central Africa. Here, stability is currently threatened by a large and semi-advanced extremist organization with international ties. It operates freely in dense jungle, relying on the difficult terrain for security. This threat may spark a medium intensity conflict in restrictive terrain. Finally, the area that presents the highest intensity threat is the Middle East and North Africa. Here the likely threat is a highly advanced adversary with possible ties and backing from a supporting state. This threat may result in high intensity conflict in open terrain or urban areas with mature infrastructure. By looking at these "at risk" regions, generalizations can be made that help assess whether current force structure is sufficient to address likely conflicts.

An Argument for an Intermediate MAGTF

Currently, MEUs and MEBs are insufficient to defeat the irregular threats that threaten regional instability. MEUs and MEBs offer speed and scalability that is best suited for crisis response missions in low threat areas. MEUs, embarked on amphibious shipping, provide a forward deployed balanced force specialized for crisis response.[10] The advantage that MEUs

offer is their persistent presence that provides timely response in the event of an unforeseen crisis. MEBs, as the Marine Corps' "middle weight" crisis response force, provide similar flexibility yet are slower to respond. Being larger than MEUs they take time to deploy due to the need to composite forces already deployed with other forward forces or with CONUS based forces. [11] Both formations provide the Joint Force Commander (JFC) flexibility across a range of missions yet their ground combat elements (GCE) lack the mass required to defeat current irregular threats.

MEUs and MEBs are balanced MAGTFs that do not possess sufficient ground combat power to defeat many of the emerging irregular threats. MEUs only have battalion landing team (BLT) as the ground combat element (GCE). The GCE of a MEB can vary depending on how it composites. Under current concepts for compositing MEB, the GCE will be a reinforced regiment.[12] The nature of combat against irregular threats will be manpower intensive because irregular adversaries will likely try to mitigate our firepower by operating amongst non-combatant populations. These circumstances will quickly diminish the combat power of a MEB that must battle to control and safeguard the non-combatant populations in order to defeat the adversary.

A ground-centric MAGTF will be needed for conflict against irregular threats. Several cases on the higher end of the conflict intensity scale demonstrate the employment of ground centric MAGTFs. Not all of these examples portray irregular adversaries but they do demonstrate frequency and circumstances under which MAGTFs have organized outside of crisis response missions. First, Operation DESERT STORM shows how I MEF organized with the bulk of its forces in the GCE. Second, Operations IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) II and III show

a similar organization and provide an example of consolidating staff structure. Both cases show the need for ground-centric MAGTFs when faced with higher end threats.

During Operation DESERT STORM, I MEF deployed as an unbalanced MAGTF with two GCEs and one ACE. Instead of operating under a single GCE commander, each division remained separate, reporting directly to the MEF commander.[13] The GCE comprised of the 1st Marine Division and 2nd Marine Division rather than the standard one division for a MEF. In total, these divisions comprised of six infantry regiments as well as artillery, light armored reconnaissance (LAR), tank, combat engineer, amphibious assault vehicle (AAV), and reconnaissance units. In contrast, the MEF maintained a single ACE. The ACE comprised of 3rd Marine Air Wing (MAW) which included four Marine Air Groups (MAG). Due to the size of the ground adversary, I MEF operated with multiple GCEs supported by one ACE for Operation DESERT STORM.

Other instances of MEFs organizing for sizable ground adversaries are OIF II and III. In October 2003, Marine planners determined that I MEFs return to Iraq for OIF II required a MAGTF concentrated on the GCE. Initially, plans called for a one division GCE that included six infantry battalions, one combat engineer company, one tank company, one provisional military police battalion, and one amphibious assault vehicle company.[14] As realities on the ground became evident, this force grew to eight infantry battalions, one reconnaissance battalion, one light armored reconnaissance battalion, two artillery batteries, as well as three US Army infantry battalions and one US Army armored battalion.[15] Comparing this force list with the supporting ACE force structure reveals the imbalance. To support this MAGTF, the plan called for a MAW with one MAG that comprised of only six squadrons. For OIF III, II MEF deployed in the summer of 2004 with a similarly unbalanced MAGTF. The GCE comprised of the 2nd

Marine Division which included two Regimental Combat Teams (RCTs) and two US Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCT). Each RCT comprised of three infantry battalions, one LAR company, one tank company, one combat engineer company, and one AAV company.[16] The ACE for II MEF increased slightly but remained comparably smaller. It comprised of a MAW with one MAG that included nine squadrons.[17] The employment of ground centric MAGTFs for OIF II and III shows, once again, that the type of combat the Marine Corps will likely engage in against irregular threats requires a ground centric MAGTF. What is most remarkable during this period was the evolution of the command element.

The command element evolved during OIF III. It was recognized that redundant staff functions existed within the MEF and division staffs due to the focus on enduring ground operations. In acknowledgement of this and a desire to reduce staff overhead, a plan was implemented that consolidated the II MEF and 2nd Marine Division staffs in January 2006. Due to the intense nature of the ground campaign and support requirements, the MEF commander maintained two deputy commanding generals, one for operations and the other for logistics.[18] This unique headquarters structure was envisioned as early at 2004 when the 1st Marine Division Commander, then Major General Mattis, remarked: "This was a ground intensive campaign, with no deep battle and only limited aviation play… …it made little sense to have layers of command and we could make economies." [19] While there is nothing new about task organizing Marine forces into a MAGTF, what evolved during OIF II and III represented a novel command structure that was better suited for ground centric MAGTF operations. What appears evident in the cases above is that in situations other than crisis response, the Marine Corps deployed ground centric MAGTFs that with GCE staff forming the MAGTF command element (CE).

Proposed Intermediate MAGTF

The Marine Corps will likely face a future comprised of crisis response actions. MEUs and MEBs are ideally suited for these missions that require a rapid response. However, these units are not sufficient against most advanced adversaries we see emerging. The Amphibious Capabilities Working Group noted in its 2012 report that "The Nation's most frequent security interventions will continue to be small scale contingencies, requiring the forward presence and readiness of its maritime crisis response force. Its most-dangerous and most-lethal interventions will require gaining access against a modern adversary…[20] This suggests that maintaining the Marine Corps' crisis response capability is critical, but what if the threat goes beyond what a MEU or MEB can handle? The quick answer is to employ a task organized MEF. Looking at recent medium to high intensity conflicts reveals that, more often than not, a ground centric MAGTF is employed. With this likelihood, it would make more sense to deploy a CE similar to the one employed towards the end of OIF III? A command element in which the MEF and division staffs are merged into one headquarters would be more efficient and effective. The adoption of an IMAGTF built on a division staff will fill the void that exists between the crisis response capabilities of MEUs and MEBs and the overage created by employing a full MEF against medium and high intensity threats.

The proposed structure of an IMAGTF will demonstrate how this formation can fill the capability gap that exists between a MEB and a MEF. It will be a ground centric MAGTF based on a division staff as the command element. Depending on the characteristics of the mission, several deputy commanding generals may be assigned to concentrate on ground operations, aviation operations, and/or logistics operations. Scalability will remain a planning principle, but against the middle and high intensity threats anticipated, the GCE will more often than not

comprise of multiple regiments. Aviation Combat Element (ACE) units will be tailored and scaled to provide the required aviation functions in support of the ground scheme of maneuver. Traditional ACE staff will form an ACE staff section within the division staff to plan and supervise aviation missions. Similarly, the LCE elements will be tailored to the task. The IMAGTF will provide a larger GCE than a MEB without requiring the duplicated staffs that can arise with the deployment of a MEF.

Structure

As with any task organized unit, getting the structure right is critical to accomplishing the mission. Since an IMAGTF will not be a standing organization like a MEF, MEB, or MEU some general issues need considering. The two most complex elements within the IMAGTF are the CE and the ACE. The division staff will need augmentation to function as a MAGTF CE. Additionally, the ACE will need Marine Air Wing (MAW) headquarters elements to provide aviation command and control (C2).

To best support the Intermediate MAGTF commander's ability to C2, the CE should be built around a division staff. In addition to supporting the commander's C2, The Command Element Roadmap 2014 reminds us that the CE of the future must be able to support the six core competencies of the Marine Corps.[21] These competencies are:

1) Conduct persistent forward naval engagement and always be prepared to respond as the Nation's force in readiness.
2) Employ integrated combined arms across the range of military operations (ROMO) and operate as part of joint or multinational force.
3) Provide forces and specialized detachments for service aboard naval ships, or stations, and for operations ashore.
4) Conduct joint forcible entry operations from the sea and develop amphibious landing force capabilities and doctrine.
5) Conduct complex expeditionary operations in urban littorals and other challenging environments.

6) Lead joint and multinational operations and enable interagency activities.

For the intermediate MAGTF commander to do this, a division staff will need to comprise of three main components: the command section, the core staff, and finally the headquarters battalion.

The command section will need additional members from across the MAGTF. The unique task organization and mission of a given intermediate MAGTF will determine to right make-up of the command section. As seen earlier, when the II MEF and 2nd Marine Division staffs merged during OIF III, two deputy commanding generals were assigned to the command section. One focused on ground operations while the other focused on logistics. Another option may be to assign the assistant MAW commander as the intermediate MAGTF commander's deputy to provide oversight and guidance on aviation operations. The mission's requirements will weigh heavily on the configuration of the command section. Having a two star division commander as the IMAGTF commander gives the option of assigning one star deputy commanders to focus on critical aspects of the IMAGTF's mission.

The core staff will need augmentation to control the ACE and enable joint and multinational operations. When divisions deployed to OIF and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) they needed augmentation to build their deployed staffs. The addition of deployed special staff enabled them to execute specified tasks. Deploying as an IMAGTF will be no different. In order to operate as a battle staff and perform warfighting and special staff functions, additional division staff members will be needed. What differentiates an IMAGTF's staff from the division staffs of OIF and OEF is the requirement to have an ACE cell within the G-3. Additionally, without a MEF command element above the division, the IMAGTF will need

to be Joint Task Force capable. By augmenting a division staff, the core staff of an IMAGTF will be able to control the MAGTF and function as part of a joint force.

Configuring the ACE for an IMAGTF presents several issues. The ACE must be configured to focus internally on the MAGTF commander's requirements as well as externally to support the Joint Force Air Component Commander's (JFACC) needs. Since we have seen that MAGTFs historically have deployed with "smaller" ACEs than GCEs, it is likely that IMAGTFs will be similarly ground-centric. This means that the ACE for an IMAGTF would be something between a MAW and a MAG. This dilemma is similar to the problem associated with providing an ACE to a MEB. Using the ACE model for a MEB will provide useful insights when contemplating the ACE for an intermediate MAGTF.

Two solutions to sourcing the MEB ACE are also applicable to sourcing an IMAGTF ACE. These include: building the ACE around a MAW HQ (minus) or building the ACE around a MAG.[22] Each of these options offers advantages and disadvantages. Exploring these in detail will highlight the risks incurred by a commander when task organizing an IMAGTF.

Building an ACE around a MAW HQ (minus) may provide the best option for a given mission but will have significant repercussions throughout the supporting MEF. Of the two options, the MAW HQ (minus) offers more capability to C2 the ACE. With it will come trained decision makers, watch standers, C2 systems, and other critical equipment.[23] The MEF providing these capabilities will likely not want to part with these critical assets considering enduring requirements to source MEUs and MEBs while remaining poised to respond to other contingencies. A more realistic option may be to build the ACE around a MAG.

IMAGTFs will likely task organize with a composite MAG. If the ACE is built around a MAG, the most pressing shortfall that must be addressed is the fact that "MAG HQs are neither

manned, trained, or equipped to perform the basic ACE functions of ATO [the Air Tasking Order] development, airspace planning/control, or monitoring current operations." [24] During Exercise Bold Alligator 2014, Colonel Jenkins, the CO, MAG-29 commented on the challenges of a MAG HQ acting as an ACE. He noted that the MAG table of organization does not fulfill the needs of the a tactical air command center or ACE site command requirements.[25] These shortfalls can be addressed by building an ACE cell within the G-3. Since these specialists would come from the MAW HQ, we find ourselves looking at a solution that is essentially expressed in the previous paragraph.

Another problem with a MAG based ACE is the various support and sustainment challenges that the base MAG may not be manned and organized to manage efficiently. Since the Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) within a given MAG is designed to support the aircraft within that MAG additional MALS detachments will be needed to support the divers aircraft added to the MAG, when a composite MAG is formed.

Augmenting the IMAGTF CE and ACE presents various challenges. These elements of the MAGTF required augmentation for recent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Following this same method offers the solution. The advantage of those deployments was the relative predictability of the missions. Anticipating the missions of an IMAGTF will help guide the planning necessary to determine the right composition of the CE and ACE.

Scalability

The three possible threat scenarios noted earlier in this paper inform the proposed structure for three scalable and tailorable IMAGTFs. Two key factors are considered in each scenario. First is the threat. Based on current and emerging causes of instability, assessments

can be made about the characteristics of the adversaries. This helps determine the size and weight of the force required. Second is the terrain. While it is nearly impossible to forecast specific mobility challenges of a future area of operations, one can make generalizations based on regional characteristics that support planning for ground and air mobility requirements. Aligning each of the three proposed IMAGTF with the possible threat scenarios will reveal variances in size and weight.

The first IMAGTF is a small and light force aligned against a threat in the "low end" of the operational intensity scale in rough terrain including urban sprawl. This light IMAGTF would be capable of securing key terrain and infrastructure like ports, airfields, and population centers. Additionally, it will be suitable to block enemy forces, defend urban areas, and deny key regions. Light ground vehicles, AAVs, and rotary wing aircraft will provide this force significant tactical mobility. Advanced communications technology will enable this force to cover large areas by distributing small units. The precise composition of this force will depend on the mission requirements. Figure 1 provides an example of a force based on two regiments comprised of two battalions each. Ground mobility is provided by a combination of light wheeled vehicles and AAVs. The AAVs add the advantage of water mobility that can be particularly useful in Asia. The ACE is comprised primarily of rotary wing aircraft to provide assault support and close air support.

The second IMAGTF is a larger force with light armor aligned against a more advanced "medium intensity" threat in mixed terrain including urban sprawl. This mid-weight IMAGTF would be capable of accomplishing missions similar to the light IMAGTF as well as seizing the initiative from opposing forces. By adding the maneuverability of LAVs and fire power of artillery, the mid-weight IMAGTF is capable of rapid offensive maneuver. Against advanced

adversaries who are used to maintaining the initiative, this larger force should be able to reduce the enemy's momentum. Figure 2 provides an example of a mid-weight IMAGTF. It is based on two regiments with three battalions each. The addition of LAVs and artillery as well as fixed wing aircraft provide this formation the speed and fire power to slow the enemy's advance and seize the initiative.

The third IMAGTF is not much larger than the second but heavier with more armor and motorized assets to align against an advanced "high intensity" threat in open terrain including urban sprawl. This heavy IMAGTF would be capable of seizing the initiative, regaining lost terrain, and begin decisive actions. The added shock and fire power of tanks combined with increased close air support capabilities will enable this force to rapidly gain momentum and defeat adversaries. The large quantities of infantry in this force will enable this heavy IMAGTF to hold recently cleared areas and begin stabilization. Figure 3 provides an example of a heavy IMAGTF. It is based on two regiments with four battalions each. The addition of tanks and aircraft provide this formation speed, shock, and fire power to conduct decisive actions against expected adversaries.

Organizing an IMAGTF around a division staff acknowledges that ground centric MAGTFs are often employed against mid to high intensity threats. In the past, the employment of a MEF against similar threats revealed unnecessary duplication of staff functions. This proposal seeks to eliminate this mistake in the future. By anticipating the expected employment of ground centric MAGTFs, configurations can be planned in advance. This early planning will reduce the friction that naturally occurs when forming ad hoc MAGTFs. By establishing training exercises and manning documents early, staffs can work out problems anticipated in future missions.

Conclusion

An IMAGTF should be adopted for missions that require defeating irregular threats. Current irregular adversaries that leverage technology and interconnectivity have gained lethality and capacity. These advanced adversaries present a threat that is more than the current crisis response MAGTFs can handle alone. Their threat to stability in vital regions requires the consideration of a more robust MAGTF without losing the MEF's ability to respond to unpredictable crises.

The establishment of an IMAGTF should not detract from the Marine Corps' focus on crisis response. Instead it should be another "tool" that offers the Joint Force options when considering how to defeat powerful irregular adversaries. By employing an IMAGTF against a mid to high intensity threat, MEFs can maintain focus on preparing and providing crisis response forces. Attempting to balance readiness for missions across the range of military operations will be one biggest challenges faced by the Marine Corps in years to come.

Detailed planning should be done now to identify shortfalls. By attempting to maintain readiness for MEB level crisis response missions and IMAGTF contingency missions, planners should identify capability gaps that will help commanders re-assign priorities. Luckily, these concepts are not revolutionary to the Marine Corps. Remaining flexible for unpredictable futures and task organizing for unique missions has been one of the Corps strengths. Now is the time, while not committed to large scale steady state missions, to re-organize and prepare to defeat the most likely and the most dangerous threats so that the Marine Corps remains the force of choice in an uncertain future.

NOTES

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FIGURES

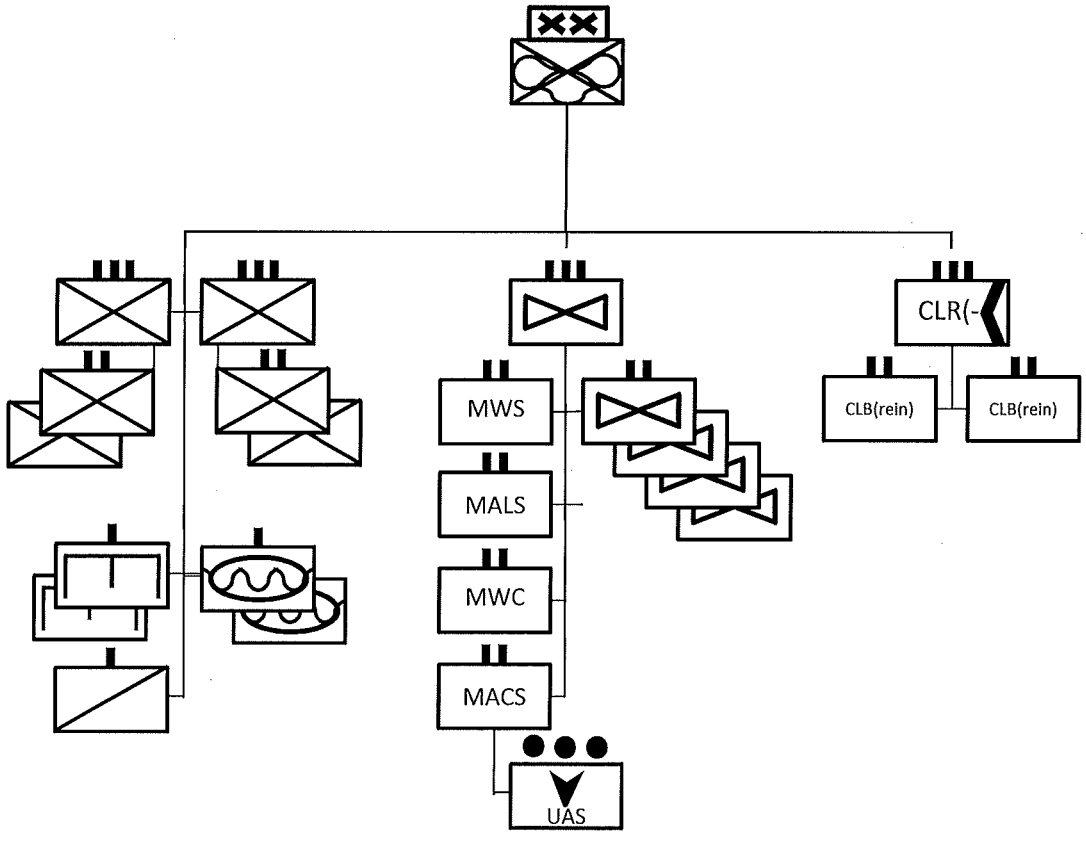

Fig. 1: Light Intermediate MAGTF

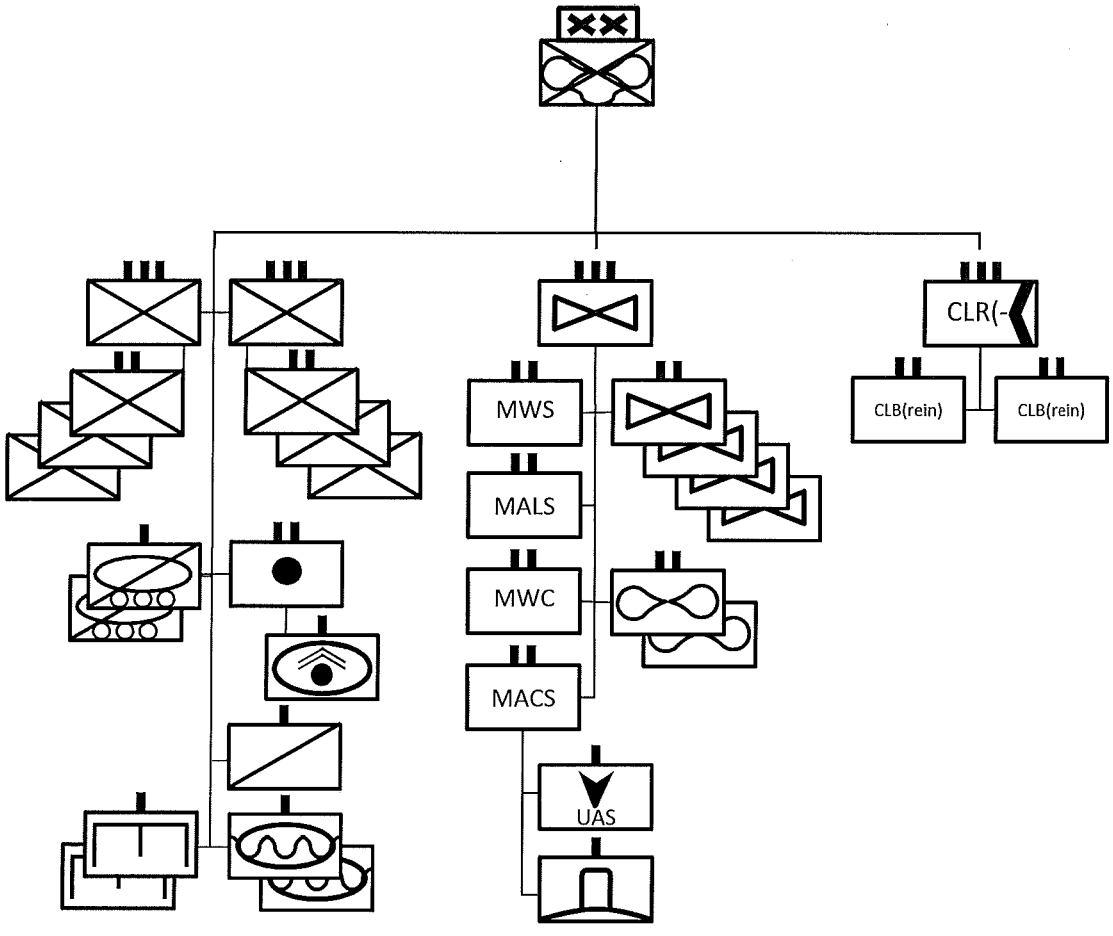

Fig. 2: Medium Intermediate MAGTF

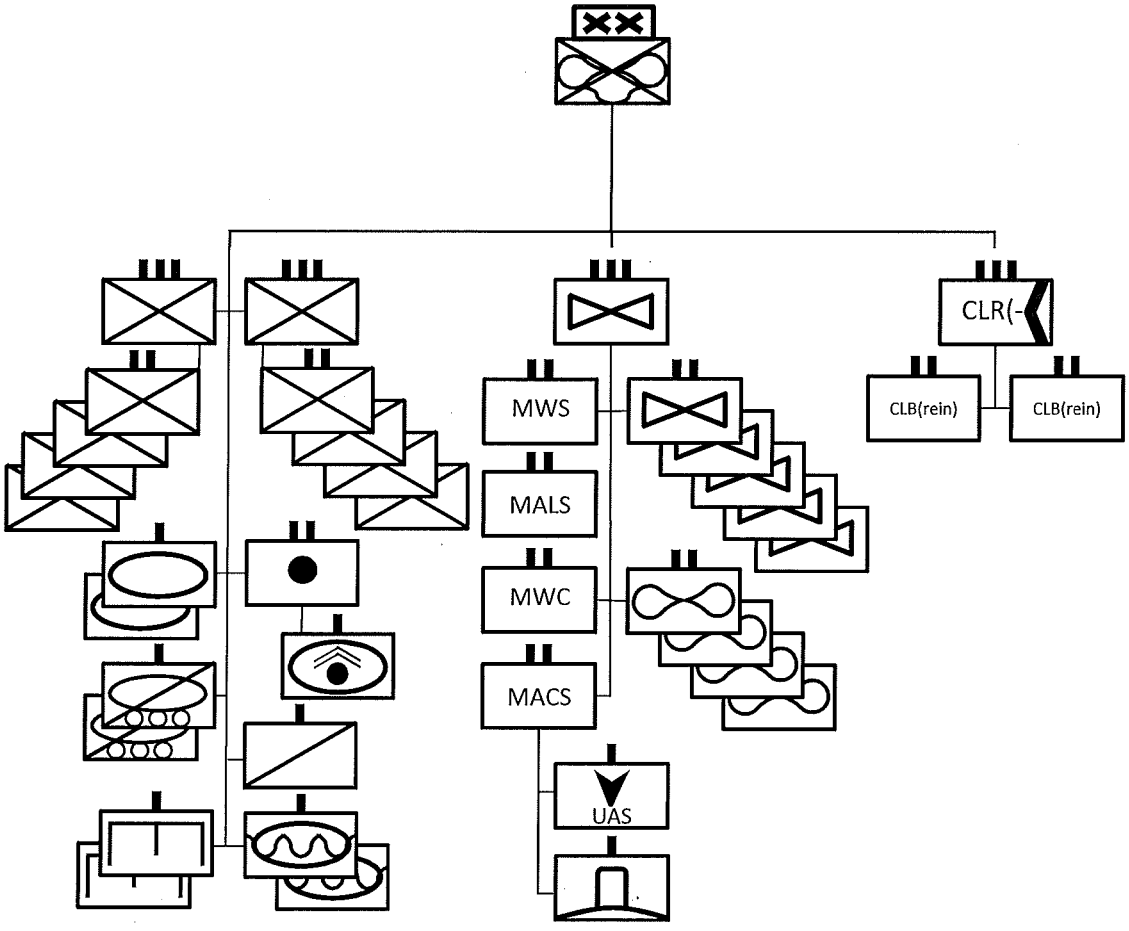

Fig. 3: Heavy Intermediate MAGTF

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