

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

MARITIME PREPOSITIONING...YESTERDAY, TODAY, & TOMORROW

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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ABSTRACT

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The United States Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force and Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade programs are time-tested and operationally indispensable capabilities demanded by the current National Security Strategy. In times of crisis, these two unique and independent programs provide the Marine Corps, and moreover, the United States with a transformational force multiplying capability essential for global reach, rapid crisis response, power projection, and forward presence. The latest Quadrennial Defense Report directs military transformation focused on an unpredictable and asymmetric threat to national security. The author says that the Marine Corps responded to this strategic direction with transformational vision and resultant service strategy capitalizing on the unique capabilities of the Navy/Marine Corps team. The author sees maritime prepositioning as an important ingredient to successfully implementing those visions. The author also provides an overview of Blount Island Command, a critical element of the Marine Corps' geo-prepositioning programs. In this overview, the author elaborates on Blount Island Command's role in supporting the prepositioning programs of today, and more importantly, the transformational future. The author concludes that Blount Island Command is a force multiplier for the Maritime Prepositioning Force as well as a critical element of the Marine Corps' transformational future.

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MARITIME PREPOSITIONING...YESTERDAY, TODAY, & TOMORROW

The US Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force is a transformational force multiplier that provides the Marine Corps and the United States with the crisis response/power projection capability demanded by the current National Security Strategy. Maritime prepositioning represents a concept developed by the Marine Corps that has supported the National Defense Strategy and the concepts of deterring forward, strategic power projection, and forward presence since the development of the initial concept in the early 1980s. Maritime prepositioning has evolved over the years into the current Maritime Prepositioning Force capability. It will continue its evolutionary development in support of the National Military Strategy as directed by future Quadrennial Defense Reports. The Maritime Prepositioning Force concept for the future embraces Department of Defense directed military transformation described in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Report and will support the envisioned transformed Navy-Marine Corps Team of the future.

On 11 September, 2001, terrorists launched a vicious surprise attack against the United States. Thousands of Americans and others died on American soil, not combatants, but rather, innocent victims of a war that took America by surprise.¹ Shortly thereafter, the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, published the Quadrennial Defense Report of 30 September 2001. The Quadrennial Defense Report, while published only days after the September 11th attacks, was the product of a lengthy process of examining subtle and dramatic changes in the world order and the recognition of emerging asymmetric threats from rogue nations, regional instabilities, religious fanaticism, and terrorists. In the Quadrennial Defense Report the Bush Administration and senior Department of Defense leaders correctly identified new and different emerging threats to national security and therefore intend to establish a new strategy for America's defense. That strategy charts a strategic roadmap for addressing uncertainty and surprise; it recognizes that America's defense and safety at home depends upon its ability to counter those threats abroad.

The Quadrennial Defense Report acknowledges that the US has important geopolitical interests around the world, interests challenged by anti-access and area denial threats. It recognizes the requirement for immediately employable forces forward deployed as well as those projected may come from outside the theater of operations. The Quadrennial Defense Report specifically argues "transforming the U.S. global military posture begins with the development of new ways to deter conflict. Deterrence in the future will continue to depend

heavily upon the capability resident in forward stationed and forward deployed forces, along with the rapidly employable capabilities the United States military possess throughout the globe.²

The National Security Strategy provides broad-based guidance concerning United States capabilities and the need to project power in response to crisis or to preempt threatening or potentially hostile action against either the US or its interests both at home and around the globe. The National Security Strategy describes “the presence of American forces overseas as one of the most profound symbols of US commitments to allies and friends.”³ The strategy also recognizes the unparalleled strength of US armed forces and the vital peace-keeping role of forward presence. In addition, it calls for transformed maneuver and expeditionary forces that “round-out” America’s ability to defend the homeland, conduct information operations, ensure US access to distant theaters, and protect critical US infrastructure and assets in outer space.⁴

The strategy set forth in the National Security Strategy clearly recognizes that “the United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression.”⁵ However, the strategy recognizes that “in an age where the enemies of civilization openly and actively seek the world’s most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather.”⁶ As a consequence of this recognition, “the United States will continue to transform its military forces to ensure the ability to conduct rapid and precise operations to achieve decisive results.”⁷

America’s strategy is broad enough to facilitate a transformational approach to crisis response and power projection. However, it specifically requires overseas and forward presence of US forces, as well as maneuver and expeditionary forces capable of rapidly responding to crisis and decisively countering threats. The strategy allows the US military the opportunity to determine how it will transform, configure, and employ its resources to provide the required crisis response capability and project power when called upon to do so.

THE MARITIME PREPOSITIONING FORCE (MPF) PROGRAM

The purpose of the Maritime Prepositioning Force program is to enable the rapid deployment and establishment of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) in support of National Security Strategy. A key feature of Maritime Prepositioning Force is its inherent ability to respond to a variety of contingencies, ranging from humanitarian assistance to major theater war. Maritime Prepositioning Force command relationships rest on joint doctrine and focus on incorporating maritime prepositioning into naval, joint, and multinational operations with a flexible command and control structure.⁸

HISTORY

In 1977 Presidential Review Directive 18, signed by President Jimmie Carter, created the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force to fill a gap that existed in forward presence in the Persian Gulf. In 1980 the Marine Corps loaded equipment and supplies aboard Military Sealift Command chartered vessels as part of an interim prepositioning and forward presence capability known as the Near Term Prepositioning Force. That effort consisted of seven ships: three (USNS *Mercury*, *Jupiter*, and *Meteor*) loaded with rolling stock to support the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade; two (SS *American Champion* and *American Courier*) transported ammunition, medical supplies, and material to support Army and Air Force units attached to the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force; two (USNS *Sealift Pacific* and *MV Patriot*) carried fuel and potable water. The cargo ships loaded up in Wilmington, N.C. in July 1980 and Near Term Prepositioning Force became fully operational by 1981. The Near Term Prepositioning Force conducted its equipment and ship maintenance in Naha, Okinawa and Subic Bay Naval Base, Republic of the Philippines.⁹

Between 1981 and 1986, Military Sealift Command chartered and converted newly-built commercial vessels with Maersk Line, Waterman Steamship Corporation, and American Overseas Marine Corporation to meet Marine Corps operational requirements. By 1983, Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, Georgia, had attained sufficient equipment and supplies for three Marine Amphibious Brigades with sufficient sustainment for thirty days, later loaded aboard the leased ships for long-term storage. These ships possess the capability to conduct roll-on/roll-off (RO/RO) and lift-on/lift-off (LO/LO) operations, self-sufficient offload operations from either in-stream or a port facility, transfer bulk liquids, while off-shore, and maintain temperature and humidity controlled spaces to protect equipment.¹⁰

The Maritime Prepositioning Force was formed into three Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons, strategically placed at locations across the globe. Maritime Prepositioning Squadron-1, established in 1984 on the U.S. East Coast, supported 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade, and then later relocated to the Mediterranean to establish a forward presence in the Europe theater after Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM. Maritime Prepositioning Squadron-2 replaced the Near Term Prepositioning Ships in Diego Garcia in 1985 and continued to support 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade based at Camp Pendleton, CA. Maritime Prepositioning Squadron-3 formed up in Guam and Tinian (later replaced by Saipan) in 1986, supporting 1st Marine Amphibious Brigade deployments from Hawaii. The first two squadrons loaded up at Wilmington, N.C. (1984-1985). The third squadron loaded at Panama City, Florida

(1986). The ammunition for all three squadrons up-loaded at the Military Ocean Terminal, Sunny Point, NC (known as MOTSU).¹¹

Prior to August 1990, Maritime Prepositioning Force operations had only been tested in exercises. Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM validated the Maritime Prepositioning Force concept, where the Maritime Prepositioning Force provided the first truly capable force in northern Saudi Arabia. In fact, the first battalion of the 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade occupied its defensive positions within four days of arrival. The first nine Maritime Prepositioning Force ships, off-loaded by the first week of September 1990, provided the equipment and thirty days of sustainment for two-thirds of the Marine Corps forces ashore, as well as supporting some US Army units.¹² During the ramp up to the Gulf War, the Marine Corps off-loaded the equipment and supplies from all three Maritime Prepositioning Force squadrons to provide the bulk of the combat power required during the first thirty days of force closure and crisis response.

In June 1991 the Marine Corps employed Maritime Prepositioning assets as part of Operation FIERY VIGIL to assist the Republic of the Philippines, when Mount Pinatubo erupted, burying whole cities and forcing the evacuation of Clark Air Base. Also, from December 1992 through May 1993, Maritime Prepositioning Force ships supported Marines conducting peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance in Somalia during Operation RESTORE HOPE.¹³

MARITIME PREPOSITIONING FORCE TODAY

Maritime Prepositioning Force Enhanced is today's Maritime Prepositioning Force. The original Maritime Prepositioning Force consisted of thirteen ships in three forward-deployed squadrons. Those ships are privately owned, operated by three companies (Maritime Sealift Command chartered) and leased to the DoD. They possess the ability to conduct roll-on/roll-off (RO/RO) and lift-on/lift-off (LO/LO) operations, self-sufficient offload operations from either in-stream or a port facility, transfer bulk liquids, while off-shore, and maintain temperature and humidity controlled spaces to protect equipment.¹⁴ They are also capable of container operations. Each squadron supports a force of approximately 17,000 Marines. The Maritime Prepositioning Force Enhanced program provides an additional ship to each Maritime Prepositioning Squadron by embarking Naval Mobile Construction Battalion assets, a Navy Fleet Hospital, and an Expeditionary Airfield. Two of the three Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons enhancement packages are already on station¹⁵ and the projected delivery date for the third ship, USNS *Wheat*, is March 03.¹⁶

MPF HOMPORT/MAINTENANCE

The Marine Corps believes that it requires a dedicated facility from which to homeport, maintain, and sustain its vital Maritime Prepositioning Force assets. That facility is Blount Island Command, located in Jacksonville, Florida. Blount Island is, in fact, a man-made island located near the mouth of the St. Johns River. It has proven to be ideally suited for Maritime Prepositioning offloads, maintenance cycle operations, backloads, and strategic throughput ("throughput" pertains to Blount Island's capability of receiving strategic-level equipment and materiel from numerous, disparate origins, organizing it, and forwarding it to the appropriate requesting agencies in a timely manner).¹⁷

At present, Blount Island is a privately owned island leased to the Marine Corps for approximately \$11.4M per year. Its current operating lease expires in 2004. Upon lease expiration, the Marine Corps plans to buy it. At present, the Marine Corps shares the island with a half dozen active commercial tenants to include Jacksonville Port Authority, Jacksonville Electric Authority, B.F. Goodrich, and GATE Maritime Properties.¹⁸

Upon initiating the Maritime Prepositioning Force program, the Marine Corps identified a requirement for a Maritime Prepositioning Force support facility. In 1985, the Marine Corps considered some sixty locations deemed as potential Maritime Prepositioning Force homeporting/maintenance locations. However, all but five were unsuitable due to limitations such as water depth, overhead clearance, acreage, available facilities (cost to build or upgrade), and ammunition safety requirements. The Marine Corps then surveyed the five remaining ports (Blount Island, FL; Davisville, RI; Panama City, FL; Port Everglades, FL; Wilmington, NC) and eliminated all but Blount Island as viable Maritime Prepositioning Force support facilities due to the reasons cited above or factors such as annual weather patterns.¹⁹

Soon after occupying Blount Island, the Marine Corps considered purchasing the Island and therefore permanently establishing it as the dedicated Maritime Prepositioning Force homeport/maintenance and sustainment facility. A significant aspect of the process of permanently establishing it as a dedicated Maritime Prepositioning Force facility involved verifying it as the best location for such a facility. To confirm Blount Island as the best location for the Maritime Prepositioning Force program, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Marine Corps began exploring alternative locations/facilities to satisfy the facility requirements. Since occupying Blount Island, the DoD has conducted four major studies of potential Maritime Prepositioning Force maintenance sites/facilities. All of these studies identify Blount Island as the best site for supporting Marine Corps prepositioning programs.²⁰ In addition, in 1999, the Marine Corps conducted a Naval Weapons Station Charleston, South Carolina site survey to

update its own previously conducted in-house assessment of Naval Weapons Station Charleston as a viable and cost efficient alternative and revalidate a 1998 Joint Staff directed Cost and Operational Effectiveness Analysis. The Joint Staff analysis examined collocating the Army Afloat Prepositioning and Marine Corps Prepositioning maintenance sites at Charleston, South Carolina or Blount Island, Florida. The Joint Staff study concluded that the Marine Corps should keep Blount Island. The 1999 Marine Corps site survey supported that conclusion.²¹

In the late 1990s, the unified combatant commanders indicated support for retaining and purchasing Blount Island through Integrated Priority List (IPL) language that highlighted the Maritime Prepositioning Force and purchase of Blount Island as a priority. In Central Command's Integrated Priority List, the Combatant Commander stated, "The requirements for prepositioning, lift, and improved logistical systems are integral to Central Command's theater strategy..."²²

U.S. Transportation Command also supported purchasing Blount Island and indicated its support through its Integrated Priority List, where the Combatant Commander reported, "Plan, program and budget for improvements to the rail loop at Blount Island, and also for the purchase of the entire island." In addition, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Jones, regularly addressed Congress on the issue and importance of purchasing Blount Island. Headquarters Marine Corps subsequently teamed with Naval Facilities Engineering Command and developed a two-phased Blount Island acquisition strategy.²³

In the first phase of the Blount Island acquisition, the Marine Corps will acquire property or easements to property owned by three different Blount Island commercial tenants located in the the island's explosive safety zone. In addition, the Marine Corps will acquire undeveloped property and property being used for commercial purposes (approximately 137 acres) as well as easements on property presently occupied by commercial activities (approximately 209 acres). The easements will preclude current owners and occupants from further developing the property and minimize personnel allowed in the explosive safety zone during ammunition handling.²⁴

In terms of safety aspects associated with ammunition handling, Blount Island handles ammunition approximately eleven times a year. During these operations, portions of the island within the explosive safety zone must be evacuated. The facility normally conducts ammunition operations from 1900 Friday evening through completion at approximately 1200 Saturday morning. Although it conducts ammunition handling during what many consider as off-peak hours, ammunition handling does interrupt and inconvenience other Blount Island tenants.²⁵

Congress appropriated full phase 1 funding in the FY00 and FY01 budget. The Corps expects to fund the second phase of the Blount Island acquisition in FY04. In phase 2, the

Marine Corps plans to acquire Gate Petroleum's property of approximately 765 acres as well as a 300-acre permitted spoils area consisting of dredged harbor/river material. It has completed the Blount Island environmental assessment (April 01), Metes/bounds survey (June 02), title search (June 01), updated property appraisals (September 01), and has begun the phase 1 negotiating process.²⁶

Through the acquisition of Blount Island the Marine Corps envisions enhancing current operations as well as expanding Blount Island's future strategic value. To do so, Blount Island Command developed a proposed business plan that focuses on a widely expanded prepositioning logistics mission capable of supporting other DoD organizations and agencies. Examples of envisioned business opportunities include:²⁷

- Layberthing additional military vessels
 - Maritime Sealift Command currently leases a ship berth from Blount Island's current landlord
- Supporting joint training/exercises for active and reserve units
 - All four services conduct exercises on Blount Island
- Establishing a formal prepositioning program/school
 - Maritime Prepositioning Force ship maintenance cycle envisioned as providing hands-on download and throughput opportunity (live training aids)
- Mobilization initiatives
 - Constructed rail loop removes island rail transportation bottleneck
- US Navy:
 - Cargo handling operations
 - Aircraft equipment storage
 - Fleet hospital operations
 - Expeditionary airfield initiatives
 - Marine terminal operations
- US Army:
 - International Standard Organization (ISO) container repair
 - Bridge boat refurbishment (currently under contract)
 - Prepositioning assistance (overflow for Army Prepositioning Force, etc.)
 - Marine terminal operations
 - Port services activities during mobilization
- US Air Force:

- Storage activities
- Prepositioning assistance for air expeditionary forces
- Tenants:
 - US Navy Cargo Handling Battalion-11
 - Military Sealift Command
 - Military Traffic Management Command
 - US Coast Guard
- Leasing opportunities:
 - Automobile parking with Jacksonville Port Authority
 - Marine terminal operations
 - Restaurant/cafeteria and requisite commercial vendors

Blount Island Command and the Marine Corps view these envisioned business opportunities as win-win situations for all concerned – the Corps, Blount Island Command, Blount Island Command's contracted work force and those organizations opting to take advantage of Blount Island Command's business proposal. Blount Island Command envisions revenues and benefits from its expanded business as capable of offsetting Maritime Prepositioning Force /Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade program expenses by reducing overhead costs and possibly providing workload stabilization for a work force cyclically oriented on the Maritime Prepositioning Force maintenance cycle schedule/requirements. Blount Island Command also envisions enhancing its prepositioning capabilities and reinforcing its status as the DoD's premier prepositioning facility as well as its reputation as the "Center of Prepositioning Excellence."²⁸

As the Maritime Prepositioning Force support facility, Blount Island provides the following: close proximity to Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, Georgia; access to a large industrial base and Navy's support structure available in Jacksonville, Florida; a fully operational facility; a well-developed road and rail network; a private slipway, located only seven miles from the sea buoy with no encumbrances to maritime prepositioning ship transiting to the slipway; ready access to commercial and military strategic airlift facility; a contiguous, efficient facility with a dedicated pier; ample staging area proximate to the 1000-foot pier and maintenance facilities; a dedicated and highly skilled workforce; and an established public and private community support base

The mission of Blount Island Command, under the overall direction of the Commander, Marine Corps Logistics Bases, Albany, Georgia, is to plan, coordinate and execute the logistics

efforts in support of Maritime Prepositioning Ship and Norway Prepositioning Programs. The Marine Corps strategically deploys three Maritime Prepositioning Ship forward, each capable of supporting an airlifted or amphibious Marine Expeditionary Brigade of approximately 17,000 personnel. The Norway Prepositioning Program supports the Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade of approximately 13,000 personnel – a slightly smaller footprint than the Maritime Prepositioning Ship Marine Expeditionary Brigades. The readiness of equipment and supplies embarked aboard any of the fifteen Maritime Prepositioning Force ships (soon to be sixteen) or stored in the Norway's caves is critical to Maritime Prepositioning Force and Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade success. Thus, once a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) embarks or airlifts to marry up with prepositioned equipment and supplies, that equipment must be ready immediately for employment and the supplies/sustainment must be capable of appropriately sustaining the force. It is relative to Maritime Prepositioning Force and Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade equipment and supply readiness that Blount Island Command finds itself involved in all aspects of the Marine Corps' prepositioning programs.

In 1986, the Marine Corps formed Biennial Maintenance Command in Jacksonville, Florida. Under the initial concept, that organization provided a nucleus command structure, operating under the operational control of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade, whose squadron was rotating through Blount Island's Maritime Prepositioning Force maintenance cycle. Under the Maritime Prepositioning Ship Maintenance Cycle program, each Maritime Prepositioning Squadron rotates through the Maritime Prepositioning Ship Maintenance Cycle every three years and takes sixty days per ship to complete. In 1989, the Marine Corps established Blount Island Command as a subordinate command of Marine Corps Logistics Bases. Therefore, Blount Island Command no longer operates under the control of a given Marine Expeditionary Brigade as its Maritime Prepositioning Force equipment rotates, but rather Blount Island Command has responsibility for planning, coordinating, and executing the logistics efforts in support of Maritime Prepositioning Force and the Norway Prepositioning Programs.²⁹

Every sixty days a ship from one of the three Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons enters the mouth of the St John's River from the Atlantic Ocean, guided by river pilots, and travels seven miles up river to dock in a slipway serving the Marine Corps side of Blount Island. With fifteen ships in the Maritime Prepositioning Squadron program and another scheduled for delivery this year, the rotation cycle for any one of the sixteen ships will be once every thirty-six months. Thus, the equipment and supplies on the ships will remain at sea or in anchorage for nearly three years before returning to Blount Island for maintenance cycle operations.

Once the stern ramp is lowered on the slipway pier head, over 650 wheeled vehicles, 375 general cargo containers, and 165 ammunition containers off-load. In addition, shipboard cranes will lift thirteen pieces of Navy lighterage off the ship's weather deck and placed then in the slipway. The equipment and general cargo containers are forwarded to the prime contractors (Honeywell Corporation and DynCorp). The thirteen pieces of lighterage, consisting of powered and nonpowered causeway sections, side loadable warping tugs, and mechanized landing craft, are floated down the St John's River to Atlantic Dry Dock Corporation. The ammunition containers are placed on flatcars and railed to the appropriate Naval Weapons Station. Once the ship off-loads, it sails to a Norfolk shipyard for required maintenance and repairs.

Within sixty days Honeywell Corporation performs cycle maintenance on all equipment, while unloading all containers, inspecting and inventorying the contents, rotating stocks as required, then restuffing the containers. DynCorp conducts the same process on the aviation support equipment and aviation associated containers. At the same time, Atlantic Dry Dock inspects and repairs the thirteen pieces of Navy lighterage. Under the direction of Marine Corps Systems Command, containerized ammunition is railed to specific Naval Weapon Stations, which inspect, rotate, and rework the ammunition as necessary, and then return it to Blount Island for backloading. Blount Island Command oversees the entire Maritime Prepositioning Force maintenance cycle process, and at the end of the sixty-day maintenance period, it ensures the ship's Maritime Prepositioning Force equipment and supplies are operationally ready, and backloaded appropriately, and that the ship is ready to get underway to return to its designated strategic location.³⁰

Blount Island Command, under the overall direction of the Commander, Marine Corps Logistics Bases, Albany, GA is responsible for planning, coordinating and executing the logistics efforts in support of the Norway Prepositioning Program.³¹ The Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade Prepositioning Program was established in the early 1980's to reinforce northern Norway. Although that need has substantially diminished with the ending of the Cold War, the Marine Corps and the DoD view the Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade Prepositioning Program as strategically important because it provides the United States with a uniquely flexible capability of a brigade's worth of equipment and supplies, strategically prepositioned in the Norwegian caves, and ready for immediate employment anywhere in Europe. Selected assets from the Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade Prepositioning Program equipment and supplies directly supported DESERT STORM and more recently, Operation NOBLE ANVIL (the Bosnian air campaign).³²

The Government of Norway provides six geographically separated sites to store the preponderance of the equipment, supplies, and ammunition associated with Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Those sites are caves that the Norwegians carved in the sides of mountains. They are well lighted, temperature-controlled, ventilated, and possess cement floors, canvassed walls, and ceilings. They are not musty, damp, dark or dirty, as one might imagine. It stores aviation support equipment in dehumidified storage buildings aboard several Norwegian air stations.³³

The United States established a Memorandum of Understanding with Norway, whereby its military accepted responsibility for Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade Prepositioning program equipment, supply, and ammunition maintenance, care, and storage. Through a process similar to the one Blount Island Command employs in Maritime Prepositioning Force maintenance, the Norwegian military employs civilian technicians to conduct regularly scheduled maintenance on all aviation and ground equipment and care in storage of supplies and ammunition. Marine Corps logistics oversight of the Norwegian effort resides within a number of commands. Under the direction of Commander, Marine Corps Logistics Bases, the Commanding Officer at Blount Island, serves as executive agent for administrative control, accountability, and logistics support for all Norway prepositioned assets, less ammunition and aviation support equipment. The Commander, Marine Corps Systems Command is responsible for ground ammunition oversight, while the Commander, US Navy Europe has responsibility for aviation ammunition. The Commanding General, Second Marine Aircraft Wing manages the aviation support equipment packages. The Commander, Marine Forces Europe also plays an important role in overseeing and coordinating many activities associated with the Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade Prepositioning program.³⁴

For over fifteen years, the Marine Corps has home based its two global prepositioning programs at Blount Island Command. Thus, the command is an essential element of Maritime Prepositioning Force and will support future global prepositioning programs, as they evolve and transform to keep pace with the dynamics of world order, an evolving national security strategy, derivative military strategies, and required crisis response/power projection capabilities.

NAVY/MARINE CORPS VISION

The Marine Corps' Maritime Prepositioning Force program planning is in step with the Quadrennial Defense Report directed military transformation and the most recent National Security Strategy guidance relative to shaping the Corps' future warfighting capabilities,

responding to crises, and projecting military power. The Navy's strategic vision, articulated in *Naval Power 21*, provides the general framework for that transformation.

The Naval Vision: The hallmark of the Navy/Marine Corps team has been the ability to change, adapt and transform to meet new threats to America. Once again, our Naval team is changing in response to a new national security posture as articulated in the DoD Quadrennial Defense Review. This vision statement defines this new direction for the United States Navy and Marine Corps to continue to control the sea and to project power, defense and influence beyond the sea and enhance networked seabasing to operate without restriction. Our forward expeditionary nature will provide persistent warfighting capabilities and sustained American influence wherever we may be called to deploy. We will assure our friends and allies, and together with the US Air Force, US Army and US Coast Guard we will dissuade, deter, and defeat our nation's enemies. Our Sailors, Marines, and Civilians will leverage innovative organizations, concepts, technologies, and business practices to achieve order of magnitude increases in warfighting effectiveness. Sea-Air-Land-and Space will be our domain. The Power of Joint Service Teamwork!³⁵

The *Naval Transformational Roadmap*, recently approved by the Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, describes how naval forces will realize nine new or drastically improved transformational warfighting capabilities and organize conceptually to optimize/maximize unique naval capabilities. The Transformational Roadmap prescribes jointness in every aspect of the Navy/Marine Corps transformational effort.³⁶

Seapower 21 and *Marine Corps Strategy 21* define the Navy and Marine Corps current and future Service strategies. The Navy and Marine Corps strategies also provide clarity and direction in defining operating concepts, identifying requisite resource requirements and charting "the way ahead" for a Navy/Marine Corps Team that will operate as a joint team and in many situations, as part of a larger joint force.³⁷

Marine Corps Strategy 21 defines a Marine Corps tailored to answer the Nation's call at home or abroad. It provides the vision, goals and aims that support the development of enhanced strategic agility, operational reach, and tactical flexibility that enable joint, allied and coalition operations. These capabilities will continue to provide the regional combatant commanders with scalable, interoperable, combined arms Marine Air-Ground Task Forces that shape the international environment, respond quickly across the complex spectrum of crisis and conflicts, and assure access or prosecute forcible entry where and when required. Fundamental to the Marine Corps vision is:

- Making Marines to win the Nation's battles and create quality citizens.
- Optimizing the Corps' operating forces, support and sustainment base, and unique capabilities.

- Sustaining the enduring Navy-Marine Corps relationship.
- Reinforcing the Marine Corps' strategic partnership with the Army, Air Force, and US Special Operations Command.
- Contributing to the development of joint, allied, coalition, and interagency capabilities.
- Capitalizing on innovation, experimentation, and technology.³⁸

In applying energy and resources to implementing its strategy, the Marine Corps developed and is now employing the concept of *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare (EMW)*. *Naval Power 21* defines Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare as “a capstone concept that is the union of the Marine Corps' core competencies; maneuver warfare philosophy; expeditionary heritage; sea basing; and integrating, operational, and functional concepts by which the Marine Corps will organize, deploy and employ forces today and in the future.”³⁹ Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare is more than a capstone concept – it is the overarching concept from which the Marine Corps will deploy and employ Marine expeditionary forces now and for the foreseeable future. Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare also provides the conceptual framework for developing and implementing its future maritime prepositioning capability.

It's important to note that *Seapower 21* defines a Navy with three fundamental concepts critical and complimentary to *Marine Corps Strategy 21*'s implementation and future. *Seapower 21*'s concepts are *Sea Strike*, *Sea Shield*, and *Sea Basing*, enabled by *FORCEnet*. According to *Naval Power 21*, these three concepts “enhance America's ability to project offensive power, defensive assurance, and operational independence around the globe.”⁴⁰ *Seapower 21* defines these three concepts as follows:

- *Sea Strike* is a broadened concept for naval power projection that leverages enhanced C4ISR, precision, stealth, and endurance to increase operational tempo, reach, and effectiveness – “the ability to project precise and persistent offensive power from the sea.”
- *Sea Shield* develops naval capabilities related to homeland defense, sea control, assured access, and projecting defense overland. By doing so, it reassures allies, strengthens deterrence, and protects the joint force – “defensive assurance throughout the world.”
- *Sea Basing* projects the sovereignty of the United States globally while providing Joint Force Commanders with vital command and control, fire support, and logistics from the sea, thereby minimizing vulnerable assets ashore – “enhances operational independence and support for the joint forces.”

Understanding Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare's role relative to these three important *Seapower 21* concepts and more importantly, the envisioned contributions expected of the future Maritime Prepositioning Force in expeditionary maneuver warfare, demands a more expanded conceptual understanding of the Sea Strike, Sea Shield and Sea Basing concepts relative to Navy and Marine Corps strategic visions. Lieutenant General Edward Hanlon Jr. and Vice Admiral Dennis V. McGinn provided an excellent overview of these concepts in their essay titled "Power and Access...From the Sea." In their article, the authors describe *Sea Strike* as "Capitalizing on the strategic agility, operational maneuverability, precise weapons employment, and indefinite sustainment of naval forces, Sea Strike is a broadened naval concept for projecting dominant and decisive offensive power from the sea in support of joint objectives, with reduced dependence on tactical land bases." The authors indicate that "Sea Strike will also provide fully integrated naval aviation force options that include both Marine squadrons embarked on carriers and amphibious ships and Navy squadrons operating from expeditionary shore bases" – something the Navy/Marine Corps Team is already doing. General Hanlon and Admiral McGinn also describe four transformational capabilities being pursued within the overall *Sea Strike* concept. Those capabilities are (1) persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); (2) time-sensitive strike; (3) information operations; and (4) ship-to-objective maneuver (STOM).⁴¹

While all four capabilities are extremely relevant to the "big picture" Sea Strike concept, the first three are not, however, necessarily germane to this discussion on Maritime Prepositioning Force. The forth capability of ship-to-objective maneuver is, however, crucial to any Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) discussion, considering the impact it will have as an essential enabler in seabasing and future operational maneuver from the sea and ship-to-objective maneuver. The concept of ship-to-objective maneuver is a force multiplier that will enable future Marine expeditionary forces to increase operational tempo, keeping the enemy off balance and forcing him to operate at a pace difficult to sustain. At the same time, ship-to-objective maneuver facilitates flexibility by enabling Marine expeditionary forces to maneuver directly against objectives deeper inland without establishing intermediate staging bases or establishing a foothold on the beach as Marine forces have always done in the past (it is in this role that the Marine Corps envisions Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) as a key player – equipping, provisioning and sustaining the force from a seabased platform). The Navy/Marine Corps team views Operational Maneuver from the Sea and Ship-to-objective Maneuver as a "transformational" Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare capabilities that provide the joint force commander with flexible crisis response/power projection capabilities available for employment

the moment Marine expeditionary forces arrive in the theater and capable of maneuvering against key objectives from seabased platforms using sea space as a maneuver area.⁴²

Sea Shield exploits network-centric control of the seas and forward-deployed defensive capabilities to defeat area-denial strategies, enabling joint forces to project and sustain power. Given the objective of this essay, the description previously provided defines this capability adequately relative to addressing Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future).

Sea Basing is not necessarily about platforms, logistics, or technology. Sea basing is about maneuver and options. In fact, Task Force 58 (TF 58) demonstrated this during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, when it conducted a 400-mile ship-to-objective maneuver from the ships of the *Peleliu* Amphibious Readiness Group into Afghanistan's "landlocked" Objective Rhino. During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, TF 58 demonstrated that seabasing is about boldly maneuvering a Marine expeditionary force from amphibious ships (the seabase) to a chosen objective, thus dictating the time and location the maneuver force confronts the enemy – a "textbook" example of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, the cornerstone of naval transformation, and an example of naval forces' potential contribution to the joint fight. In the future, the Navy/Marine Corps team envisions Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) as a critical enabler and facilitator for Marine expeditionary forces operating against objectives from seabases such as amphibious ships or mobile amphibious platforms serving as seabases located in the maneuver space offshore. Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future)'s envisioned contribution to seabasing and Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare is its ability to provide combatant commanders with phased at-sea force arrival and assembly, selective offload, sustainment, and reconstitution of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade-sized force – all from seaspace.⁴³

MARITIME PREPOSITIONING FORCE (FUTURE)

The Navy/Marine Corps team envisions replacing the current Maritime Prepositioning Force program (described earlier in this essay) with a now-developing concept. The Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) concept includes improved and innovative platforms designed to support new naval concepts such as Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS), Ship-to-Objective Maneuver (STOM) and Seabasing. Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) is in the early stages of its concept development process where the Marine Corps is exploring new technology areas such as selective onload/offload, internal ships systems (i.e., automated warehousing, item/pallet/container operations, RO/RO systems, and flow patterns), external ships systems (i.e., ramps, lighterage, and other craft interfaces),

modular system/sub-system concepts and aircraft interface technologies. The Marine Corps envisions its fleet of Maritime Prepositioning Force vessels designed as integral elements of the seabasing concept and configured as above to enhance Maritime Prepositioning Force capabilities and operations supporting a wide range of envisioned combat and noncombat operations.⁴⁴

Over the next two decades, the Marine Corps intends to replace today's Maritime Prepositioning Force ships, concepts and doctrine, and capabilities with new ships, employment concepts and more importantly, transformational capabilities specifically designed to compliment and support the evolving Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare and Navy's capstone concepts spelled out in *Naval Power 21*.⁴⁵

Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) 2010 and beyond is the concept by which the Marine Corps envisions its next-generation Maritime Prepositioning Force's as enhancing Navy/Marine Corps forward presence and power projection capabilities. The Marine Corps envisions its Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) as a force multiplier with an exponentially expanded functionality increasing its capability of supporting expeditionary operations across an increased range of contingencies reflected in the clearly defined pillars of future MPF operations – force closure, amphibious task force integration, indefinite sustainment, and reconstitution/redeployment.⁴⁶

PILLARS OF MARITIME PREPOSITIONING FORCE (FUTURE)

Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) enables sea-based force closure by facilitating the arrival and assembly process at sea, thus eliminating the requirement for access to secure ports and airfields. The goal of this concept is to enable Marines to deploy by a combination of surface mobility means, strategic, theater, and tactical airlift to meet maritime prepositioning platforms already underway and en route to an objective area. The Marine Corps envisions these platforms as capable of billeting units while they complete mission preparation and designed to facilitate an easy and efficient equipment and mission preparation process. Thus, elements of expeditionary force will arrive in the objective area mission ready.⁴⁷

The Marine Corps envisions developing a Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) capability to support Operational Maneuver from the Sea by selectively offloading mission specific equipment and supplies for the amphibious force assault echelon from a sea based platform and then sustaining the force throughout its mission from that same sea based platform. The Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) vision includes multi-purpose Maritime Prepositioning Ships capable of providing facilities for assault support aircraft, surface assault

craft, advanced amphibious assault vehicles, and, organic lighterage capable of operating in sea-state conditions up to sea-state three. To ensure a Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) capable of anticipating the needs of the engaged amphibious force, the Marine Corps envisions equipping Maritime Prepositioning Ships with the communications assets essential to integrating Maritime Prepositioning Force with the amphibious force and including Maritime Prepositioning Ships in the tactical communications architecture to facilitate a shared situational awareness amphibious force wide. The Marine Corps does not envision future Maritime Prepositioning Ships as a capable of forcible entry, but rather as a capability to compliment and reinforce the striking power of an amphibious force projecting power from the sea.⁴⁸

The Marine Corps envisions its Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) as capable of sustaining the amphibious force indefinitely from sea based platforms serving as an element of the supply pipeline capable of drawing sustainment from the supply source and ultimately supporting the engaged warfighter via the sea base – essentially, Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) will become the warfighters' supply system. Finally, the Marine Corps also envisions Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) as capable of conducting in-theater reconstitution and redeployment, thus negating the requirement to conduct an extensive reconstitution effort at a strategic sustainment base, such as Blount Island Command, Guam, Okinawa or Diego Garcia and therefore providing the joint force commander with a Maritime Prepositioning Force Marine Air Ground Task Force quickly ready for a follow-on mission.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

The Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning program is an evolutionary program and combat multiplier initiated to enhance the Marine Corps' ability to rapidly project combat power and military capability in response to crisis anywhere in the world. In August of 1990, its employment in DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM validated the Maritime Prepositioning Force concept, enabling the first battalion of the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade to occupy defensive positions within four days of arriving in Saudi Arabia. Since DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, the Marine Corps has revalidated the Maritime Prepositioning concept by successfully employing Maritime Prepositioning Force assets in contingency operations such as Operation FIERY VIGIL (in support of the disaster relief effort in the Philippines in June 1991 when Mount Pinatubo erupted) and during Operation RESTORE HOPE (in support of the peacekeeping and humanitarian relief effort in Somalia).⁵⁰ Moreover, right now, the Maritime Prepositioning Force is supporting the America's force build up in Kuwait, as the United States

prepares to engage Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi military in the event the United States once again declares war on Iraq.

The Marine Corps views its Maritime Prepositioning Force of the future as a key transformational capability that is in step with the Department of Defense directed military transformation and the US Navy's *Naval Transformational Roadmap*. The Marine Corps' envisioned future maritime prepositioning concept fully supports *Joint Vision 2020* and the Navy/Marine Corps concept of Naval Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare. Since the inception of the Maritime Prepositioning Force, the Marine Corps has improved the program by incorporating innovative ideas, concepts, and technological advancements into the program, thus maintaining its focus of providing the Marine Expeditionary Brigade and other expeditionary forces with a more responsive capability that the Marine Corps can tailor to envisioned future operational requirements.

Seabasing is the centerpiece of the Navy/Marine Corps transformational vision for the future. The Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) is a key concept supporting that vision. The Marine Corps envisions its Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) as an even more effective force multiplier with significantly expanded operational flexibility and capability essential in today's uncertain environment.

Blount Island Command is the Maritime Prepositioning Force's homeport and center for equipment/supply maintenance and sustainment. The Marine Corps currently leases its Blount Island property on a man-made island located near the mouth of the St Johns River in Jacksonville, Florida. The Marine Corps has a validated requirement for a Maritime Prepositioning Force maintenance facility such as Blount Island Command. Numerous studies recommend and support the Marine Corps' intention of buying the Island as a long-term cost saver, vice leasing it, as is currently the case. Blount Island also supports another premier Marine Corps prepositioning capability located in Norway and is a world class prepositioning support facility/organization that is postured to support the Maritime Prepositioning Force of the future.

While the day-to-day maintenance cycles that depend on places like Blount Island may not be as sexy or appear as important to national security as sophisticated new equipment or expensive modern technology, Blount Island is a force multiplier for the Maritime Prepositioning Force as well as a critical element of the Navy/Marine Corps Team's transformational future. The Marine Corps' Maritime Prepositioning Force, Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade Prepositioning program, and Blount Island Command are national strategic assets well

suited for supporting the National Military Strategy and capable of enhancing America's current and future power projection and crisis response capabilities.

WORD COUNT = 6,934.

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