

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**U.S. MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS STRATEGY:
WILL IT SURVIVE TRANSFORMATION?**

by

Lieutenant Colonel Niel E. Nelson
United States Marine Corps

Captain John M. Crochet, USN
Project Advisor

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 03 MAY 2004		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE U.S. Marine Corps Logistics Strategy: Will It Survive Transformation?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Niel Nelson				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5050				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT See attached file.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 23	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Niel E. Nelson USMC
TITLE: U.S. Marine Corps Logistics Strategy: will it survive Transformation?
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 17 February 2004 PAGES: 23 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

This SRP reviews the history of the U. S. Marine Corps Logistics Strategy, adopted in 1995. It examines the effects of the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review and the Department of the Defense's Transformation Planning Guidance on both U.S. Navy and Marine Corps future concepts for logistics in the 21st Century. Finally, this SRP recommends how the Navy and Marine Corps may adjust their current logistics concepts to better align them to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
U.S. MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS STRATEGY: WILL IT SURVIVE TRANSFORMATION?	1
FRAMING THE PROBLEM	2
TRANSFORMATION DEFINED.....	3
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	4
USMC PAST OPERATIONS	5
ENVISIONING THE FUTURE THROUGH CONCEPTS	7
DOD VISION.....	7
NAVAL VISION.....	8
MARINE CORPS VISION.....	9
CONTINUUM OF WARFARE.....	10
CURRENT MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS STRATEGY	11
POSSIBLE FUTURE.....	12
CONCLUSION	13
ENDNOTES	15
BIBLIOGRAPHY	17

U.S. MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS STRATEGY: WILL IT SURVIVE TRANSFORMATION?

Marine innovation is evidenced by continuous transformation and modernization efforts, which allow us to keep pace with changes in an increasingly complex national security environment. In fact, the Corps has consistently viewed transformation as an evolutionary process, not a singular event.

—General Michael W. Hagee
Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps

The U.S. Marine Corps has always prided itself on its progressiveness and ability to keep pace with emerging challenges in the national security environment. Innovative concepts such as the Navy's "From the Sea...", the U.S. Marine Corps' Ship to Objective Maneuver (STOM), and Maritime Pre-positioned Fleet Future have addressed some of these challenges and, in turn, driven the logistics elements within the U.S. Marine Corps to redefine and transform their role in support of the warfighter. This initiative to transform logistics has given rise to the U.S. Marine Corps Logistic Vision Statement 2020 that attempts to show how future logistics support will be achieved. However, this well-intentioned logistics strategy has been overcome by real-world events, poor management, and disjointed execution. Specifically, the U.S. Marine Corps Logistic Vision of the future has not evolved to meet current Department of Defense (DoD) transformation efforts and is in danger of becoming obsolete before it is fielded to the active forces.

Recent deployments to the Middle East in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), which disregarded the time proven method of force movement planning using a Time Phased Force Deployment Document (TPFDD), may provide some insight into the direction that the DoD is headed. Rather than utilizing existing TPFDDs, the OIF force movement process introduced an entirely new method known as Requests for Forces (RFF) to plan force movements. This RFF process facilitated a DoD executive level decision process that focused on a high-end, capabilities-based, force movement that both disregarded support requirements for allocated combat units and left those combat units with little embarkation preparation time. Conversations with DoD staff members have indicated that the Joint Staff is contemplating yet another change to the manner in which Services manage force movement - toward a system that would request certain capabilities rather than specific forces. This "request-for-capabilities" (RFC) process would rely on the ability of individual Services to ensure that each of a long "laundry list" of assigned capabilities is complete and ready to deploy. While it is unclear exactly what impact this change will have, it very well could drive Services to a capabilities-based force structure, with individual units being much larger than their contemporary counterparts.

Individual Service deployment and sustainment processes would have to be updated in order to provide desired capabilities that are both jointly interoperable and fully capable at any given moment. Despite this clear trend toward RFCs, the current U.S. Marine Corps logistics efforts are focused on implementing better business practices in which process efficiencies tend to be more important than process effectiveness. The U.S. Marine Corps logistics strategy, with its emphasis towards a smaller and more efficient seabased logistics capability, may be out of step with the current DoD RFC focus, especially if capabilities are required in multiple locations simultaneously.

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

The U.S. Marine Corps Logistics strategy, the current strategic vision of the U.S. Marine Corps logistics community, calls for redesigning logistics to be compatible with a concept that defines the future of the Marine Corps Expeditionary Warfare - the Navy's Seabasing concept. Sea Base operations, as currently envisioned, will enable U.S. Forces to influence events within the world's littorals using the sea both as a maneuver space and as a secure "base" from which joint forces can project power ashore. Seabasing enables forces to move directly from ships to objectives deep inland and represents a significant advance over traditional over-the-shore amphibious operations¹.

Seabasing, which is predicated upon the assumption that future warfare will require the U.S. Forces to attack directly from the sea because of port and airfield access denial, provides the basis for U.S. Marine Corps future strategies. Complementing the Seabasing operational concept is the U.S. Marine Corps' STOM concept in which military forces will travel directly from ship to an objective area, perform their required mission, and then extract back to bases at sea. The STOM concept is based upon the assumption that reduction of key terrain and command and control nodes will destroy an enemy's center of gravity and compel the antagonist to submit to terms that are suitable for the U.S..

While both the Seabasing and STOM concepts hold a great deal of promise, providing the joint force with maximized naval power projection and enhanced deployment and employment of expeditionary forces,² they are only achievable if U.S. Marine Corps logistics processes are properly designed to support them. The U.S. Marine Corps logistics community's strategy, then, must be aimed at implementation of changes to logistics processes that properly complement both the Seabasing and STOM concepts if it is to meet future logistics challenges. It must also be mindful of the impending DoD RFC focus that will require forces that are supportable in a variety of conditions and locations for varying durations. Unfortunately, efforts

to transform U.S. Marine Corps logistics processes, utilizing better business practices while simultaneously consolidating and reducing the logistics force size, seem to be a bit disjointed. Marine Corps logistics transformational oversight has not been very stringent, and thus has produced a variety of logistics support techniques and force compositions within the U.S. Marine Corps' primary logistics support organization – the Force Service Support Group (FSSG).

The U.S. Marine Corps currently has all three of its FSSGs organized and operating along distinctly different organizational lines. The challenge facing the U.S. Marine Corps is how to successfully create logistics organizations that support a capabilities based future force, while simultaneously striving for a reduced footprint, incorporating better business practices and complementing future seabasing and STOM concepts. Now, into this already convoluted landscape, the DoD has added "transformation" to further confuse those charged with change. To best understand how the DoD will fight in the future, the Services must first understand what is meant by this catalyst concept known as "transformation".

TRANSFORMATION DEFINED

Military transformation is defined in the Transportation Planning Guidance as "a process that shapes the changing nature of military competition and cooperation through new combinations of concepts, capabilities, people, and organizations that exploit our nation's advantages and protect against our asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position, help[ing to] underpin peace and stability in the world."³ This is just one of many interpretations; certainly the generic definition of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary does not offer a definition of transformation to help the military with its baseline understanding. Our senior military leaders, including former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Eric Shinseki, and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, have embraced transformation as the mechanism for...engaging change within the Services and Department of Defense (DoD).⁴ But do they fully appreciate what is necessary to transform a defense establishment?

General Pace, at a recent national security conference, stated that it did not bother him one bit that he could not define transformation.⁵ This indifference to fostering a common understanding of transformation has created an environment in which the Services are more likely to develop changes and engage in strategies that may later be questioned and possibly terminated after a great amount of effort has been expended - because they are inconsistent with some misunderstood aspect of transformation.

John Koa, a popular economist who has made a career out of creating new businesses, tells us that transformation requires determination, because an innovative initiative is a serious

undertaking that will affect every aspect of the organization - it's about taking risks, and it's about overturning the existing order.⁶ The U.S. Marine Corps, like the other services, is working to develop strategies to unleash future force concepts. But many of the U.S. Marine Corps and Naval concepts are almost ten years old, predating the current DoD transformation vision. This "cart before the horse" means that these concepts may not properly complement today's transformation strategies. Many of the U.S. Marine Corps' efforts today tend to be well-packaged presentations that complement transformational efforts, but in reality are just well-orchestrated public affairs campaigns to ensure that pre-existing strategies and concepts remain funded. The future of our military operational success is dependant upon the successful prediction of what the future will entail and how we shape that future with our strategies of today. Looking back on our own military history can help provide some insights into how successful prediction of future events has hindered or helped the military in an ever-changing world.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Change is nothing new to the DoD. In the 1950's the U.S. Army changed its structure to be more relevant to what DoD leadership predicted would be the new age of nuclear warfare. This reorganization under the Eisenhower Administration was termed the "New Look". It redefined the roles of each Service, aligning them to function successfully in what were perceived to be the requirements of the atomic age.⁷ The New Look Army was dubbed "the Pentomic Army" because all units below the division structure were reformed into five similar units in order to better meet the predicted nuclear threat. To reorganize as the Pentomic Army, the U.S. Army shifted large amounts of its acquisition funding, delaying and in some cases cutting a number of equipment replacement programs in order to provide the needed capital. The tangible effect of reorganizing the Army was often felt in the logistics arena where redundancy in capability was commonplace. This redundancy was replaced with centralized control of units, maintenance, mobility and supply in an effort to produce efficiencies while making the core of the Army smaller and more agile. These supporting capabilities were no longer seen as strategic or relevant because the nuclear age of warfare would not require the army to deploy and sustain itself in mass. This Army of the 1950's thus spent billions of dollars in developing nuclear weapons for use on the battlefield. It had undergone a wrenching reorganization and rewritten its basic tactical doctrine to prepare itself for the demands of nuclear warfare.⁸ From the perspective of a war deemed most likely to occur – or of the war that actually did occur in Vietnam – the reforms of the 1950's unquestionably had made the

Army a less effective fighting force⁹, neither sustainable nor sufficiently mobile on the battlefield of Vietnam.

It is not uncommon to hear in most military institutes that the U.S. military is the best equipped and best led force in the world. This air of invincibility is further reinforced by battlefield successes during the conflicts of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Urgent Fury, Operation Enduring Freedom and most recently, OIF. In all of these, the US Forces quickly achieved their stated mission objectives. This recent history of military success and the relative abundance of U.S. military capability provided plausible rationale for the readiness of the DoD to reduce spending, cut manpower, and trim the military capabilities in the days just prior to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Thankfully, the cuts were never realized as the Services now are struggling to find ways to support the multiple contingencies in which they are involved and capitalize on lessons learned from recent combat.

The success of the U.S. forces, with technologically-enabled superiority in speed and firepower against ineffective opposition, has had the effect of changing the public view toward the need for large ground forces, giving rise to naïve, but popular, expectations that future warfare will be short and decisive. But a simple review of recent wars shows few instances in which this technological advantage has proven decisive in victory. Even today, in OIF, the Army is re-learning the counterinsurgency tactics it abandoned in the 1980's in the belief that these would not be needed again - much in the same fashion as it had learned in Vietnam that support and sustainment capabilities discarded during the Pentomic Army reorganization were absolutely vital for combat operations. The lesson of importance here is that the future is exceptionally difficult to predict and poorly conceived change based upon an uncertain future is equally difficult to undo. It took time for the U.S. Army to relearn and reorganize how it supported and sustained itself in the field after making sweeping organizational changes that were not well conceived. This lesson should not be lost on the other Services.

USMC PAST OPERATIONS

The U.S. Marine Corps has been involved in protracted land conflicts in Beirut, Panama, Desert Storm, Somalia, Afghanistan, and currently in Iraq since 1980. During this 24-year period, only the 1983 combat operations in Granada (Urgent Fury) were concluded in a matter of days. In each of these "extended" conflicts, the U.S. Marine Corps relied upon its Combat Service Support elements to provide medical, supply, maintenance, engineering and transport support to combat forces from a shore based position. The U.S. Marine Corps effort in OIF offers a good illustration of the complexity of the effort required to support combat.

During Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. Marine Corps formed a Marine Logistics Command in Kuwait to support operational level logistics requirements in direct support of tactical logistics units within the Iraq Theater of Operations.¹⁰ Despite herculean efforts, the Marine Logistics Command took months to establish and, as a result, was not available to support the time sensitive logistics requirements of combat forces during their advance to Baghdad.

The need for a Marine Logistics Command was a “lessons learned” during Operation Desert Storm and was based upon the well-informed and thoughtful efforts of a number of think tanks that attempted to use the recently concluded war to chart a course for future U.S. Marine Corps combat operations. As a result of the creation of the Marine Logistics Command and in keeping with the 1st Marine Division Logistics Light concept, many combat units within the 1st Marine Division radically reduced or shed their combat service support capabilities, in anticipation that the Marine Logistics Command would be able to provide all combat logistics support. Unfortunately, the assumption that “pushing” support forward instead of utilizing tactical logistics elements to replenish stocks could satisfy future combat logistics requirements, proved faulty. The Marine Logistics Command was never able to generate enough distribution assets. Fortunately for all involved, the demand for trucks was lifted as the unsophisticated Iraqi Army dissolved quickly, allowing success without fully stressing the system. The distribution assets, normally in the form of large trucks that haul containers and break bulk cargo, were in short supply. This shortage came from changes in tables of organizations and equipment that took place during peace - changes made in order to increase efficiency by maximizing usage of reduced personnel and equipment assets. Unfortunately, a fast paced operation such as OIF requires effectiveness that does not always translate to the most efficient utilization of logistics assets. In short, the existing assets were insufficient to provide required support on such short notice.

Difficulties experienced during OIF indicate that current U.S. Marine Corps logistics capability is not robust enough to support protracted land warfare and must be thoroughly studied to enable the best future strategies for support of logistics concepts. Unfortunately, the “afterglow” of what proved to be a very rapid and decisive operation may overshadow problems encountered in combat support during the conflict. The U.S. Marine Corps must carefully review the different levels of support that took place during OIF, ensuring the lessons learned in this most recent combat operation provide a sound basis for the logistics strategies of the future. While it is undeniable that the U.S. Marine Corps is having a great number of small successes with its current logistics practices, a logistics strategy that misreads the lessons of OIF, and is

not in step with either Service employment concepts or DoD strategies, could prove disastrous in the future.

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE THROUGH CONCEPTS

A recent article in the Marine Corps Times by Christian Lowe, entitled “Pentagon Report Backs Corps’ Seabasing Plan”, boosted the Marine Corps warfighting strategy of Seabasing and charged the other services to redouble their efforts to base forces at sea.¹¹ Lowe’s argument is based mainly on the U. S. Army’s inability to use Turkish territory as a staging base for 4th Infantry Division combat operations into northern Iraq in support of OIF. In the article, he concludes that, had the 4th Infantry Division been a seabased force, it would not have needed a country to transit through. The need for Seabasing, however, is predicated on robust port and airfield access denial efforts by hostile countries and their surrounding neighbors - more than has been seen in any conflict since World War II.

Hostile countries have always opposed entry by their invaders. Traditionally, this denial has been overcome through diplomatic means and with the assistance of adjoining countries or by forced entry over the shore. As the list of nations powerful enough to challenge U.S. access continues to decrease in size, it begs the question if Seabasing is really needed to assure access. While the Seabasing concept clearly has the potential to enhance future U.S. Marine Corps combat effectiveness, its costs in equipment, technology creation and production will be very high. This high cost will require both the U. S. Marine Corps and Navy to make difficult decisions about reducing the funding of near-term warfighting capability - supporting logistics programs in particular - to achieve their Seabasing vision. Logistics programs are relatively low cost and do not receive the same level of congressional sponsorship and service visibility as do ongoing future warfare programs such as the over-the-horizon troop assault carrier, the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, the new troop and cargo airframe, the MV-22 Osprey airframe and Navy’s newest amphibious assault ship the LPD-21. Can the Navy and Marine Corps team afford to place so much faith in a vision that will require decades of dedicated funding, but is based upon a tenuous prediction of the future?

DOD VISION

In his recent Quadrennial Defense Review, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld shifted the basis for the DoD’s planning from the threat-based model that has dominated thinking in the past to a capability-based model for the future.¹² This change in defense planning was implemented after an assessment of the global security environment failed to identify a U.S.

peer competitor, necessitating a shift in thinking to justify continued investment in military capabilities. Even though the U.S. may be without a peer, the potential exists for regional powers to develop sufficient capabilities to threaten stability in regions critical to the U.S.¹³ But while planning force structure based upon a current or a predicted threat is a well-established practice, attempting to define the “capabilities set” required to meet a wide spectrum of future threats is truly a trip into the unknown. We must analyze the U.S. Marine Corps Logistics strategy with full knowledge of the new challenges posed by a capabilities-based strategy as opposed to the traditional threat-based approach.

NAVAL VISION

The Naval Vision to overcome access denial efforts and provide a Seabase for operations ashore denotes a major shift in maritime strategy from an open-water focus to one that focuses on the littoral regions of the world. Seabasing is part of a complex system of systems, controlled through a networked system of communications, in which assault forces form, repairs are undertaken, and supplies are received and passed forward via high speed aircraft or lighterage. This unique vision promises to increase the technological gap between the U.S. from already distant enemies and allies.

This visionary thinking has produced a number of questions that require detailed analysis. The Navy must predict what the naval environment will be in the next 20 to 50 years, what the role of Naval forces will be in the joint fight, and what assets and technologies will be required to implement this vision. It will also have to determine how it will integrate new Sea Base-related hardware with existing equipment to support the vision and existing processes and, finally, ascertain what doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel or facilities are required to support such a vision.¹⁴

Although Seabasing is designed to replace what has been historically a forcible entry expeditionary operation across the shore,¹⁵ the DoD’s 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review requires the Navy and Marine Corps to maintain the capability to conduct forcible entry operation during development of the Seabasing concept. The Quadrennial Defense Review also calls for the DoD’s capability-based military to provide forward deployed forces to support long-standing contingency commitments in critical areas of interest. These long-standing commitments will, in effect, become part of the U.S. forward deterrent posture.¹⁶ The U.S. Marine Corps, as part of the Navy-Marine Corps Team, must ensure that both its transformational changes and the alignment of these changes are in concert with modifications to the Navy’s structure and strategy.

MARINE CORPS VISION

The Marine Corps future vision is aligned with that of its long-time partner, the U.S. Navy, and is supported by a number of concepts that span from core competencies - such as sustainable littoral power projection - to the capstone concept of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare. Part of this vision deals with supporting the force throughout multiple missions and functions. The future, as predicted in the Quadrennial Defense Review and reinforced by the Naval Vision, calls for overcoming access denial efforts. So it will require a sustained combat presence from the sea.

The U.S. Marine Corps strategy to support Seabasing projects that most of its current logistics forces will not be required ashore; it anticipates support will only be provided to combat forces via short duration fights - from the Seabase. This vision of a very focused type of logistics support is consistent with the U.S. Marine Corps STOM concept and provides the framework for a continued evolution in logistics support to future warfare. However, this vision does not adequately capture the unique requirements of major sustained combat operations ashore. Further, it is inconsistent with the Quadrennial Defense Review's requirements to support long-standing contingency commitments in critical areas of interest.

Reducing U.S. Marine Corps logistics capability ashore sounds attractive and briefs well because it provides the seductive promise of future savings through elimination of redundant personnel and equipment. But, as the personnel and corresponding equipment are reduced further to meet continuing reductions in naval amphibious vessels, the ability to support sustained operations ashore is reduced. We have previously inferred that the U.S. Marine Corps lacked sufficient distribution assets to properly support its forces engaged in OIF. History has shown the Marine Corps has continuously been involved in protracted land campaigns that are joint in nature. Under these conditions, the U.S. Marine Corps must be able to provide its Title 10 support to forces ashore, while a preponderance of its logistics support comes from the U. S. Army. Any vision of the future must include this level of support.

Logistics challenges associated with the Sea Base concept do not end with distribution. While maximizing use of shipboard logistics support to forces ashore places the iron mountain of supplies in a more secure, readily accessible location, there is no suitable sea-based substitute for Engineer, Transportation or Maintenance elements that must be dispersed and mobile to support the ground maneuver. The demonstrated need for this supporting logistics "tail" of the warfighter makes it unacceptably risky to rely on the Seabasing concept as being fully supportive of STOM across the entire continuum of warfare.

CONTINUUM OF WARFARE

Predicting what the continuum of warfare will look like in the future is a nebulous business. Even more difficult is building a force that is scalable along that continuum. U.S. Marine Corps Strategy 21 demands that U.S. Marine Corps logistics forces of the future provide rapid and precise distribution of tailored expeditionary logistics to the operating forces in any environment.¹⁷ One size does not fit all levels. Each incremental move along the continuum, accompanied by progressively more lengthy periods of combat operations ashore, substantially increases the level of support required. The U.S. Marine Corps future warfare strategy addresses this problem in its capstone concept of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, which acknowledges the need to retain the ability to sustain operations from land bases while simultaneously creating greater capabilities from the sea.¹⁸ Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare is designed to embrace new technologies and revolutionize the logistics capabilities of expeditionary forces. However, mission success, despite lean combat logistics support, against an unsophisticated enemy such as the Iraqis, does not provide a sound basis for cutting capabilities. It is this dilemma - how the U.S. Marine Corps can cut logistics and support processes, equipment and personnel and still be able to fulfill its obligations along the warfare continuum - that faces U.S. Marine Corps leadership today.

The U.S. has not shown a great propensity to get in and get out of conflicts quickly. Once the U.S. goes in, it seldom leaves in a short time. History has proven that even if the Marine Corps and the Navy present the best-positioned force to any conflict, that force is dependent on the U.S. Army to take over the conflict if it expands to a protracted land campaign. The time lag between the "first-to fight"-capability of the U.S. Marine Corps and establishment of U.S. Army combat power in most scenarios, however, demands a U.S. Marine Corps with increased logistics capabilities ashore to achieve its support and distribution requirements outside the littoral. All of this is contrary to the vision of Seabased logistics and STOM for a future U.S. Marine Corps.

Current logistics strategies have placed high expectations and a great deal of money in the Seabasing concept, betting that it will adequately support future conflicts. Just as the Navy's Sea Enterprise, a Sea Power 21 enabler that supports the Seabasing concept through better business practices, validates \$38 billion in savings across the Future Years Defense Plan and identifies another \$12 billion in new initiatives¹⁹, the U.S. Marine Corps must identify and allocate large quantities of its own scarce resources to ensure its compatibility. The Seabasing concept must continue to be reviewed, refined and proven relevant against future threats and the full spectrum of warfare that may be reasonably expected.

CURRENT MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS STRATEGY

The cornerstone for operational logistics support within the U.S. Marine Corps is the FSSGs. What is troubling today is that all three of the U.S. Marines Corps' FSSGs are aligned differently. This incongruity seems to have resulted from a lack of operational guidance on the implementation of the strategic logistic guidance proffered in the U.S. Marine Corps' Logistics Campaign Plan 2001. This campaign plan or logistic strategy was designed to identify milestones for implementing the Logistics Strategy for the future. It does not outline how the U.S. Marine Corps will accomplish its Combat Service Support mission; rather, it is based on employing better business practices linked with the best known information technology to provide a leap forward in logistics support. Two of the strategy's main tenets include improving equipment reliability, availability and maintainability through a reduction in maintenance demand, and reducing inventory requirements and logistics footprint ashore. According to the logistics strategy, equipment improvements, increased usage of contracted logistics support, enhanced depot maintenance, and improvements to the logistics distribution and information architecture will enable these enhancements. The strategy, however, fails to address the trend for increased U.S. Marine Corps involvement in protracted land combat and peacekeeping operations. Emphasizing the importance of the future logistics strategy was former Marine Corps Commandant, General James Jones, who stated that "combat commanders must have absolute confidence, that required [logistics] support will be provided when and where it is needed".²⁰ This boils down to trust in the system, and the current logistics strategy makes that trust questionable.

The current U.S. Marine Corps logistics system seems to be headed in three different directions, with implementation of a strategic direction ill defined and operational details left to the discretion of each individual commander. These directions are easily seen in the formation and employment of the U.S. Marine Corps' FSSGs. 1st FSSG has realigned its battalions into Combat Service Support Battalions, each with core competencies of supply, maintenance, engineer, transport and medical in support of designated warfighting units. 2nd FSSG has pooled all supply, maintenance and transportation assets requiring Engineer, Military Police, Medical and Service battalions to request these capabilities when deploying or training. 3rd FSSG has retained the traditional structure and all logistics support organizations have kept their assets and support the warfighter by forming the traditional Combat Service Support Detachments as required.

These multiple approaches to common functions have created incompatible capabilities within the U.S. Marine Corps, which prides itself on the ability to create scalable Marine Air

Ground Task Forces. For example, in one FSSG, maintenance is centralized above at the Group level, requiring additional battalion processes that push and track equipment into a centralized system. Meanwhile, in a second FSSG maintenance is decentralized, requiring the battalions to maintain their equipment as they would in combat. Adding to the overall confusion is lack of commonality in automated data processing support. Each FSSG uses an automated program to complete standard equipment, supply and repair requisitions that is incompatible with those in use by other FSSGs and requires a second program just to interface with them. These differences in how logistics support is performed at both the tactical and operational levels are at the center of transformational arguments within the U.S. Marine Corps. Additionally, logistics processes within the FSSGs are at the level in which these processes are mapped, changed, removed or added creating transformation in the system. However, the lack of commonality between the different FSSGs impacts effectiveness by reducing synergy in a fiscally constrained environment and clearly indicates the need for more defined guidance or revised Logistics strategy.

The concept of Seabased logistics presumes a common understanding of a variety of inter-related and complex logistics support processes and their relationships to how the warfighter desires to conduct combat. Singular, "one-size-fits-all" strategies such as Seabased logistics do not fit well into protracted land campaigns that require varying levels of support that cannot be duplicated using an efficiency-based seabasing strategy. Complicating the efforts to meet the best vision for the future are the transitory Seabasing funding strategies and ongoing contingency operations which rob funding that otherwise might be available to support more robust test and evaluation of future logistics support concepts and processes. "Streamlining" logistics with insufficient funding and in pursuit of better business practices could lead to adoption of a process that will not stand up in logistics-intensive conflicts. Additionally, changes must complement current and future DoD strategies, which are increasingly designed to accommodate requests for capabilities to meet future threats. The U.S. Marine Corps has invested tens of millions of dollars into its logistics in order to reduce and consolidate logistics capabilities aboard a Sea Base. These investments and programs clearly need to be revisited, particularly in view of the low probability that these seabased logistics capabilities will be employed for long periods of time in lieu of placing units ashore.

POSSIBLE FUTURE

The process improvement methodology, in which incremental changes to processes and concepts are continuously evaluated as they mature, provides an integrated and working

linkage between the capabilities of today and those envisioned for the future. This methodology can nurture the U.S. Marine Corps future logistics strategy through positive change concomitant with each success and proven process. Using U.S. Marine Corps Strategy 21 as its basis, U.S. Marine Corps logistics support should be evolved rather than radically changed with an eye toward a capability that provides seabased support to multiple shore-based operations, while sustaining a capable level of combat support forces ashore.

Many of today's warfighting and logistics strategies, such as Seabased Logistics, are reduced to single phrases or words in an effort to ensure they are engrained in the memories of those in charge of both change and funding. But strategies require a complete understanding prior to allocating funds, changing the current capabilities and implementing change.

While the use of technology to ensure continuity and integration of efforts holds a great deal of promise in major theater wars, it does not fully address the low end of the spectrum of warfare - Military Operations Other than War. Utilizing a methodology that will facilitate constructive incremental changes while the concepts and strategies are developing will bring about positive changes and a forward progression that will turn strategy into reality. It is this kind of change methodology that is needed if the U.S. Marine Corps logistics processes are to remain consistent with what the DoD's vision of U.S. Marine Corps employment. However, current trends point towards increased Marine Corps involvement in protracted combat operations ashore, necessitating a large distribution and logistics capability both afloat and ashore. Changing the logistics strategy of the U.S. Marine Corps to support the entire continuum of warfare, including ensuring adequate support ashore for prolonged periods of time, will require a shift in the seabased strategy for logistics. Changing this concept now and refining the strategy to ensure full support will cost little compared to waiting for the realization that the next long term battle in the future will not be supportable by U.S. Marine Corps Logistics.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. Marine Corps must revise its logistics vision of the future to ensure its logistics support is adequate both afloat and ashore and must devise logistics solutions that adequately support protracted land campaigns. While the Sea Base can be utilized for replenishable supplies and distribution capability and not just as a platform for maintaining capabilities that transit ashore when required, the cost of these naval platforms far outweighs their utility. The strategy must provide adequate shore based logistics support capabilities and ensure cohesive, responsive and sustainable combat support for maneuver units. Delaying or canceling already-

approved acquisition programs in order to provide the necessary funding levels for future strategies is very high risk lacking a clearer vision of exactly what constitutes a capabilities-based future.

A review of the U.S. Marine Corps history reveals that it tends to repeat itself. The U.S. has no peer competitor and is light years ahead of its nearest rival. Is the Seabased force, as currently envisioned, providing for our future by robbing the present? What is the right answer? It lies somewhere in between a seabased and ground based force. If the U.S. Marine Corps logistics strategies are to remain relevant for the future, it must be revised. Changes must reflect increases in support ashore. Reducing logistics support to integrate aboard a Sea Base poses very high risk and it is not consistent with current or historical commitments of the U.S. Marine Corps. U.S. Marine Corps Strategy 21 provides an excellent vision to focus our long-term goals. However, we must fully evaluate the future changes against the realities of today and gradually adjust as we make changes to meet the challenges of the future.

WORD COUNT = 5815

ENDNOTES

¹ Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, U.S. Department of the Navy. Marine Corps Capstone Concept: Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, 16-17.

² Ibid, 17.

³ Officer of secretary of Defense, Transformation Planning Guidance, April 2003, 3.

⁴ DOD Leaders discuss transformation

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kao, John. *Innovation Manifesto: The First Pocket Edition*. Norwalk, CT.: Precision Printing, 2002, 10.

⁷ Bacevich, A. J. The Pentomic Era, The U.S. Army between Korea and Vietnam, 15.

⁸ Ibid, 140.

⁹ Ibid, 141-2.

¹⁰ The MLC was just beginning to organize itself for sustained operations. Logistics support was primarily delivered by the 1st FSSG's Combat Support Battalions, who had preloaded days of supply in anticipation of delays and shortages from incomplete logistics planning, that included incompatible communications systems, and resupply processes.

¹¹ Lowe, Christian. "Pentagon reports Corps' sea-basing plan," *Marine Corps Times*, 1 December 2003, 28.

¹² U.S. Department of Defense. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 30 September 2001.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Defense. "Defense Science Board Task Force on Sea Basing." Briefing slides with scripted commentary. Washington, D.C., 23 September 2003.

¹⁵ Ibid, 9

¹⁶ Quadrennial Defense Review Report, 21.

¹⁷ Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, U.S. Department of the Navy. Marine Corps Strategy 21, 8.

¹⁸ Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, 2.

¹⁹ Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, Strategic Initiative Groups "War Room Report 3-04" Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 16 January 2004.

²⁰ Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, U.S. Department of the Navy. Installations and Logistics Department, *Marine Corps Logistics Vision and Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, January 2001.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bacevich, A. J. *The Pentomic Era, The U.S. Army between Korea and Vietnam*, Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press., 1996.
- Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Department of the Navy. *Marine Corps Concepts and Programs 2003*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 2003.
- Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Department of the Navy. *Marine Corps Capstone Concept: Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, Chapter 2*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, November 2001.
- Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Department of the Navy. *Marine Corps Strategy 21*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 3 November 2000.
- Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Department of the Navy. Installations and Logistics Department, *Marine Corps Logistics Vision and Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, January 2001.
- Kao, John. *Innovation Manifesto: The First Pocket Edition*. Norwalk, CT.: Precision Printing, 2002.
- Lowe, Christian. "Pentagon reports Corps' sea-basing plan," *Marine Corps Times*, 1 December 2003, 28.
- "Marine Corps Transformation: Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare." *Lexington Institute, Naval Strike Forum* (July 2003): 1-8.
- U.S. Department of Defense. "Defense Science Board Task Force on Sea Basing." Briefing slides with scripted commentary. Washington, D.C., 23 September 2003.
- U.S. Department of Defense. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 30 September 2001.
- U.S. Department of Defense. *Transformation Planning Guidance*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, April 2003.
- U.S. Department of the Navy. *Naval Power 21...A Naval Vision*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, October 2002.
- Zinni, Anthony. Gen USMC (Ret). "How do we overhaul the Nation's Defense to win the next war?". Address to the U.S. Marine Corps Association and U.S. Naval Institute Forum 2003 at the Crystal City Marriott, Arlington, VA. 4 September.

