

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

SEABASING: A JOINT PROJECTION PLATFORM

by

Colonel Armon A. Cioppa
United States Army

Colonel Dallas Hack
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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Is seabasing truly a joint concept or is it merely a larger form of United States Naval and Marine Corps employment? Additionally, what effect will this evolving capability have in relation to United States National Strategy and the employment of military forces as an element of national power?

Seabasing is a Joint Integrating Concept that will provide future Joint Force Commanders a secure, joint capable, agile, and scalable power projection platform free of the restrictions normally associated with traditional land based installations. This Joint Integrating Concept will enable rapid deployment, assembly of combat forces, command and control, precise power projection, reconstitution and redeployment of joint combat power from the sea against an asymmetrical enemy that possesses evolving and adaptive technologies and strategies.

From the beginning of a crisis through the completion of stabilization operations, seabasing offers power projection through the sequential and concurrent integration of its five primary operating lines. These lines of operations (close, assemble, employ, sustain and reconstitute) provide our nation a truly joint flexible, responsive, precise, and powerful tool in a full spectrum of operations ranging from humanitarian support through our continuing execution of the Global War on Terrorism.

SEABASING: A POWER PROJECTION PLATFORM

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.

—Carl von Clausewitz, 1827 ¹

Overview

Regardless of evolving techniques and methods, the basic nature of war has and will remain constant. The success that the United States has had in its application of military power has caused our enemies to offset our tactical and operational capabilities by becoming increasingly creative, adaptive and lethal.

Since September 11, 2001, our enemies seek increasingly asymmetric advantages in their methods. Some enemies, notably non-state actors, are almost totally asymmetric. They neither have hierarchical governments, as found in the United States and its allies, nor do they possess the cultural values that govern military force as seen in most other civilized nations. For example, non-state actors do not employ rules of engagement to limit tactical collateral damage as we do. Rather, they feel morally unconstrained to use what ever methods available including terror to achieve their desired effect.²

Given the current world environment, what does the future threat look like? What National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy must be developed to address this emerging threat? Finally, what new capabilities enable the U.S. to prosecute a full spectrum of strategy to appropriately counter our enemies' continually adaptive means and methods?

Seabasing has the greatest potential to satisfy future strategic requirements. Seabasing is a Joint Integrating Concept that enables a full spectrum of operational capabilities ranging from Humanitarian Assistance through employment of decisive combat power. Seabasing provides future Joint Force Commanders a secure, joint capable, agile, and scalable power projection platform free of the restrictions normally associated with traditional land based installations. Without parallel, a sea base will enable rapid deployment, assembly of combat forces, command and control, precise power projection, reconstitution and redeployment of joint combat power from the sea against asymmetrical threats that are adaptive and evolving.

Threat

The current threat to the United States and its national interests is exceptionally complex and multi-faceted. Political and security challenges have changed greatly since the end of the Cold War. More and more often U.S. national interests do not align with those of our traditional friends and allies. In fact, the Global War on Terrorism has presented the U.S. with a dilemma. While our Cold War allies are no longer as dependent on U.S. support for security, the U.S. has become increasingly dependent on them for cooperation in intelligence gathering and sharing operations as she prosecutes the Global War on Terrorism. This situation led to a dramatic increase in Anti-Americanism, anti-globalization, and anti-United States presence throughout the world.

Threats to our security come from many locations and may be delivered in many ways. As described in the National Military Strategy, persistent and emerging threats to U.S. security and national interests are categorized as traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive.³ Each of these threats has unique characteristics. Traditional threats are represented by states employing legacy and advanced military forces and capabilities. Force employment follows long established and recognized tactics, techniques, and procedures. Examples of these threats are North Korea, China, and Russia. Irregular threats include employment of conventional methods adopted and executed by non-state actors to counteract stronger state opponents, such as Al-Qa'ida and other terrorist networks. Terrorist networks may employ capabilities found in catastrophic and disruptive categories as well. Catastrophic threats involve clandestine acquisition, possession, and potential terrorist or rogue employment of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD/E) or methods producing WMD-like effects. Disruptive threats are those emerging from international competitors developing and employing evolving or new technology to offset an opponent's advantage in a certain operational environment.⁴ Examples of a disruptive threat could be China's continued improvements in missile technology or their recent satellite activity.

Additionally, changes in the global environment have created new distributed threats. Potential enemies challenge U.S. strength throughout an extended and complex area. This battle space extends from decisive overseas areas to the U.S. Homeland and includes international airspace, waters, space, and cyberspace. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff have identified a particular area stretching from the Western Hemisphere through Africa, the Middle East, and Asia as an "arc of instability."⁵ This ungoverned and politically unconstrained "arc" may provide a potential proliferation area for emerging threats to U.S. national interests. Non-state actors, terrorists, and insurgents can take advantage of this territory for planning bases,

training sites, weapons manufacturing and production facilities, and to launch offensive operations.⁶

Littorals: A New Emphasis

An increased focus in the Pacific Ocean area of operations shifted attention from open oceans to littoral regions and anti-access strategies now cause power projection issues to be paramount in strategy development.⁷ A littoral is defined as the shore and coastal area, its adjacent waterways, and the land area extending inland, generally from 50 to 250 miles.⁸ Why are the littorals significant? The strategic importance of littorals lies in the following facts:

- 95% of humanity lives within 500 miles of the sea.
- 80% of all nations border on the coastline.
- 80% of the world's capitals are within 300 miles of the shore.
- Greater than 90% of the world's commerce is transported by the sea.
- 65% of all U.S. commerce is transported by the sea.⁹
- The littoral is home to nearly all primary marketplaces for international trade.¹⁰
- U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps are forward deployed and can be anywhere in the world within a period of 2 weeks to 2 months. Whether to ensure freedom of navigation or crisis management, power projection enabled by U.S. Naval Forces ensures America's influence in littoral areas.¹¹

Delivery of goods and services via sea transport is essential to the continued globalization of the world's markets. IRIS Independent Research Firm developed a data base that identified 2,243 data points from 147 countries. Each data point represented a strategic node, a city or capital with some kind of valuable natural resource and had a population in excess of 100,000 people. The average distance from the sea of each of these cities was 202 miles with a median node of 75 miles. Second, 24% of the cities are on the coastline with 53% less than 100 miles from the coast. Extending the littorals 225 miles inland (in accordance with the 250 mile measurement presented in the definition) means that 70% of the nodes are within this distance. Consequently, the results of IRIS Independent Research Firm suggest that the littoral areas are linked closely to U.S. economic interests.¹²

The importance of littorals in relation to globalization and world stability also gains support in Thomas Barnett's book, "The Pentagon's New Map."¹³ A professor at the Naval War College, Barnett uses scenario planning and systems integration to describe conditions that dominate the post 9/11 world security environment. The Pentagon's "new map" looks very similar to the old world map when comparing geographic boundaries and names. But, this is where the

similarities end.¹⁴ The world that Barnett describes is divided into two parts, the Functioning Core and the Non-Integrated Gap. The Functioning Core consists of stable, modernized nations in North America, much of South America, the European Union, Russia, Japan, China, India, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. There is little threat of war and violence as the result of Globalization's benefits and rising standards of living in these countries. However, in the Non-Integrated Gap, countries like the Caribbean Rim, most of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Southwest and Southeast Asia, turmoil, violence and crisis exists. The rejection of modernity causes a lack of connectivity to the Functioning Core. Consequently, Gap nations become disenfranchised and potential breeding grounds for terrorism and threats to world stability.¹⁵

Historically, United States Armed Forces have been deployed forward to influence regional security, promote democracy, respond to crisis, and to safeguard United States interests abroad. Following the end of the Cold War, the changing nature of the threat to our national interests requires our forces to conduct operations in areas where traditional host nation support and international cooperation is no longer guaranteed.¹⁶ For example, during Operation Allied Forces in 1998, Greece denied the United States Marine Corps use of a port for Maritime Propositioning Force (MPF) operation because the facility hosted one third of Greek international trade.¹⁷ Likewise, during operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. forces were denied permission by Turkey for transit rights into Iraq. Although a NATO ally and offers of compensation and U.S. loan guarantees worth more than six billion dollars, Turkey denied short-duration access through its sovereign territory. To put this in perspective, all three of the Maritime Propositioning Force Future (MPF (F)) squadrons (essential to the future seabasing concept) is worth roughly the same amount as the U.S. Government's offer of compensation.¹⁸

These recent experiences in Greece, Turkey, and Iraq underscore the fact that more often than not, forward bases may not be available for U.S. forces due to political, economic, and operationally sensitive factors that delay, limit or even prevent their use. Consequently, the current and future shifts in world alliances and the political and economic implications of globalization require the U.S. to experiment and develop new approaches to power projection. It is absolutely imperative that U.S. forces possess the ability to gain access anywhere within the world. To do so quickly, will provide a strong deterrent mechanism that can remain postured until the crisis is resolved or until the application of military force is required. Seabasing balances the capabilities for strategic responsiveness with battle space dominance—deployability, lethality, survivability, agility, versatility, and sustainability.

Strategy

Although the U.S. only represents one-twentieth of the world's population, its economic and cultural influence is dramatically larger. Access to global markets is critical to U.S. national interests and is largely guaranteed by the U.S.'s ability to project power through its naval forces. Because America is the de facto model for Globalization and a powerhouse of economic generation, its leadership is critical to the global economy. For any national strategy to be effective, the U.S. must recognize the inter-relationship of the Core and Gap states to the littorals and its ability to influence policy and manage crisis within these regions. An effective national strategy must nurture relations across the functioning Core by maintaining and expanding alliances and exporting security in critical Gap crisis areas. Likewise, the U.S. must "destabilize exports" from the Gap states that pose the greatest danger to stability—specifically, terrorism, drugs, and diseases. Additionally, the migration of those who can contribute to the general welfare of all nations must continue.¹⁹

U.S. military forces operate jointly. The Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO) is the basis for all concepts that describe how joint forces are expected to function across the full spectrum of military operations.²⁰ The CCJO primarily focuses on a strategy for accomplishing military objectives while contributing and supporting the broader national objectives through unified action . . . integration with interagency and multinational partners.²¹ It is in this document that we look for the challenges and capabilities that the Joint Force Commander (JFC) will require in the future. Current and fundamental actions that the JFC must take to ensure success include:

- Establish, expand, and secure reach. This is the joint force's ability to access, coordinate, and employ essential capabilities available inside and outside the operational area to shape the environment, deter or defeat an enemy, or support other strategic objectives. This idea is more than the traditional term of Operational Reach. It encompasses building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships necessary for the introduction, basing, and sustainment of forces abroad.
- Acquire, refine, and shape knowledge. The JFC's ability to work within and across national and international sources to sustain specific and appropriate knowledge to a given area, people, or situation is critical to the JFC's ability to understand his force. Without this ability, the JFC will be unable to employ his force to create decisive effects against an asymmetric adversary. This knowledge must be timely, relevant, and accurate to be of any value.

- Identify, create, and exploit effects. The JFC must integrate joint capabilities with all instruments of national power. The JFC must consider planned diplomatic, informational, and economic tasks that, when integrated with military tasks, contribute to the desired effects ensuring the overall accomplishment of the objective.²²

Eleven specific characteristics are essential to the joint force's ability to operate effectively. They are Knowledge Empowerment, Networking, Interoperability, Expeditionary Capabilities, Adaptable / Tailorable, Enduring and Persistent, Precise, Fast, Resilient, Agile and Lethal. These tenants guide the development, organization, training, and equipping of the joint force.²³

Knowledge empowerment emphasizes the JFC's ability to make better decisions faster throughout all levels of command. Through decentralization a networked joint force will extend the ability for leadership to take greater initiative, adapt more quickly, make better decisions and capitalize on opportunity; all without sacrificing coordination or the unity of effort characteristic of increased OPTEMPO. Interoperability is absolutely essential for component services to integrate and synchronize operations. Interoperability implies that service culture, component systems, capabilities and organizations will work harmoniously across all joint forces. Expeditionary joint forces are organized, postured, and capable of rapid and simultaneous deployment, employment, and sustainment. Expeditionary includes all aspects of planning, training, and education of joint forces. Versatility is the key to adaptable and tailorable forces. Joint forces must be scalable in employing the right mass and weight of effort; agile in shifting between missions without a loss of momentum and responsive to changing conditions and environments. This characteristic is critically important to the JFC as he sustains operations for prolonged periods with an adaptive adversary in a versatile and complex environment. Precision is more than fires. Precision denotes the joint force's ability to understand the situation, determine the desired effects, select and execute the appropriate course of action, assess the effects, and reengage if necessary. Speed is essential in order to keep an adversary off-balance. Acting fast is a force multiplier and will allow the JFC to effectively control battlefield operations tempo (OPTEMPO). Operating effectively requires the joint force to protect and sustain its freedom of action. Resiliency means that the joint force can withstand pressure, absorb punishment and achieve desired effects while remaining focused and maintaining momentum. Agility denotes the ability of the joint force to move quickly and seamlessly to resolve a crisis or effect operations. Agility focuses on timeliness . . . thinking, planning, communicating, and acting in a way that enables the JFC to adapt rapidly to unfolding

situations or to exploit a fleeting opportunity or a key enemy vulnerability. Destruction is lethality and includes non-kinetic as well as kinetic effects.²⁴

What National Military Strategy can the United States develop to govern its implementation of military force? What emerging technologies and innovative approaches for the application of military power will provide the U.S. a wide range of options to deter and defeat an adversary's traditional, irregular, catastrophic or disruptive threat?

Seabasing

“United States forces must react promptly to theater needs from a posture that minimizes footprint. Department of Defense is changing the United States global basing policy, placing more emphasis on the ability to surge quickly to trouble spots across the globe, and making U.S. forces more agile and expeditionary. The new challenge is to project joint power more rapidly to confront unexpected threats.”²⁵

The Defense Science Board has conducted a series of logistical, tactical, and technological land warfare studies during the last eight years to determine how to address this situation. Their recommendations emphasize light, rapidly deployable, maneuver forces that are supported by remote precision fires.²⁶ The U.S. Army's current transformation toward modular forces that are more lethal, more flexible, more easily deployed and are tailored to specific missions minimizes the importance of land bases that were once required for division and echelon above division sized units. Additionally, the success of future engagements will depend on our ability to conduct expeditionary operations from intermediate staging bases in or near the theater of operations.

As we have reviewed the threat, we will now look at seabasing as an evolving concept that offers the JFC the capability and flexibility he requires. The key to a relevant and effective National Military Strategy is to develop the capability to utilize power projection platforms that compliment, integrate, and enable joint military capabilities throughout the littorals with minimal or no access to nearby land bases. The Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Integrating Concept (JIC) defines seabasing as “the rapid deployment, assembly, command, projection, reconstitution and re-employment of joint combat power from the sea, while providing continuous support, sustainment and force projection to select expeditionary joint forces without reliance on land bases within the Joint Operations area (JOA). These capabilities expand operational maneuver options, and facilitate assured access and entry from the sea.”²⁷

Seabasing is one of several evolving JICs that describes how, during the next 10-20 years (2015 - 2025), a JFC will integrate future operational capabilities to achieve mission

accomplishment through attainment of desired effects.²⁸ This future concept will satisfy the three requirements for fundamental actions and the 11 characteristics of joint force operations.

Sea Power 21, the U.S. Navy's vision for operations in the twenty-first century, comprises three concepts. The first concept, Sea Strike, encompasses the methods and techniques for projecting precise and persistent naval offensive power. It describes how 21st century naval forces will employ direct, decisive, and sustained influence in joint campaigns through the battlefield operating systems of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), time-sensitive strike, Ship to Shore Maneuver (STOM), and information operations (IO) to deliver accurate and devastating combat power ashore. Sustained naval forward presence, the ability to dominate the seas and gain access to contested littorals, and a maintenance of distributed and networked intelligence to protect our homeland are all components of Sea Shield, the second of the three Sea Power 21 concepts.

Seabasing is the third component of Sea Power 21 and will provide the JFC with global command and control capability and that integrates support to the other services. It also is the enabling concept of the United States Marine Corps' Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare (EMW)/Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMTS) model. OMTS treats the sea as a maneuver space, not as an obstacle. Traditionally, naval amphibious forces have always used the sea for positional advantage. Consequently, seabasing will ensure that our adversaries continue to face the age-old dilemma: defend the entire length of coastline and littorals or afford opponents the undesirable tactical advantage of attacking at time and place of their choosing.²⁹

Seabasing expands this traditional advantage and enables the JFC to meet future challenges posed by adaptive, asymmetric enemies, new technologies, and anti-access strategies. Sea bases serve as the foundation for generating overwhelming offensive and defensive joint power from assets that can deliver integrated fires, project and sustain operational maneuver forces globally, and maintain command and control for indefinite periods of time from the sea. At the heart of seabasing are afloat bases where ships, forces, their logistics, and other support reside in a secure (sub-surface, surface, and aerial), networked and flexible environment, supported by improved sealift for their employment. As the DOD JIC explains,

A sea base is not just a ship, not just pre-positioned material, not just helicopter assault—it represents a complex capability. One must think of a sea base as a hybrid system of systems consisting of concepts of operations, ships, forces offensive and defensive weapons, aircraft, communications and logistics, all of which involve careful planning, coordination and exercising to operate smoothly.³⁰

Capabilities

From the beginning of a crisis through the completion of stabilization operations, seabasing offers the JFC power projection options through sequential and concurrent integration of five primary lines of operations and seven principles. The principles upon which seabasing are based are:

- Use the sea as a maneuver space.
- Leverage forward presence and joint interdependence.
- Protect joint force operations.
- Provide scalable, responsive joint force projection.
- Sustain force operations from the sea.
- Expand access options and reduce dependence on land bases.
- Create uncertainty for adversaries.³¹

Seabasing has five operating lines.

- Close. First is the ability for joint forces to rapidly close to the Joint Operations Area (JOA) within 10 -14 days following receipt of the Execution Order (EXORD). Rapid closure affords the JFC several options ranging from deterrence, to immediate response to decisive operations.
- Assemble. Once on station, the Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG), a Carrier Strike Group (CSG) and Maritime Prepositioning Group (MPG), supported by a Combat Logistics Force (some 36 ships in all) can assemble within 4 - 72 hours and Employ joint forces against an objective. This rapid ability to assemble enables the JFC to seize the initiative. A seamless integration of scalable joint forces capabilities on and around a secure sea base is the key to operational success.
- Employ. Leveraging the scalability of the sea base, tailored forces can be employed to gather intelligence or further develop the situation until combat operations are required. The sea base has the ability to launch at least one brigade size element to seize the initiative, conduct decisive operations, and transition to future operations.
- Sustain. Persistent joint logistics capabilities afloat and ashore will be used to sustain decisive combat operations. The sea base offers a stand-off range of 200 to 250 nautical miles from the objective. In conjunction with advanced bases, the Sea Bases can sustain logistics operations within 2,000 nautical miles of the JOA.
- Reconstitution of units to appropriate levels of combat effectiveness will occur on station within 10 -14 days of recall. Rapid reconstitution eliminates the need to wait

for additional forces or equipment from CONUS. Once reconstituted, forces will have the capability to quickly reposition within the JOA.³²

The sea base provides the appropriate platforms and equipment to ensure the JFC possesses integrated C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance). C4ISR enables overwhelming power and precision fires with seamless application to be direct with pinpoint accuracy at the decisive point. The sea base truly is a joint operating platform that enables employment of Army forces ranging from Unit of Action (UA, brigade size elements) to a Unit of Execution (UEX, divisional size element). When assembled, the sea base can act as an Intermediate Staging Base (ISB) and conduct Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSO&I) of joint forces. By leveraging the operating lines, specifically rapid closure, assembly, and employment, seabasing provides multiple means by which to deter an adversary, or conduct selected operations including demonstrations, Flexible Deterrent Options (FDOs), and Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO).

Historical Precedence

The U.S. Navy is the proponent for seabasing. However, the concept of power projection from the sea for prolonged periods is neither new nor strictly a naval concept. Joint amphibious operations for U.S. forces can be traced back to the U.S. Civil War. Moreover, World War II provides the best examples of highly successful amphibious operations. Although seabasing is far more than amphibious operations, its origins are firmly rooted in amphibious warfare. The battle for the Pacific island of Okinawa represents one of the most successful examples in regard to the potency achieved with sea borne offensive and sustained operations. In the spring and summer of 1945, U.S. joint and combined forces conducted operations from a huge sea base against the island of Okinawa. The battle has been referred to as the “Typhoon of Steel” in English and *tetsu no ame* (“rain of steel”) or *tetsu no bonfu* (“violent wind of steel”) in Japanese. The nicknames refer to the ferocity and intensity of the fighting and the sheer numbers of Allied ships, armored vehicles, and men that participated in the battle.³³ From 1 April 1945 through 21 June 1945, the combined naval forces consisting of U.S. and the British Commonwealth (British, Canadian, New Zealand, and Australia)³⁴ numbered approximately 620 major vessels and over 548,000 personnel. Most of the battleships, fast carriers and, in some cases, all of the specialized ships were engaged. Vessels ranged in size from small tugs to aircraft carriers and included all categories of strike and support vessels—specifically repair, logistics, minesweepers, and hospital ships. If all ships, including landing craft and amphibious

tractors, were tallied the number would grow to over 1,500. In sheer quantity, the Okinawa naval force was as large as the Normandy invasion force, another example of the seabasing concept. The operating distance of the Okinawa naval force was equally impressive. Some elements home ported in the Marianas Islands were approximately 800 miles from their objectives and Pearl Harbor, home base for the Pacific Fleet, was 4,040 miles east of Okinawa.³⁵

The first lesson learned from the Okinawa campaign suggests that the sea base that conquered Okinawa was effective as a launch platform and would have, if necessity dictated, been essential for the assault on Japan's home islands. The doctrine developed prior to WWII by Naval and USMC forces proved successful during the Okinawa Campaign. Secondly, the sea base was a multi-service and multi-national enabler. As Hone describes, "U.S. Marines and Soldiers fought side-by-side, British and U.S. Naval task forces complimented one another, and B-29 strategic bombers coordinated their attacks with raids by carrier task forces."³⁶ The Okinawa sea base provided the required flow of combat troops, an adequate repair and support capability, useful and timely intelligence, and constant pressure on a determined enemy. Lastly, as in the present concept of seabasing, the Okinawa sea base transformed from a mere platform to launch and sustain short duration amphibious operations to a multi-functional capability enabling synchronized employment, sustainment, and maintenance of joint and combined forces over vast areas.

The resulting combined and joint Allied victory by the Okinawa naval task force is the very foundation upon which our joint concept of sea basing is built. As stated by Colonel Ron Isom, Chief, Logistics Division for the Future Center of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command during his 21 October 2004 brief, "The U.S. Army sees great potential in its use of seabasing."³⁷ The transformation of Army units from large divisional formations into Brigade Combat Teams (BCT), a smaller yet more lethal force, enables the BCT to be tactically configured and deployed from ships. Sea bases will allow Soldiers to close rapidly to the objective using assembly areas at sea to provide logistical support if access to land bases are denied. Intermediate Staging Bases (ISB) will be aboard ships and act as staging areas prior to moving ashore. These floating ISBs will be secure and strategically positioned for the RSO&I processing of follow on forces throughout all phases of the campaign. Soldiers and their crew served systems will assemble, perform pre-combat checks and rehearsals, and prepare to launch operations directly against an enemy objective. The sea offers added protection from the immediate tactical threats while preparing to commence offensive operations and reduces the footprint once on shore.³⁸ Selective offload capability enables timely disembarkment of only the required

material essential for the operation. Furthermore, operational flexibility to attack from any direction with little warning allows U.S. and coalition forces positional advantage in any part of the world.³⁹ Whether, a sea base carries a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) consisting of 15,500 U.S. Marines, 3,420 vehicles, and 156 aircraft or a joint and combined unit of similar size and composition, the capability that the sea base introduces remains the same.⁴⁰

Limiting Factors

The limiting factors pertaining to the seabasing concept fall in to two major categories: technological capabilities and associated funding and those limitations inherent while conducting operations at sea. A sea base is exceptionally expensive to produce. Not surprisingly, the major challenge for the U.S. Navy is allocation of funds.⁴¹ The Navy must decide where to place its emphasis as it structures itself to meet future requirements. Is the emphasis for funding be on a blue water navy comprising capital ships or on ships with newer capabilities to meet a greater range of threats? The Navy's full modernization plan requires 16 billion to 20 billion dollars per year while their construction budget remains 11 to 12 billion dollars a year.⁴² Whatever the decision, new construction must remain within a limited shipbuilding budget. Realizing this, the Navy has developed a 30 year modernization plan to upgrade its amphibious and Maritime Prepositioning Forces to support seabasing.⁴³

Evolving technology currently exists to design, develop, and produce the requirements of a sea base. To be fully mission capable, three components must be developed in order to realize the potential of seabasing. These are ships that will enable the storage of equipment and aviation platforms, stabilized cargo handling equipment used to move and off-load oversized cargo at Sea State 4 conditions (wave height from 1.25 - 2.5 meters), and the design of vertical lift aircraft capable transporting 20 ton loads up to distances of 300 miles.⁴⁴ However, funding remains the central issue for opponents.

All concepts have vulnerabilities; seabasing is no different. Naval vessels throughout history have been exposed to threats inherent to the seaborne operations including sub-surface (submarine), surface (ships, mines), and aerial (aircraft and missile) threats. However, seabasing enables power projection when land access is denied. "Sea Based Theater Air/Missile Defense"⁴⁵ delivers some measure of antiballistic missile defense both at sea and to some degree over land, and the seabasing provides increased medical support through definitive surgical capability not available without a sea base.⁴⁶ These advantages are just a few of the force multipliers available to the joint force and its commander.

Recommendations

Seabasing is more than a logistical concern – it represents an operational concept suited to the future geopolitical environment. Continue to develop, experiment, exercise, and fund the concept of seabasing. Further:

- Continue to fund seabasing as a flexible, scalable joint concept that supports a wide range of military options and supports the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy. Seabasing enables the JFC to escalate or deescalate a crisis through the implementation of as much or as little military force when and where he chooses without the requirement of coalition basing. When employed, a sea base will enable rapid force buildup, integration, power projection, and sustainment and reconstitution from over the horizon without the necessity to first reduce shore defenses.
- Seabasing must not lose its joint and combined interoperability focus, nor should the concept of a sea base ever be confused with amphibious assault operations. Amphibious assault capability may be an element of seabasing but is not the same as seabasing itself. The Army is firm in its belief that the sea base may hold great potential for future use by its conventional and Special Operation Forces.⁴⁷
- Clearly identify service roles within the joint concept. Continue to conduct exercises to increase interoperability and further develop doctrine for seabasing implementation. Within this decade, the Navy and Marine Corps have conducted several studies to determine improvements in the concept. Mission Area Analysis, Operational Reach – 2015 focused on vertical lift capabilities and limitations and Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Command) Extended Range Operations proved that a company sized force package had an operational range of 200 nautical miles from a sea base, 90 miles farther than the last exercise. The last study, Seabasing Concept of Operations, extended a campaign for 22 days and stressed sustainment requirements.⁴⁸ Likewise, since 1999, all Army Title 10 war games incorporated seabasing as a basic exercise element. In 2003 and 2004, Army units deployed through and from a sea base.⁴⁹ “The Army believes seabasing offers a way of providing the strategic responsiveness and agility required to gain entry to anti-access-theaters of operations and will continue to collaborate and develop concepts for force projection and associated capabilities, of which seabasing will be a very important tenet.”⁵⁰

Conclusion

The United States cannot predict with any certainty future threats that will challenge our homeland, people, or national interests. The U.S. can however, observe trends and develop a National Security Strategy and National Military Strategies that mitigate future risks. Several factors influence that risk. First, current and future adversaries are and will be adaptive and asymmetrical. Their delivery methods will range from conventional to Weapons of Mass Destruction / Effects (WMD/E). Enemies most likely will be rogue or non-state-actors and emanate from littoral and ungoverned areas. Second, because much of the U.S. economy depends on Globalization, access to developing markets through free trade and the ability to freely navigate the world's water ways are essential to U.S. national interests. Finally, as predicted by Thomas Barnett and unless reversed, the Functioning Core nations will continue to prosper as they modernize while the Non-Integrated Gap Nations will continue to turn from modernity and experience poor economic development, population explosion, scarcity of resources, violence, and crisis.⁵¹ Therefore, the U.S. will require the ability to respond quickly anywhere within the world. Once on station, these forces must be prepared to execute a full range of options . . . capable of deterring aggression through mere presence and diplomacy or employing decisive combat power to achieve desired effects.

Of the JICs currently under development, none are as responsive or offer the U.S. military a more flexible capability. Seabasing provides a secure, joint capable, agile, and scalable power projection platform free of the restrictions normally associated with traditional land based installations. This Joint Integrating Concept will enable rapid deployment, assembly of combat forces, command and control, precise power projection, reconstitution and redeployment of joint combat power from the sea against an asymmetrical enemy that possesses evolving and adaptive technologies and strategies.

From the beginning of a crisis through the completion of stabilization operations, seabasing offers our nation a truly joint flexible, responsive, precise, and powerful tool in a full spectrum of operations ranging from humanitarian support through our continuing execution of the Global War on Terrorism.

Endnotes

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