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EMBRACE REALITY & SHAPE THE FUTURE

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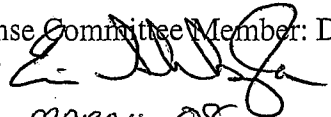
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Executive Summary

Title: Embrace Reality & Shape the Future

Author: Major P. Ray Roberson, Jr.

Thesis: The Marine Corps should embrace these engagement operations because they will exercise expeditionary capabilities, increase cultural awareness, enhance joint, interagency and non-governmental organization (NGO) interoperability, and develop local networks. In addition, the Marine Corps will increase its irregular warfare capacity by conducting engagement operations, or tactical diplomacy.

Discussion: General Tony Zinni recently wrote, "I felt that if we were more aggressive and did a better job of planning and coordinating engagement programs – military, diplomatic, economic, cultural, etc. – we could truly "shape" a more stable, secure, and productive environment in troubled regions of the world."¹ The U.S. needs an institution or entity to fill the capacity void at the tactical level of diplomacy. The U.S. Marine Corps is uniquely suited to conduct operations across the engagement spectrum. Although there are other U.S. military organizations which are better suited to conduct specific missions, the Marine Corps' "true uniqueness lies in its general-purpose utility in being a force for all seasons. DOD discusses what broadly defines engagement in terms of security cooperation, but this unnecessarily narrows the possibilities of what the military, and specifically the U.S. Marine Corps, can do to promote U.S. interests abroad. The Marine Corps is following the DOD lead as it too focuses its institutional energy on building military-to-military training capacities.

The Marine Corps should seek to fill the tactical diplomacy void with an engagement strategy that takes a holistic approach. The Marine Corps has yet to fully explore the potential benefits for it as an organization, and more importantly, the nation, of developing robust engagement capabilities, while maintaining its conventional ones. The Marine Corps needs to make at least four specific changes to improve its non-kinetic capability sets and its ability to perform effective ESCO. The Marine Corps should create MAGTFs specifically designed to conduct ESCO; increase its capacity to employ critical MOSs; expand the breadth and depth of civil-military operations (CMO) training; and establish a Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC)-level Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) to collaborate with other agencies and organizations, especially USAID. As the Marine Corps' personnel strength grows to 202,000, the organization should examine the differences in today's approach in comparison with the year 2000. The Marine Corps should take a different approach and build a more flexible force structure that includes the critical MOSs.

Conclusion: The pre-9/11 paradigm served the Marine Corps well, but post-9/11, that paradigm proved to be inadequate in preparing Marines to engage in the non-kinetic operations to prevent, mitigate and prepare for future wars. As the Marine Corps searches for what will define it in the years to come, it cannot expect that resuming CAXs and traditional MEU operations will prepare Marines for the demands of tomorrow.

EMBRACE REALITY & SHAPE THE FUTURE

The United States foreign policy emphasis shifted from isolation to engagement from 2001 to today. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as natural disasters around the world, presented the U.S. with opportunities to establish relationships with partner nations, in order to counter challenges to U.S. global interests. International support for the war in Afghanistan shares the resource burdens and contributes to the international perceptions of legitimacy, whereas burden-sharing for the war in Iraq has continued to erode and the U.S. now shoulders the vast majority of the costs. Building new and strengthening old partnerships helps to diffuse criticism of U.S. international actions, and highlights the value of engagement as a foreign policy tool. New relationships must have mutually beneficial aspects to them. They may provide U.S. diplomatic and/or military access, while the U.S. reciprocates with varying levels of diplomatic, military and economic assistance to those countries willing support its interests. These cooperating countries often improve their status in the ever-increasing globalized community.

General Tony Zinni recently wrote, "I felt that if we were more aggressive and did a better job of planning and coordinating engagement programs – military, diplomatic, economic, cultural, etc. – we could truly "shape" a more stable, secure, and productive environment in troubled regions of the world."¹ The substantial cost of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars makes it clear that U.S. foreign policy should shift towards preventing wars. Engagement activities and operations should no longer be assigned lesser roles, because as the world's lone superpower, armed conflicts anywhere around the globe often directly and indirectly affect U.S. interests. And if the U.S. must fight a

war, engagement activities and operations enable the U.S. military to have the greatest possible cultural understanding and international support to ensure success.

The United States needs an agency or organization to conduct these engagement programs abroad at the tactical level to further its strategic interests. U.S. foreign engagement has always had the twofold purpose of furthering America's foreign policy interests in expanding democracy and free markets, and improving the lives of the citizens of the developing world.² The 2005 Southeast Asian tsunami disaster relief operation and humanitarian operations in general, provide a starting point to begin establishing stronger diplomatic relationships, which potentially leads to national and regional stability. This stability allows open and free commerce, which is of key strategic interest because it leads to greater prosperity, and begins to merge other nations' interest with the United States'.

Unstable areas around the world, especially the "Arc of Instability" pose a threat to U.S. interests because these countries are often weak and fragile with uncertain futures. Some of these countries contain vast natural resources that contribute to the global economy, which contributes to U.S. interests in their respective stability.³ The U.S. specifically has an interest in increasing engagement activities in these resource-rich countries. Engagement can ultimately help stabilize these countries by establishing stronger diplomatic ties, increasing their military capabilities, and facilitating economic development to increase global interdependence.

Engagement will not always bring stability to a nation or region, nor will it necessarily preclude armed conflict, but engagement presents a greater possibility that armed conflict can at the very least be postponed, if not mitigated altogether.

Engagement is a proactive approach to extending the elements of national power in a calculated way that will improve stability, while increasing bilateral and regional cooperation with the United States. Engagement is shaping the future rather than reacting to the consequences of a destabilized country or region. As General Zinni states, "Diplomatic solutions are always preferable to military operations."⁴

The line between military and diplomatic operations is seldom distinct because military operations should tie into the nation's strategic diplomatic plan. As the Departments of State and Defense develop complementary plans, the military's opportunity to support the U.S.' diplomatic efforts continues to expand. The Marine Corps should embrace these engagement operations because they will exercise expeditionary capabilities, increase cultural awareness, enhance joint, interagency and non-governmental organization (NGO) interoperability, and develop local networks. In addition, the Marine Corps will increase its irregular warfare capacity by conducting engagement operations, or tactical diplomacy.

Background

The Department of State's (DOS) mission is to build and maintain strong bilateral and multilateral relationships "to create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community."⁵ DOS develops and articulates a diplomatic strategy based upon the President's National Security Strategy, and the Secretary of State and Ambassadors execute this strategic diplomacy. Foreign dignitaries and Ambassadors regularly exchange correspondence and interact, but only at the highest levels of government.

DOS's primary engagement tool is the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). "USAID is an independent federal government agency that [...] advances U.S. foreign policy objectives by supporting economic growth, agriculture and trade; global health; and, democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance." It is the organization best suited to conduct tactical engagement operations, but it has capacity limitations. "In all, there are about 8,000 employees worldwide, including 1,200 Civil Service employees and 500 Foreign Service Officers based in Washington, 800 Foreign Service Officers deployed overseas, 5,000 local employees working in our overseas missions."⁶ When allocating these personnel around the world, the agency's limitations are obvious. The U.S. government lacks depth below the strategic and operational levels.

The weaknesses in the government's ability to unify its agencies' efforts are highlighted as they attempt to project U.S. power abroad. DOD is the only agency that has a robust global power projection capability. The other agencies do not have the capacity to effectively handle additional roles and responsibilities. Increasing capacity is the first hurdle to effective interagency integration. Because of limited capacity most agencies prioritize their responses with a triage approach – what has to be done, what should be done, and what can be done.

The U.S. needs an institution or entity to fill the capacity void at the tactical level of diplomacy. Diplomats discuss the resources and capabilities that the U.S. can offer, but ultimately someone has to deliver them. The Secretary of Defense has acknowledged on numerous occasions the challenges DOS and other U.S. agencies face. In a recent speech, Secretary Gates noted that:

What is not as well-known, and arguably even more shortsighted, was the gutting of America's ability to engage, assist, and communicate with other parts of the world – the 'soft power,' which had been so important throughout the Cold War. The State Department froze the hiring of new Foreign Service officers for a period of time. The United States Agency for International Development saw deep staff cuts – its permanent staff dropping from a high of 15,000 during Vietnam to about 3,000 in the 1990s. And the U.S. Information Agency was abolished as an independent entity, split into pieces, and many of its capabilities folded into a small corner of the State Department.⁷

When looking objectively at the percentage of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to DOD in comparison with the other agencies, it becomes apparent that DOD cannot refuse to address the nation's unfulfilled demands. DOD may not want the mission, but because no other agency has the capacity today, DOD is obligated to close the gap in this unfilled requirement. Engagement requirements will most likely increase before they diminish. Lieutenant General (LTG) Chiarelli stated that the U.S. should:

utilize its military to create and shape alliances – the GDP investment in our military is too great to underutilize. The primary focus remains warfighting supremacy, but this allows the military to conduct other missions, which ultimately enhance the overall effort to further U.S. interests. The challenge then becomes achieving the right balance.⁸

The U.S. Marine Corps is uniquely suited to conduct operations across the engagement spectrum. Although there are other U.S. military organizations which are better suited to conduct specific missions, the Marine Corps' "true uniqueness lies in its general-purpose utility in being a force for all seasons."⁹ The Marines' expeditionary culture and willingness to "do windows" makes the Marine Corps the best organization to fill this tactical diplomacy void.

The Marine Corps provided security assistance, military training and humanitarian assistance to many Southeast Asian neighbors prior to 2001, but these

engagement activities' significance increased immediately following September 11th. The U.S. Marine Corps is respected around the world for its professionalism, and host-nation militaries, specifically in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and the Republic of the Philippines, were anxious to work with the Marines to increase interoperability and validate their capabilities with a recognized world power. In addition to the military-to-military interactions, the Navy-Marine Corps team offered medical and dental care to their indigenous populations -- many had never received any advanced medical care. These foreign militaries want to work with the Marine Corps, but their indigenous populations needed the preventative and corrective medical and dental care they received.

II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), based in Jacksonville, North Carolina, participated in a similar Engagement and Security Cooperation Operations (ESCO), most notably Exercise UNITAS in South America. This is the U.S. Navy's longest running multi-lateral exercise, but the Marine Corps recently began staffing its participation with reserve component Marines as personnel demands for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars increased.¹⁰ UNITAS is a series of bi- and multi-lateral exercises with 11 countries that facilitates interoperability, and encourages regional cooperation. Regrettably, this exercise, and many like it, has been categorized as a lesser priority, and Marine Corps participation continues to wane.

III MEF, based in Okinawa, Japan, continues to establish its reputation for effective engagement with its numerous operations and exercises throughout the Pacific Command theater. III MEF's strategic geographic location enables the Marine Corps to project U.S. power and compassion, which ESCO only reinforce. Each year the MEF participates in 7th Fleet's Exercise LANDING FORCE (LF) COMBINED ARMS AND

READINESS AFLOAT TRAINING (CARAT). This ESCO deployment further develops military and civilian relationships with Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Republic of the Philippines. In addition to the military-to-military interactions, medical and dental personnel conduct civic action projects (CAP) in the latter four countries. The military-to-military interactions are the centerpiece of the deployment, but the CAPs generate the greatest positive media coverage, and are what the local community leaders appreciate the most.

The greatest U.S. success since September 11th was providing humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia following the tsunamis in 2004, and to Pakistan following the earthquake in 2005.¹¹ These natural disasters created an opportunity for the U.S. to uphold its espoused values, and also deny anti-U.S. interest groups from establishing or further entrenching themselves in these vulnerable areas. The U.S. response highlighted for the international community the depth of military power, and how that power, which was used to project U.S. values and further its interests, can also be harnessed for the benefit of the international community. The U.S. response showed the world why it is important to be a U.S. friend rather than an enemy.

During December 2004 and January 2005, III MEF responded to the tsunami by deploying thousands of Marines and their equipment to Thailand and Sri Lanka, and aboard ships off the Indonesian coast. Within weeks the U.S. effectively responded to mitigate the effects of an international tragedy. III MEF became a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), and coordinated with the respective national governments the parameters under which the U.S. would operate to provide the greatest disaster relief possible. The nuances of host nations warranted consideration of how the U.S. could help without

undermining those respective governments. Nevertheless, the U.S. delivered food, water, temporary shelter, and removed debris that enabled local governments and populations to begin rebuilding their lives and communities in earnest.

Later that same year, III MEF again responded to a natural disaster. When an earthquake struck Pakistan in October 2005, Marine Corps' helicopters proved instrumental in effectively providing critical humanitarian assistance. Pakistan's vast territory and remote areas challenged overland transportation. This disaster relief operation offered the U.S. a unique opportunity to influence Pakistan's local population, which is frequently characterized as loathing the U.S. because of its support for President Pervez Musharraf. The Pakistani people were able to see first hand the U.S. compassion and demonstration of its stated ideals in a personal context.

The U.S. has provided military training to a number of allies that were previously less relevant in world affairs. The Marine Corps sent detachments to Mongolia and Georgia to train their militaries to support the Afghan and Iraq war efforts. Every country that is willing to participate in these armed conflicts now matters to the U.S., and its assistance matters to them. The U.S. now finds itself more connected to and dependent upon the global community, but this also presents an opportunity to advance its national security interests. The U.S.' interests are becoming more and more intertwined with the world's, which makes engagement a necessary shaping tool to advance its global agenda.

Although U.S. foreign policy continues to morph towards more engagement at the executive and cabinet levels, the opportunity the nation must address is at the community level. For example, the government of Saudi Arabia supports U.S. policy and often

favorably responds to U.S. requests, but the Saudis contributed the majority of the 9/11 hijackers, and the Saudi people in general do not hold a favorable view of the U.S. While the U.S. must accept that some people will not positively view the U.S., there are some areas around the world that the U.S. can influence. Every incremental step towards reshaping negative views into positive ones is an incremental step towards increased national security. Some pundits argue that world opinion does not matter, but people who like the U.S. do not usually try to undermine or destroy it. The U.S. can do more to transform global opinions, and it must do so with a long-term, sustainable engagement strategy.

Today's Challenges

The greatest challenge for DOD's ESCO efforts is the interagency, but this is not an excuse for inaction. Prior to 2005, there was no mechanism to integrate the government agencies' symbiotic, but disconnected, engagement efforts. National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) – 44, Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization, made the State Department responsible for integrating efforts in the global war on terror, which facilitates a comprehensive unity of effort. It is a positive step towards coordinating and integrating all the government agencies necessary to conduct a comprehensive engagement strategy, but it does not include the scope required to integrate Phase 0 military engagement efforts.¹² Another directive or a modification to the existing one will be required to further integrate interagency efforts during the engagement phase.

Each Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) now has a Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG), which will help Marine Forces (MARFOR) and MEF commanders develop effective, well-integrated plans. DOD, especially at the GCC level, has recognized the value of the interagency and that all the elements of national power cannot be optimally projected solely through the military. The JIACG continues to make progress at the operational and tactical levels as representatives across the interagency collaborate to maximize the effectiveness of each operation, even as barriers and challenges remain at the national level. The interagency process, at least in as much as it falls within the purview of the JIACG, is functional rather than optimal at the operational and tactical levels. Key government representatives acknowledge the current systems' limitations. Numerous articles have been written about how the various government agencies and departments should be reformed, specifically "Strategic Planning for U.S. National Security: A Project Solarium for the 21st Century" and "Beyond Goldwater-Nichols", so this aspect will not be further addressed in this paper.¹³

DOD is working towards resurrecting the Military Advisory and Assistance Group (MAAG) concept to further integrate military and interagency operations, but this represents a separate DOD counterpart to DOS in a foreign country.¹⁴ Although this extension of DOD enhances its ability to coordinate engagement activities, the MAAG creates a formal bureaucratic structure that discourages coordination between the U.S. Embassy Chief of Mission and the unit commander. The MAAG as a separate executive branch entity has the potential to further disintegrate the U.S. foreign policy strategy and message rather than improving coordination and enhancing the U.S.'s ability to mobilize its instruments of the national power.

At the operational and tactical levels, the Marine Corps is attempting to establish a robust Marine Corps Training and Advisor Group (MCTAG). Although the Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) established the Foreign Military Training Unit (FMTU) to fill this military-to-military training role as the Marine component of the U.S. Special Operations Command, the Marine Corps' leadership envisions a need to fulfill GCC requirements beyond MARSOC's capacity.¹⁵ The MCTAG is the Marine Corps' pragmatic response to the continuous advisor and transition team requirements in Iraq. The MCTAG provides another security cooperation employment option, which increases institutional flexibility.

DOD discusses what broadly defines engagement in terms of security cooperation, but this unnecessarily narrows the possibilities of what the military, and specifically the U.S. Marine Corps, can do to promote U.S. interests abroad. The military discusses engagement activities through the prism of security cooperation, but there are many more activities and operations as well. Just as there is a spectrum of conflict, there is also a spectrum of engagement, which ranges from humanitarian assistance to foreign internal defense. The goal of ESCO is to build both civilian and military relationships, which facilitate greater cultural understanding and ultimately lead to improved regional stability.

DOD's approach to ESCO is to focus its institutional energy on building partner nations' military capabilities and capacity, which ultimately lessens international reliance upon U.S. military forces. This is a critical aspect of the ESCO equation; however, military-to-military security cooperation receives a disproportionate percentage of the military's attention and resources while other engagement opportunities are neglected.

Engagement includes conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, general infrastructure improvement, and security cooperation, but it also includes an opportunity to leverage the capabilities managed by other U.S. agencies.

The Marine Corps is following DOD lead as it too focuses its institutional energy on building military-to-military training capacities. The Marine Corps wants to create a Security Cooperation (SC) Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) that will be built around an infantry battalion – this is more of the same kinetically-oriented thinking that accentuated the early problems in Iraq. The challenge is not simply how the military can build more military capacity to alleviate the world's demand for U.S. forces. The challenge is bringing all the Marine Corps' capabilities, and including joint and interagency capabilities as well. Coordinating DOD efforts with other agencies, such as announcing a U.S. trade agreement, and conducting simultaneous military-to-military exercises and medical, dental, veterinary, and engineer CAPs across a local region, can have a seismic impact in shaping a foreign nation's perception of the U.S.

Today's vision for security cooperation requires Marines to train, conduct exercises, provide military assistance, and share intelligence.¹⁶ The issue with the Marine Corps' vision, as it is being developed in "The Long War Concept", is that it seeks to justify infantry battalion increases rather than develop a ground-up ESCO plan. The Marine Corps is building a concept to justify personnel and equipment instead of building a concept that develops the best Marine Corps to fight tomorrow's irregular war. Instead, the Marine Corps should use ESCO to fully employ all its capabilities, further develop non-kinetic tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), and continue to develop the organization's ability to operate across the conflict spectrum.

The Marine Corps consistently proves its preeminence in combined arms integration and amphibious operations. Combined arms exercises (CAX) and Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) deployment cycles develop and refine these core capability sets, but they do not prepare the Marine Corps to conduct non-kinetic operations. The Marine Corps needs a new capability set to eliminate this institutional blind spot, and a robust ESCO plan presents the opportunity to fill this capability gap by enhancing the organization's ability to conduct non-kinetic operations.

The Marine Corps' institutional challenge is shifting the mindset. The organization's reputation and status comes from its conventional success. Although the Marine Corps leadership is developing a security cooperation strategy, there is a general lack of commitment to ESCO. A notable exception is the Marine Corps' commitment to advisors and transition teams – they both represent a nimble, non-kinetic response that to date has improved the probability of U.S. success in Iraq. The U.S. Navy tested its Global Fleet Station (GFS) concept in 2007, and requested Marine Corps participation. The Marine Corps sent eight reserve Marines to observe and participate in the Navy's engagement initiative. While there are significant competing requirements that demand tough prioritization choices, one can conclude that engagement is a strategy to employ peace-time capacity rather than a mission the Marine Corps truly wants.

The Marine Corps needs take a more ambitious approach that goes beyond employing its new infantry battalion capacity. The Marine Corps should fully employ its MAGTF capabilities, and augment them with specialized personnel and capability sets. When examining the likely irregular warfare threats of tomorrow, the Marine Corps

needs additional active duty, non-conventional capabilities, such as public affairs (PA), civil affairs (CA) and information operations (IO).

New Approach

The Marine Corps should seek to fill the tactical diplomacy void with an engagement strategy that takes a holistic approach. The Marine Corps has developed and demonstrated its ability to conduct conventional operations, with particular emphasis on combined arms integration and amphibious assault capabilities. This premier warfighting organization continues to develop its ability to conduct irregular operations – the Marine Corps' ability to shape the non-kinetic battlefield matures more and more each day. However, the Marine Corps has yet to fully explore the potential benefits for it as an organization, and more importantly, the nation, of developing robust engagement capabilities while maintaining its conventional capabilities. "This far left side of the spectrum is where the jihadists are making their greatest progress-where local governments are weakest, corrupt, incompetent, or all of the above; where conventional U.S. combat forces are least appropriate; and where American policy and capabilities are weakest."¹⁷ Rather than allow anti-U.S. interest groups to provide people with clean water, medical services, etc., the Marine Corps can exercise its expeditionary capabilities to fulfill these needs in strategic geographical areas.

The greatest opportunity for the United States, which the Marine Corps is postured to exploit because of its ability to rapidly respond, is humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations: HA/DR is not just crisis response. It is an opportunity for tactical diplomacy because for those indigenous people who receive care

and services, there is a tangible benefit, which strengthens the American image abroad on an individual level. In the past, engineer, medical and dental civic action programs (CAP) were developed as lesser adjacent efforts to military exercises and operations – personnel, who were not conducting higher priority tasks, volunteered or were assigned to conduct these missions. As an imperative tenant of ESCO, HA/DR operations should have a high priority because of the immediate positive impact in the region.

Understandably the military wants to focus on the military-to-military portion of ESCO because it fundamentally aligns, but an effective ESCO strategy combines security cooperation and HA/DR to provide a solid foundation that will reinforce initiatives designed to advance U.S. national interests. The Marine Corps needs a comprehensive approach that addresses the same issues it faces today in Iraq. The Marine Corps needs to effectively work with a foreign country's military, local population and government, and deliver messages to each that advances the U.S. agenda.

Engagement operations provide an opportunity to integrate rapid deployment cycles with real-world operations. DOD and the Marine Corps treat the MEU as the nation's principal crisis response mechanism because it can rapidly respond to a range of scenarios. For other units that are not forward deployed, they face significant friction that can inhibit rapid deployment. While some units plan and execute limited rapid deployment exercises, amphibious and aviation lift constraints, as well as competing training and exercise employment plans (TEEP), deter a fully synchronized tables of organization and equipment (T/O&E) mobilizations, and subsequent operations.

The most important residual benefit of ESCO for the Marine Corps is that individual Marines develop cultural understanding from working with joint, inter-agency

and NGO personnel, as well as indigenous people. An expanded ESCO program exposes large numbers of Marines to the subtleties of a country, region, or organization, which increases cultural understanding with each interaction. This interaction with foreign governments, militaries, businesses, and civilians provides a basis for learning the cultural differences and similarities that cannot be fully understood in the classroom or from reading The Ugly American – it is only with exposure that people see their similarities after understanding their differences. The Marines involved with ESCO will not become experts, but they will develop familiarity with a culture through their daily interactions, making them better tactical ambassadors and increasing their value to the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps will increase its joint, inter-agency and NGO cultural understanding at the organizational and individual levels as the ESCO strategy and implementation matures, which will facilitate more effective interoperability. Each organization brings its own unique culture. Engagement operations require a range of specialized capabilities that do not intuitively mesh into the Marine Corps' general-purpose culture. As units involved in an operation begin to understand individuals' roles and the available resources, these units can leverage unique capability sets. Increased frequency of operations offers Marines the opportunity to develop greater understanding of how to employ all the resources and assets available to increase the success of each mission.

The most important aspect of cultural understanding is that Marines learn how to conduct effective kinetic and non-kinetic operations against previously unfamiliar nations and/or groups. As Ralph Peters stated, "We need to know who to kill, who not to kill,

and know the difference between the two.” Cultural understanding is about preventing wars, but it also about preparing to conduct and win wars in the most efficient and effective way possible.¹⁸ It is only through a variety of interactions and systematic training and education programs that Marines will be prepared to identify and successfully attack a future enemy’s critical vulnerability.

As Marines develop cultural maturity, it becomes easier to develop robust intelligence networks within a foreign community. Intelligence personnel have the opportunity to expand their networks to maintain a minimal level of situational awareness well after the mission concludes. Intelligence personnel work with local police and government representatives, and develop relationships that are forged with frequent and sustained exposure. Many of these contacts continue to provide tangible and intangible benefits well into the future.

Marines who work in non-conventional roles develop creative problem solving abilities that directly translate to conventional operations. Humanitarian assistance, governance, infrastructure repair and economic development are concepts that require Marines to expand their critical thinking capabilities and act outside their traditional roles, which enhance their abilities to work in uncertain environments. These Marines become better-rounded, and more adept at solving complex problems under pressure.

The Marine Corps needs to make at least four specific changes to improve its non-kinetic capability sets and its ability to perform effective ESCO. The Marine Corps should create MAGTFs specifically designed to conduct ESCO. The MAGTF has the ability to task organize and frequently does for ad hoc missions, but there is a general adherence to the baseline structure. The standing MEU structure options should be

expanded to create the Marine Expeditionary Unit – Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Response – Engagement, or MEU (HA/DR-E). This MEU would reduce some of the traditional battalion landing team personnel and equipment and replace them with civil and public affairs, information operations, and Navy and Marine Corps engineering personnel and equipment. The rationale is that these capability sets offer the commander a greater capability to conduct ESCO, and most nations which present the most compelling cases for military-to-military engagement do not have tanks, light armored vehicles or robust artillery capabilities. The MEU still retains an infantry battalion with a weapons company and limited close air support, but the organization has a greater opportunity to defeat terrorism where it incubates.¹⁹

The Marine Corps must increase its capacity to employ critical MOSs. Today, the most effective approach is for the Marine Corps to create organic personnel structure and establish formal agreements with the Army, Air Force and Navy to provide essential personnel. The Marine Corps will be in a stronger position by leveraging the capabilities resident in the joint community because the other services have a base upon which they can build and share expertise as they augment and help the Marine Corps develop its own capabilities. Civil Affairs (CA), Public Affairs (PA), and Information Operations (IO) personnel have the ability favorably publicize U.S. efforts and influence targeted communities. These CA, PA, and IO personnel possess the skill sets necessary to capitalize upon ESCO by publicizing the Marine Corps' efforts to shape local, national and international opinions. The Marine Corps is creating a new cadre of Information Operations (IO) personnel, which will enhance the effective operation of staffs. The IO

MOS will also provide commanders with potential advisors who understand the joint capabilities critical to civil-military operations.

In the CA field, the first step is to move CA from the Marine Corps Reserve to the active duty forces – this will provide MEF commanders with a valuable resource that no longer has reserve component limitations. Additionally, the Marine Corps should institutionalize the “in lieu of” mission structure, especially for CA. Artillery battalions provide a valuable conventional capability in combat, but in a non-kinetic operation, they have little relevancy. This MOS set is an optimal candidate to augment standing CA forces in an “in lieu of” capacity.

The Marine Corps should expand the breadth and depth of civil military operations (CMO) training. The Marine Corps University has responded by creating training organizations, but the training is not sufficient to indoctrinate the organization at all levels. Just as “Every Marine is a Rifleman,” the Marine Corps should emphasize that “Every Marine is an Ambassador.” If the Marine Corps is going to conduct civil military operations, it must prepare for them with the same level of diligence it applies to conventional operations. In addition to the training every Marine receives, those Marines filling CA billets should obtain advanced training, which will help them develop and execute engagement strategies. The common theme within the Marine Corps today is a unit that is prepared to conduct high-intensity combat operations can also conduct CMO, which implies that the only difference is not killing the local population. If it were only that simple, the U.S. would have realized success in today’s conflicts much sooner.

The Marine Corps should establish a Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC)-level Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) to collaborate with other agencies and

organizations, especially USAID. DOD established the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and it bares the responsibility to collaborate at the institutional level with governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO), but this does not absolve the Marine Corps of detailed high-level coordination. While it may be detrimental for some organizations to overtly coordinate with the Marine Corps in a foreign setting, these same organizations can at the least discuss and deconflict their activities in Washington, D.C.

Overcoming Resistance

There will be resistance to this perceived “militarization” of foreign policy. There is a tendency for some political purists to say that there are other U.S. government agencies better postured to fill the tactical diplomacy void. However, the discussion of who will conduct tactical diplomacy would not occur if some agency was fulfilling the requirement. General Chiarelli went so far as to hypothesize that “the interagency will be broken for our lifetimes.”²⁰ This situation then leads to the question, if the military, and specifically the Marine Corps, does not seize the initiative and embrace this mission, who will? Is the nation more or less secure because the Marine Corps seeks to fill the void?

The Marine Corps must recognize the nation’s need, and with DOD’s acquiescence, embrace the engagement mission that appears to always be “someone else’s job”. Although the term engagement draws fierce opposition because the associated tactical tasks are not embraced as traditional department of defense roles, engagement now represents a critical component of national defense. Engagement must

be treated as preventative measures to armed conflict, and thereby, a means to preserving and furthering the U.S. strategic interests through influence vice conflict.

As the Marine Corps' personnel strength grows to 202,000, the organization should examine the differences in today's approach in comparison with the year 2000. The post-OEF/OIF era will present different challenges. While the Marine Corps prepares for the security cooperation demands with the proposed MCTAG and SC MAGTF, it has not adequately addressed the emerging personnel capabilities deficit. The Marine Corps debate for new personnel allocation of military occupational specialties (MOS) began with current conventional capabilities shortfalls instead of the anticipated shortfalls five to ten years from now. Instead of simply increasing conventional capacity, and institutionalizing provisional mission sets, the Marine Corps needs to more critically assess its capability shortfalls.

As LTG Chiarelli observed, "Civil Affairs efforts improved force protection when combined with security operations."²¹ The Marine Corps should take a different approach and build a more flexible force structure that includes the critical MOSs. Although the previous Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, made force transformation his top priority, the Marine Corps today is the same as it was in 2000. The only difference is that the Marines recently conducted extensive counter-insurgency operations with its conventional capabilities. The Marine Corps will be more effective in conducting these operations with a force structure that can operate at a moments notice across the conflict spectrum. The MOSs that will facilitate effective ESCO are also the same MOSs that the Marine Corps needed in 2003 and continues to need today.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps should embrace these engagement operations because they will exercise expeditionary capabilities, increase cultural awareness, enhance joint, interagency and non-governmental organization (NGO) interoperability, and develop local networks. In addition, the Marine Corps will increase its irregular warfare capacity by conducting engagement operations, or tactical diplomacy.

The pre-9/11 paradigm served the Marine Corps well, but post-9/11, that paradigm proved to be inadequate in preparing Marines to engage in the non-kinetic operations to prevent, mitigate and prepare for future wars. As the Marine Corps searches for what will define it in the years to come, it cannot expect that resuming CAXs and traditional MEU operations will prepare Marines for the demands of tomorrow. The new paradigm must be additive rather than a refinement of the old one, and ESCO is the added dimension that will prepare the Marine Corps to conduct non-kinetic and kinetic operations for tomorrow's conflicts.

Although nation-building is viewed unfavorably in today's political jargon, nation-building increases stability throughout the world, and ESCO enables those efforts. The U.S. and the world need stability to function as a global community, and stability enables the free flow of goods and services around the world. Stability ultimately leads to greater economic prosperity for those who need it most. Engagement is the toolset that in its barest form is the projection of U.S. power, but it provides the U.S. the ability to shape and transform regional and global stability to U.S. advantage. An effectively implemented engagement strategy serves U.S. national interests, and it is the right role for the Marine Corps today.

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