

The Expeditionary Mind  
EWS Contemporary Issue Paper  
Submitted by Captain S.M. Mellon  
to  
Major R.F. Revoir, CG 9  
20 February 2008

# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE <b>20 FEB 2008</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>The Expeditionary Mind</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development, Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068</b>				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 <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>12</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## **Scenario.**

Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/8 lands in Pasni, Pakistan to conduct bilateral training with the Pakistani Marine Corps. The logistics support structure in Pasni is not mature but does have basic host nation support (HNS) for Class I (Subsistence), III (Fuel), and IV (Construction Materials). Organic supply build-up for the 12 day exercise will be completed by D+2 and utilizes Class I and III HNS to augment organic stocks. Initial intelligence estimates indicate that no significant enemy threat exists in Pasni. On D+2 of the training exercise, civil unrest erupts and the local populace threatens the stability of the Pakistani Government. The 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable [MEU(SOC)]) receives a warning order to conduct a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) and begins the “Rapid Response Planning Process” to tackle the developing problem. Concurrently, similar civil unrest spreads to neighboring Iran. Intelligence now indicates that the former, insignificant Level I anti-western terrorist threat in the Pasni region has gained support from the local populace and is receiving financial, military, and tactical support from Iranian terrorist cells. BLT 1/8 (-) is ashore with 1 Mechanized Rifle Co and HNS for contracted Class I, III, and IV is no longer available.

The previous scenario was taken from Operation Inspired Union and occurred in September of 2006 when BLT 1/8, 24<sup>th</sup> MEU(SOC) conducted bilateral training with the Pakistani Marine Corps. From the BLT S-4’s perspective, the scenario presents serious issues in providing logistics support to the BLT. In resolving this issue, replenishment from the sea presents the most reliable answer. In October of 2001, the 26<sup>th</sup> MEU(SOC) created an expeditionary sustainment bridge to an inland forward operating base (FOB) which ultimately led to the establishment of Camp Rhino, Kandahar, Afghanistan. In the very near future, not so

far beyond the “Long War,” the Marine Corps will again be called upon to provide power from the sea as a result of being “most ready, when the nation is least ready.”<sup>1</sup>

In the current operating environment (COE), the Marine Corps enjoys logistically mature theaters of operation. This situation will not exist in the future. To enhance expeditionary capability and to prepare for operations beyond the “Long War,” the Marine Corps must think logistically and restructure its mindset to reduce the weight of equipment and the weight of the individual Marine’s combat load, return to basics by educating and training the Marine Corps on the logistics of amphibious operations, and, finally, focus on providing right time logistics support to sustain the amphibious force from ship to shore.

### **The Expeditionary Mind and Amphibious Roots.**

What is the “Expeditionary Mind?” The “Expeditionary Mind” has allowed the Marine Corps to develop from creation at Tun Tavern in 1775 as a naval force of troops embarked aboard colonial men-of-war such as the U.S.S. Constitution and has transcended to modern time as demonstrated during amphibious operations on Guadalcanal in the summer of 1942 and on the Korean peninsula in 1950 and on to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) in the COE.<sup>2</sup> Historically, the expeditionary mindset has enabled the Marine Corps to uniquely and innovatively adapt to changing environments and to take on a wide range of missions with less personnel and equipment by combining the lethality of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). As the previously listed history exemplifies, the Marine Corps must maintain a focus of effort on the roots of its creation, amphibious operations, and use the expeditionary mind to remain responsive to contingencies of the future.

Currently, the Marine Corps is operating in a logistically mature environment which will not exist in the future. Operations in Djibouti and the greater Horn of Africa (HOA), in

Afghanistan, and Iraq have logistically spoiled the Marine Corps and lessened its ability to respond to crises more easily solved through conduct of expeditionary operations. Innovation remains the hallmark of the Marine Corps and although the Corps is currently conducting successful operations in an unconventional war in the OIF/OEF counterinsurgency (COIN), the traditional concept of projecting “power from the sea” and exercising agile, adaptive, and lethal ship-to-shore amphibious operations with a minimal or infantile logistics support structure and signature has largely been neglected.<sup>3</sup>

In the future, the Marine Corps will continue operate from amphibious shipping in littoral regions with minimal logistics infrastructure similar to those found in the “Arc of Instability” which extends from Central and South America to the continents of Africa, Southeast Asia and into the seas of Indochina.<sup>4</sup> Operations in these regions will require significant logistical support from naval surface assets. In these regions, the Marine Corps cannot rely on current logistically mature support models seen recently in the COE. The Marine Corps reliance on logistically mature support structures in OEF/OIF may prevent the Marine Corps from developing and executing innovative logistics support. To enhance the ability to provide sea-based logistics to the Marine units operating in the littoral, the Marine Corps has created new “Security Cooperation Marine Air-Ground Task Forces...And for sailors, it will mean a steady reliance on the amphibious fleet.”<sup>5</sup> The Marine Corps will return to amphibious roots as seen with the emergence of the Security Cooperation MAGTFs and “in the future, more Marines than ever will be deployed aboard Navy and potentially Coast Guard shipping.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Striking the Balance of Equipment Weight and the Weight of the Combat Loaded Marine.**

To enhance expeditionary capability and to prepare for operations beyond the “Long War,” the Marine Corps must reduce the weight of equipment and the weight of the individual Marine’s combat load. Is the Marine Corps capable of embarking the COE’s armor heavy

equipment for future operations? The answer to this question is no. Current amphibious shipping can carry armor heavy equipment such as the Marine Armor Kit/MTVR Armor System (MAK/MAS), and the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle (MRAP). However, due to the weight of MAK, MAS, and MRAP vehicles, the total number of vehicles available to the ground combat element (GCE) aboard amphibious shipping is significantly reduced. For example, the MAK installed on the High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) increases the weight of the vehicle by 3,000 lbs. Ultimately, the increased weight of each vehicle reduces the total number of vehicles capable of being lifted by the current amphibious shipping models: Multipurpose Amphibious Assault Ship (LHD), General Purpose Amphibious Assault Ship (LHA), Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD), and Dock Landing Ship (LSD).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, each vehicle's increased weight reduces the number of vehicles capable of being loaded onto ship-to-shore assets such as the Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) and Landing Craft, Utility (LCU).<sup>8</sup> In this respect, current armor heavy equipment does not support current/traditional amphibious lift capabilities. However, the Marine Corps and Navy team are planning to update and redesign the aging fleet of amphibious vessels and create new amphibious vessels which will be capable of displacing more tons of equipment. For example the new "Large, Medium-Speed, Roll-On/Roll-Off" or LMSR Maritime Prepositioning Force, Future [MPF(F)] ship will give the MPF(F) squadrons a ship capable of lifting 62,644 Long Tons and is scheduled to become part of MPF(F) shipping in the summer of 2008.<sup>9</sup>

To become enhance expeditionary capability, the Marine Corps must reduce the weight of the individual Marine's combat load. The addition of armor and modern equipment weight to an individual combat loaded Marine is now 90.5 lbs in the COE.<sup>10</sup> This does not support the expeditionary mindset and almost singly erases the concept of classic light infantry. As Col S. L.

A. Marshall noted post World War II, “The soldier cannot be a fighter and a pack animal at one and the same time, any more than a field piece can be a gun and a supply vehicle combined.”<sup>11</sup> Classic light infantry “is the most suitable infantry for all forms of close terrain (forests, mountains, tundra, and cities) and civil-military operations” and is a better choice for Marines embarked aboard amphibious shipping.<sup>12</sup> In keeping with the expeditionary mindset, a lighter Marine would, “For strategic movement [enable] the overall force [to be] smaller and [to have] units [that] are individually lighter in weight.”<sup>13</sup>

The individual equipment load for a Marine in the COE is not designed for expeditionary operations. Roughly speaking, the total weight requirement for each 03XX in an infantry battalion is 46,155 lbs. The aging CH-46E can lift approximately one squad (13 Marines), has a maximum payload of 24,300 lbs, and can range approximately 132 nautical miles.<sup>14</sup> When considering the extended range of most littorals, international waters of 12 nautical miles from shore, and approximate positioning of amphibious ships from the objective, the ability of the aviation combat element (ACE) to lift a Marine rifle squad becomes a significant issue. Hence, the Marine Corps has developed the MV-22 Osprey, which can lift a reinforced squad (18 Marines), has a maximum vertical takeoff payload of 47,500 lbs, and can range approximately 200 nautical miles.<sup>15</sup> Although the Osprey greatly enhances the Marine Corps capability to lift a larger number of Marines farther than the CH-46E, the overall size of the Osprey, in combination with the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter concept and fuel requirements for both platforms, has forced the Navy and Marine Corps team to design the LHD Replacement [LHD(R)] without a well deck.<sup>16</sup> The LHD(R)’s increased focus on ACE centric amphibious assault places an even greater emphasis on the concept of light infantry and the importance of reducing the weight of the combat loaded Marine.

## **Educating the Marine Corps in the Midst of OEF/OIF.**

To enhance expeditionary capability, the Marine Corps must educate and train its Marines on logistical issues involved with amphibious operations of the past and present. The Marine Corps has exponentially lost logistics-based amphibious knowledge and experience by spending over five years in the COE. Generally speaking, many of the Marine Corps company grade officers, NCOs, and SNCOs have an experience base with multiple tours in the COE; tours where a logistically mature theater of operation exists. On the periphery, the previous experience level naturally points to a knowledge base deficient in logistical challenges associated with amphibious operations. This knowledge base is almost entirely void of the expeditionary mindset and as General Conway notes, “Historically, our Corps has produced respected leaders who have demonstrated intellectual agility in warfighting. As of late, our deployment tempo increasingly places our PME [Professional Military Education] programs at risk. No level of risk is acceptable, however, if it threatens the steady flow of thinkers, planners, and aggressive commanders who can execute.”<sup>17</sup>

The corner stone of expeditionary operations is the MEU. In total, the Marine Corps dispatches seven MEUs (3 each from the West and East Coast, and 1 from Okinawa) supporting I, II and III Marine Expeditionary Force respectively. Approximately 2000 Marines from each element of the MEU MAGTF deploy annually. In providing a rough translation with respect to current manpower force projections of the Marine Corps being equal to 187,000 Marines at the end of Fiscal Year 2008, this means that approximately 14,000 Marines or 7.48% of the Marine Corps is the benefactor of amphibious-based MEU experience annually. Compared to the number of Marines currently serving in OEF/OIF, the percentage of the Marine Corps with amphibious-based MEU experience is significantly smaller. Consequently, the majority of the

current force's experience revolves around OEF/OIF, and many of the Marine Corps' company grade officers, NCOs and SNCO's know only OEF/OIF scenarios devoid of logistics challenges experienced in amphibious operations. Although the Marine Corps is the "nation's premiere expeditionary force...we now have a generation of young men and women who do not have a complete understanding of what expeditionary is."<sup>18</sup>

How does the Marine Corps effectively implement logistics lessons learned from amphibious operations of the past and present in the midst of OEF/OIF? Simply put, a PME study of historical amphibious operations with heavy emphasis on current MEU-based amphibious operations must be implemented. The classical debate of which comes first in the five phases of an amphibious operation – embarkation, movement, planning, rehearsal, and assault – is not as important as the study of the five phases of amphibious operations and how to strike a balance in loading an amphibious ship to prepare for a multitude of MEU-based operations which may include “stability and support; small wars and counterinsurgency; humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and nation-building; peacekeeping operations; combating terrorism; counterproliferation and nonproliferation; combating drug trafficking and crime; and non-combatant evacuation operations.”<sup>19</sup> Most importantly, the understanding of logistics issues dealing with embarkation of a ship, the sequence of loading, and how these issues directly relate to the success or failure of amphibious operations are of extreme importance. As Gen Leonard F. Chapman (24<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps) notes, “It is incumbent upon the Marine officer to be constantly teaching his men, his junior officers and himself.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Right Time Logistics Support.**

To enhance the expeditionary mind, the Marine Corps must conduct right time logistics to support the MAGTF during all phases of amphibious operations. Basic calculations for a MEU sized element indicate that the ACE will consume the lion's share of Class III (Fuel), while

the GCE will consume the majority of Class V (Ammunition). Traditionally, questions posed to the logistics community have revolved around when and how much of a unit's equipment will arrive. Anticipating the needs of each element within the MAGTF is the mainstay of providing right time logistics support. It is critical for each logistician in the MAGTF to understand and project the needs of the unit he/she is supporting and furthermore, to ensure that each element of the MAGTF receives exactly what is needed to continue operations without pause. Critical errors in sustaining the needs of the force are not acceptable. Logisticians of all ranks must have the agility to tap into any logistics network – joint, coalition, and HNS - to provide the most effective sustainment to the MAGTF. Right time logistics in the COE has been conducted in a logistically mature environment where supplies are readily available to the MAGTF from a multitude of sources. Logisticians must not rely on current OEF/OIF mature logistics experience for future operations. Although the aide from joint interaction stretching to the Goldwater-Nichols Act has enabled the Marine Corps to tap into joint stocks, Marine Corps logisticians must remember to focus on the basics of amphibious operations.<sup>21</sup> It is important for logisticians to realize that amphibious ship space limits the size of embarked sustainment packages and most importantly, that it is incumbent upon the logistician to forecast and procure the needs of the MAGTF to provide logistics at the right place and at the right time.

### **Summary.**

American history, recent as well as past, has fully demonstrated the vital need for the existence of a strong force in readiness:

“Such a force, versatile, fast-moving and hard-hitting...can prevent the growth of potentially large conflagrations by prompt and vigorous action during the incipient stages. The Nation's shock troops must be the most ready when the Nation is least ready...to provide a balanced force in readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground-and-air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large-scale war. –82<sup>nd</sup> Congress.

The Marine Corps must remain focused on its amphibious roots and enhance the expeditionary mind if it is to remain a “versatile, fast-moving and hard-hitting...” force to meet the demands of the American people and those of the world. As an amphibious force in expeditionary readiness, the Marine Corps must take the time to re-evaluate it’s role providing rapid response to regions in the “Arc of Instability” and other similar littorals throughout the world. Logistically mature theaters of operation as seen in the COE will not exist in the future. To enhance expeditionary capability and to prepare for operations beyond the COE, the Marine Corps must reduce the weight of equipment and the weight of the individual Marine’s combat load, return to the basics by educating and training the Marine Corps on the logistics of amphibious operations, and finally, focus the efforts of logisticians within the MAGTF to provide right time logistics support from ship to shore.

**2,667 words**

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