

## WAR ON THE RIVER: DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT EXPEDITIONARY RIVERINE OFFICERS

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**WAR ON THE RIVER: DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT EXPEDITIONARY RIVERINE  
OFFICERS**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The Riverine community has brought to bear significant capabilities for the Joint force and to combat the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The U.S. Navy's Riverine contribution fills a critical role for the Joint Force and has done so since its inception on 25 May 2006. This capability will be in jeopardy if the developmental process of growing Expeditionary Riverine Officers is not changed. With the development of a new Expeditionary Riverine Officer progression model and the incorporation of new combat leadership models throughout the Navy, the anticipated asymmetric threats of the future would be met with a competent joint maritime force. This new Expeditionary Riverine Officer force would be capable of meeting the Sea Service Commander's new Maritime strategy while ensuring the future joint war fighter remains enabled.

## WAR ON THE RIVER: DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT EXPEDITIONARY RIVERINE OFFICERS

It is 2 a.m. at Haditha Dam, Anbar Province Iraq. Riverine Squadron Three is in their second week of deployment providing Maritime Security Operations for Multi-National Force West (MNF-W). The intelligence and operations officers awake the Commanding Officer with a report that time sensitive, actionable intelligence has been collected and are recommending an immediate joint USMC and Riverine mission. Just two days prior, the Marines were attacked and suffered casualties in the vicinity of the Dam by enemy forces utilizing Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The Commanding Officer immediately approved the operation and directed urgent collaboration with neighboring USMC forces. In less than forty five minutes of this notification, Marine quick reaction and Riverine forces deployed and the riverine unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was launched. Within twenty minutes, these joint forces were on station conducting operations. Landward, the Marines conducted sweeping maneuvers to canalize suspected enemies towards the shoreline, while the maritime Riverine force provided two independent blocking positions to thwart any escape attempts. Riverine Security Forces (RST) also deployed ashore from the Riverine boats to capture possible escapees. All landward and seaward forces worked seamlessly together, advised by the Riverine Combat Operations Center (COC), which provided critical intelligence data gained by the UAV. After two hours of intense operations, Marine and Navy Riverine forces apprehended thirty individuals suspected of participating in recent bombings near the Haditha Dam, and ultimately detained two of them. This joint mission led to a four-month disruption of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) cell that had been operating

near the Dam and bought the Riverine Force instant credibility with their joint partners. This mission set the tone for Riverine Squadron Three—as an essential member of the team—for the remainder of its seven month deployment in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> At this point, it was made clear to the enemy and to the coalition force, that the US Navy Riverine force was ready, on-station, and eager to make a difference.

The U.S. Navy's Riverine contribution to the Global War On Terrorism (GWOT) fills a critical role in the Joint Force and has done so since its inception on 25 May 2006. It fulfills, according to Naval Expeditionary Combat Command's (NECC) draft instruction, the following capabilities: net-centric operations, command and control, battle-space awareness, force application, protection, logistics, and force support.<sup>2</sup> The above vignette from Iraq highlights all of these joint capabilities in action. However, this contribution requires combat leadership, expeditionary experience and competency ashore—abilities that the Navy needs to further develop for long-term success.

#### Expeditionary Warfare and Competency Ashore—What would Mahan and Corbett Think?

One rule that has not changed since the dawn of conflict is that the character of war constantly changes. War within the maritime domain is no exception. Over the last 200 years, maritime strategy has changed significantly to meet the evolving threats originating not only from the littorals, but more recently, from further in-land as well. Over these years, these threats have morphed from maritime threats posed by traditional state actors to threats from asymmetric, non-state actors. And consequently, these unconventional threats are continually becoming more strategically challenging to counter.

Two maritime strategists, Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) and Julian Stafford Corbett (1854-1922) have been called the fathers of maritime warfare theory. Both have had a significant impact on the Navy's ability to neutralize these threats in the maritime environment (at sea and in the littorals). Their strategies have impacted the social, economic, and political realms of the American people.

Today's wars are conceptually and operationally different from those fought during the turn of the last century, when Mahan and Corbett wrote. Threats no longer are defined by borders and confined to nation states. After the Soviet Union admitted defeat in the Cold War, the Khobar towers and USS Cole were bombed. Then the U.S. homeland suffered the 9/11 attacks and terrorism became a significant worldwide threat. Public opinion has continued to influence the political realm, and the mass media has found its way on to the battlefield. U.S. national strategy now reflects these significant changes in world politics, global economics, and war itself. Following suit, the sea services (Navy, Marines and Coast Guard) overcame their parochialisms and did something that Mahan and Corbett would hardly have envisioned: They developed a joint maritime strategy and published it in 2007.

This was the first time a joint effort contributed to a strategy that integrates sea-power with other elements of national power, as well as those of the US allies.<sup>3</sup> This new strategy clearly states that the sea services must operate across the full spectrum of operations.<sup>4</sup> It advances the concept that "preventing wars is as important as winning wars."<sup>5</sup> The roles and missions of the U.S. military are significantly different than they were during the Mahanian-Corbettian era.

This new strategy was truly innovative and it is intended to be used as a source document and blueprint to provide the Navy, Marines, and the Coast Guard continued relevance in fighting the GWOT. One significant concept developed in the new strategy is the requirement for a globally distributed, mission tailored maritime force, which “must extend beyond traditional deployment areas and reflect missions ranging from humanitarian operations to an increased emphasis on counter-terrorism and irregular warfare to meet evolving requirement for each geographic area in conjunction with special operations and interagency forces.”<sup>6</sup> The Navy’s new Naval Expeditionary Combat Command and the Riverine Community, for the most part, are well suited for this new mission. This is not news for those who have served recent combat tours in Iraq. As former Riverine Squadron 2 Commanding Officer CDR Gary Leigh writes:

In order to completely support the Joint Campaign Plan, we were asked to, not only conduct our own Irregular Warfare missions, but coordinate our own Security Assistance and Foreign Internal Defense, Civil Affairs, and Information Operations in a manner that was complementary to the battle-space owners.<sup>7</sup>

Key items in the new maritime strategy, highlighted by the sea service Chiefs, reflected the need to foster relationships through Theater Security Cooperation, increase capacity building, humanitarian assistance, and maritime governance.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, it mandated that the strategy address transnational threats, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, pirates, trafficking, and weapons smuggling.<sup>9</sup> It is evident that this new strategy is concerned with future littoral threats and portions of the world’s waterways that are virtually inaccessible. Many analysts have argued that within the next 20 years, potential future hotspots will include Africa, Iran, Pakistan, and North Korea, all of which have well-established littorals, all of which infer Riverine relevance. To address this, the strategy required that the maritime forces “expand their core

capabilities and each Combatant Commander understand the new maritime strategy and capabilities and increase their mission tailored force packages for proper employment.<sup>10</sup>

In September of 2009, the CNO published his 2010 maritime guidance where he states, “demand for Navy forces is the highest it has been in recent years, and we are responding to this demand with more agility and flexibility than ever before.”<sup>11</sup> Among other key interests in his opening paragraph, he highlights the critical support provided by Riverine forces to the joint forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). His focus areas remain building the force, maintaining war-fighting readiness and developing and supporting Sailors, Navy civilians and their families.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in a separate but related document, the CNO stated, “You may, in the future, see an increase in Riverine capability”... explaining that the force can’t do training with international partners due to lack of capacity.<sup>13</sup> These above statements from the CNO provide relevance and anticipated growth for the expeditionary community, but the enduring question remains, is the Navy willing to make the proper investment in officer development to meet the future needs of the joint warfighter—a naval force with experienced combat leadership skills, expeditionary experience and competency ashore? The answer is yes with the new development of expeditionary forces within the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC).



Figure 1: Riverine Patrol Boat (RPB) operating in Iraq 2008 (photo taken by RIVRON Three Detachment member while on patrol)

### Naval Expeditionary Capabilities

To address the naval expeditionary capability gap that exists near shore and in the littorals, the Navy developed the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command in January of 2006.<sup>14</sup> “It was created to centrally manage the current and future readiness, resources, manning, training, and equipping of approximately 40,000 expeditionary sailors who serve in every theater of operation.”<sup>15</sup> The development of NECC supports the requirements in the National Security Strategy, National Military Strategy, Cooperative Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as well as provides continued guidance by the CNO in his 2010 Maritime Strategy. “NECC provides a full spectrum of operations, including effective waterborne and ashore anti-terrorism force protection; theater security cooperation and engagement; and humanitarian assistance and disaster

relief.”<sup>16</sup> Thirteen expeditionary commands have been established across seven functional areas to address maritime support ashore and in the littorals.<sup>17</sup> These functional areas include maritime security, riverine and boat operations, diving and salvage, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), logistics, naval construction, and “in lieu of” & interagency.<sup>18</sup> Once deployed “these capabilities are typically under the control of the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC), the Joint Force Land Component Commander (JFLCC), the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC), or remain under the Service Component Commander.”<sup>19</sup>

As stated earlier by the CNO, future maritime forces are required to have the ability to “extend beyond traditional deployment areas and reflect missions ranging from humanitarian operations to an increased emphasis on counter-terrorism and irregular warfare.”<sup>20</sup> Of these functional expeditionary areas, only the Riverine, EOD, and Naval Construction communities are routinely deployed ashore into combat zones.

#### Riverine Capabilities and Force Structure

The Riverine force enables the joint warfighter, and has done so since it's inception on 25 May 2006. As stated in the Riverine concept of operations document of 2006:

Riverine operations will conduct maritime security and theater security cooperation operations in a Riverine area of operation, which may include: securing areas for military or commerce operations, preventing flow of contraband, enabling power projection operations, joint, bi-lateral exercises, personnel exchanges, and humanitarian assistance. The force will be capable of combating enemy Riverine forces, by applying direct or supporting fires. Three Riverine Squadrons under one Riverine Group Commander serve as a ready force for the Joint Forces Maritime Component Commander. Each Riverine Squadron consists of specially designed craft configured to operate in a hostile Riverine environment. Watercrafts will have multiple crews for near continuous operations and lift capacity for a small tactical unit. Manning, training and equipment will support operations versus a Level II threat, and include organic

Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence, Force Protection, and logistics.<sup>21</sup>

To summarize, the Riverine Force is responsible for providing an offensive component to the Joint Force; It is adaptive to mission requirements, scalable, and agile.<sup>22</sup>

Riverine operations in Iraq, over the last three years, have supported the CNO's requirement for a continued viable, highly adaptive expeditionary force. For each of the seven-month rotations of combat tours in Iraq, Riverine units validated all joint capabilities envisioned by NECC, enabling joint warfighters, interagency partners, and multi-national forces. Their efforts not only achieved tactical objectives, but also had far reaching operational and strategic utility. Although not entirely comprehensive, the snapshots listed below highlight Riverine capabilities during Operation Iraqi Freedom from February 2007 to November 2009.

#### Seven Months in Iraq

Riverine operations were primarily conducted within the maritime security operations domain. These Riverine area control and denial missions were accomplished almost daily in Iraq. Encompassing critical infrastructure protection and control of the physical riparian area, these forces concurrently supported multi-national and civil authorities. Additionally, by providing the prerequisite security environment, Riverine forces assisted governmental agencies in the restoration of their essential services.<sup>23</sup>

Interdiction of inland lines of communication is an additional capability area within the Maritime domain that was routinely provided. The domain awareness and

knowledge gained by interviewing the population provided invaluable insights as Riverine forces enabled the irregular warfare fight.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 2: Riverine Squadron Three, Detachment Three, Iraq 2008

River-based patrol boats also provided fire support to conventional, multinational, and Special Operations Forces (SOF). Riverine Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) coordinated and controlled close air support and indirect fire.<sup>25</sup>

Insertion and extraction missions of U.S, interagency, SOF, and multi-national forces were also frequently accomplished. In addition to these operations and in conjunction with Joint Land and Air Forces, the Riverine force was regularly used as a blocking force – a maneuver to capture or prevent the escape of the enemy.<sup>26</sup>

Most significantly during the deployment, Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) operations were routinely conducted. These missions garnered the most strategic and

operational level gains for the MNF commander. For the last five deployments in support of OIF, Riverine forces led the efforts in the creation of an Iraqi Waterborne River-police program. This directly built Iraqi security force capability and capacity of the Iraqi government. From its initial conception, this program established, trained, and created a regional Iraqi River-Police training facility, still in use today. Crucial to the success of this program was the continued engagement with Iraqi key leaders.<sup>27</sup>

Lastly, the vast majority of all Riverine missions in Iraq employed irregular warfare concepts with the sole purpose of enabling the joint fight.

In Riverine Squadron Three's seven month deployment alone, the Riverine force conducted 275 Combat missions, 70 missions combined with Iraqi security forces, 150 tactical convoy operations, 300 hours of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) operations, seized 4 detainees, and discovered 8 weapons caches.<sup>28</sup>

#### Unique Competencies - The Requirement for Seasoned Expeditionary Riverine Officers

Navy Riverine forces provide unique combat capabilities to the joint warfighter; capabilities that are relevant, precise, and enduring. To maintain these capabilities, the Navy must develop future expeditionary Riverine officers to meet anticipated maritime threats. Riverine officers that have led the community in the past few years have written the collective history and tactics of contemporary Riverine warfare. And it is this collection of officers and corporate understanding of Riverine warfare that has provided the foundational base of expeditionary riverine knowledge for the joint warfighter and for the Combatant Commanders on expeditionary warfare matters. The Navy must prevent the loss of this expertise if a joint force riverine capability will be required in the future. Current expeditionary officer maturity and developmental growth models to meet the

future needs of the joint war fighter are not robust enough to preserve experienced combat leadership skills, expeditionary experiences and competency ashore knowledge to grow a competent future expeditionary officer Riverine force. Within the EOD and the naval construction communities, officer development models are fully established. Their models to build competent senior officers, who perform at the joint levels, have been proven to be highly effective. Conversely, in the newly established Riverine Community, officer development is only effective for one tour (two years) and the officer development models remain unproven.

Such a niche field of highly trained Riverine officers should be developed into their own designator or stand alone Riverine community, like EOD, and not be anchored amongst other naval communities, to best serve the future joint warfighter.

#### An Old Riverine Assessment Reconsidered

Much debate and criticism has occurred over the last few years as to the viability of the new U.S. Navy's Riverine force. An article written two years ago by LT Daniel Hancock in the January 2008 publication of *Proceedings Magazine* on Riverine warfare contends that the Navy's top leaders have not invested enough quality resources and institutionally have not altered their core identity to support this emerging expeditionary community.<sup>29</sup>

LT Hancock's concerns, which remain valid, necessitate the demand for acceptance from the entire Navy—including all its subcultures—that the Riverine force is a versatile, adaptable, and capable force. LT Hancock also postulated in his article that with the development of this new Riverine community, working subordinate to the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command, a new officer community would probably not be

established.<sup>30</sup> It has been two years since the publication of his article, and a great deal of work has been accomplished by the Navy on how to grow expeditionary officers.

#### Expeditionary Officer Development-The Study

The need for smart, experienced expeditionary officers is vital to meet future emerging maritime threats and the future requirements of the Navy and the joint warfighter. Therefore, NECC leadership explored ways to develop expeditionary leadership and proficiency.<sup>31</sup> Based on the results from an earlier expeditionary officer manning study, the Center for Naval Analysis was tasked by United States Fleet Forces Command (USFFC) to further study and provide analysis on the development of an Expeditionary Officer career path.<sup>32</sup> In this creation, CNA was specifically directed to fit the Expeditionary Officer path within existing Surface Warfare Officer career paths and investigate the creation of an Additional Qualification Designator (AQD) to manage expeditionary warfare within each community.<sup>33</sup> CNA was to answer the question how to develop expeditionary experience.<sup>34</sup> The CNA presented their study to USFFC in July of 2009.

The analysis primarily focused on the surface community's expansion into an Expeditionary Officer field since this community comprised the majority of the billets within NECC. NECC stated that commands of interest affirmed the required expeditionary officer experience to fill 56 billets in Mobile Expeditionary Security Force (MESF), Riverine, and the NECC headquarters at the LCDR (O-4) and above level.<sup>35</sup> One aspect of the CNA study highlighted that fungibility of experience from Mobile Expeditionary Security Group (MESG) to Riverine could occur, however, some level of professional military experience or Professional Qualification Standards (PQS) formal certification were required to ensure the expeditionary experience levels remained the

same.<sup>36</sup> Another interesting CNA recommendation highlighted the career paths developed in the study which allowed surface officers to have multiple tours in NECC while remaining viable in their community.<sup>37</sup>

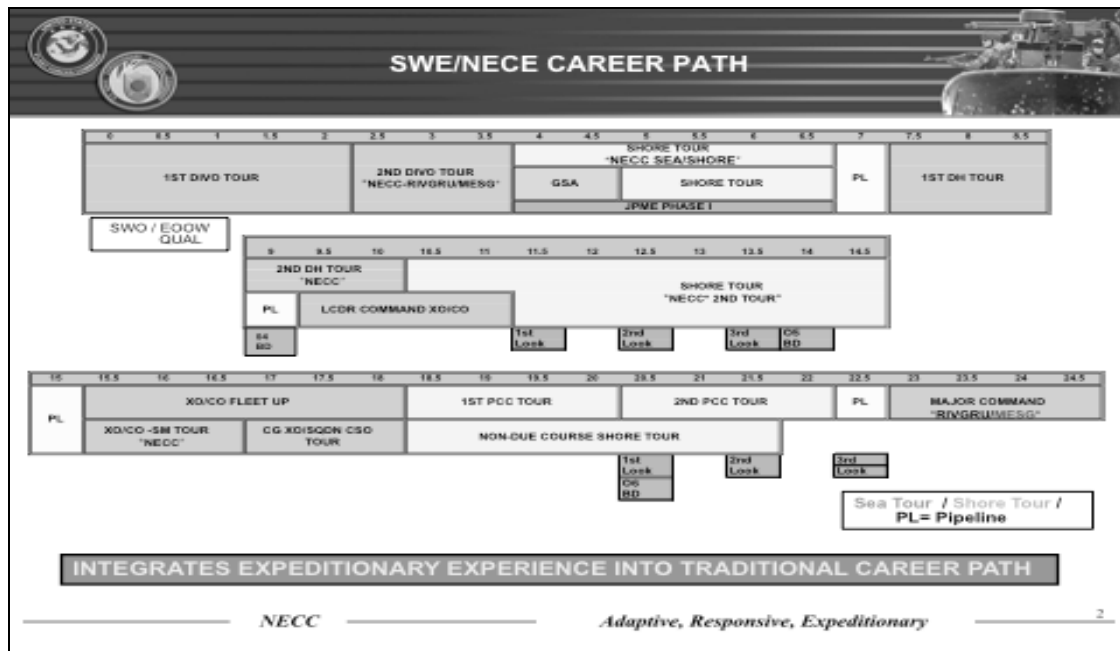


Figure 3: NECC Expeditionary Officer Development Model

The study concluded with the creation of an Expeditionary Officer career path integrated into a traditional Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) career path and track officers with Additional Qualification Designators (AQD's).<sup>38</sup> CNA provided very a valuable assumption in their analysis to consider: Potential expeditionary officers may promote at lower rates than traditional (mainstream) surface officers due to extended sea tours and missed opportunities for joint and graduate level education.<sup>39</sup> Based upon the work from CNA, NECC developed a Expeditionary Officer Development Model, Figure 3.<sup>40</sup>

## Projected Career Path Pitfalls

CNA's analysis provided a very comprehensive and first-rate process as to how to develop expeditionary officer experience. However, this analysis does not fully develop enough of an expeditionary Riverine joint knowledge base required in more senior officers in the pay grades of 05 to 06. An option for analysis (from CFFC) should have been to create a stand-alone designator for expeditionary Riverine officer development. Rather, the entering assumption for the analysis was very limited. It was anchored to the mainstream surface officer career path, which unintentionally provided a deep water bias to the study and focused on a comprehensive approach to building expeditionary experience across all NECC core areas. It does provide a good solution for officer development for non-combat units, but fails to provide the same measure of resolution for units in combat as to what the CNO mandated in his maritime vision, a need for a naval force that extends beyond the traditional maritime boundaries. Years ago, the naval EOD community went through a similar growing process. Initially it was coupled to the surface community for initial officer development, believing that, surface experience was needed to develop an EOD officer. It took years of funding shortages, lack of officer recognition within the unrestricted line community, and the GWOT to change this. The naval EOD community now manages its own separate community and officer developmental programs. Resourcing remains at its highest levels and naval EOD joint officer expertise remains impressive.

Based upon recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, the above approved expeditionary officer model in figure 1 cannot meet the future needs of the joint warfighter at the senior officer commander to captain level.<sup>41</sup> It does not offer sufficient expeditionary tours in key billets to develop the requisite joint skills needed in senior

officers. Under the current officer development model, once an officer detaches from a Riverine command, they, in essence, are set on a course back to a non-expeditionary command. This dilutes experience and further jeopardizes the officer's future career path. This occurs a minimum of two times in the approved officer development model. Likewise, Combatant Commanders will not acquire the proper support they need from their Joint Force Maritime Component Commanders (JFMCC), due to the lack of corporate mid and senior-grade officer knowledge in expeditionary and Riverine warfare. This does not promote legacy knowledge, training capacity, expeditionary experiences, lessons learned development, or corporate wisdom, for a long-term viable force.

#### The Ideal Expeditionary Riverine Officer

To ensure the continued valued contribution to the joint-force, the development of a separate Riverine designator and career path must first be created. This would guarantee the viability of Riverine combat leadership experience, expeditionary experience and competency ashore in the future. Minimum characteristics of the ideal Riverine Expeditionary officer should include the following combat leadership traits:

- Most importantly, the officer must be a leader who can effectively command and control his subordinates. Recent deployment lessons learned revealed that it was vital that unity of command and unity of effort were well understood and exercised by all officers. These concepts remained vital to Riverine mission successes and provided for combat leadership, a trait which only comes from experience and nurturing. The Riverine community remains a specialized niche community where the levels of risk are unlike other naval

communities. These levels of risk are linked to inshore missions where hostile contact may occur with little or no warning.

- The Expeditionary Riverine Officer must have an ability to think like a joint warfighter at the most junior grades. They must possess a thorough understanding of joint capabilities and comprehend how Riverine warfare enables them. This includes a complete understanding of Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets and intelligence programs associated with them. They must understand Army and Marine ground tactics, the targeting process, joint planning, and Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) tactics.
- The Expeditionary Riverine Officer must be able to communicate and coordinate with interagency partners as well as be culturally savvy in order to coordinate with coalition and multi-national forces. Again, the ability to understand and develop unity of effort is vital.
- Lastly, the officer must be in exemplary physical condition, be adaptive, and able to think on his feet.

This is a lot to ask of a junior officer. With the guidance and mentorship from an experienced expeditionary-proven Commanding Officer, these traits could be brought to bear as it did during Riverine Squadron Three's deployment into Iraq. The Commanding Officer was well versed with joint and interagency coordination efforts, traits developed in his prior assignments in the expeditionary EOD career field.

## Way Ahead

How should the Navy mature a competent Expeditionary Riverine officer force for the future—A force that can meet the requirements of the Navy’s sea service commander’s new maritime strategy? First develop a new Expeditionary Riverine Officer designator and career path, and second instill a combat leadership ethos in its officers.

Significant work has already been accomplished in the development of a separate expeditionary officer designator by the efforts of the CNA study. However, this development model is not mature enough to develop the requisite expeditionary skills needed in future Riverine officers. This study, modified with the current EOD officer progression model, would prove to be the ideal template required to build a viable career (designator) path for a Riverine Officer. It provides the necessary expeditionary and joint assignments to foster the growth of a seasoned senior officer with joint experience. Additionally, in order to build and reinforce those ideal expeditionary Riverine officer leadership traits needed in future joint expeditionary officers, the U.S. Navy needs to comprehensively embrace the fundamentals of ground combat leadership. It should study combat leadership from the U.S Army and Marines and integrate those findings on leadership into the Expeditionary community.

## Ensuring Competency Ashore - A New Model

Building an effective Riverine officer career path should be accomplished by combining the NECC Expeditionary Officer Career path in Figure 3 and the career progress ideas and methodologies used in the current EOD officer progression model.<sup>42</sup> As depicted in Figure 4 below, this new officer Expeditionary Officer progression model

encompasses initial core Riverine/Expeditionary training through post major command tours while incorporating major expeditionary joint tour milestones.

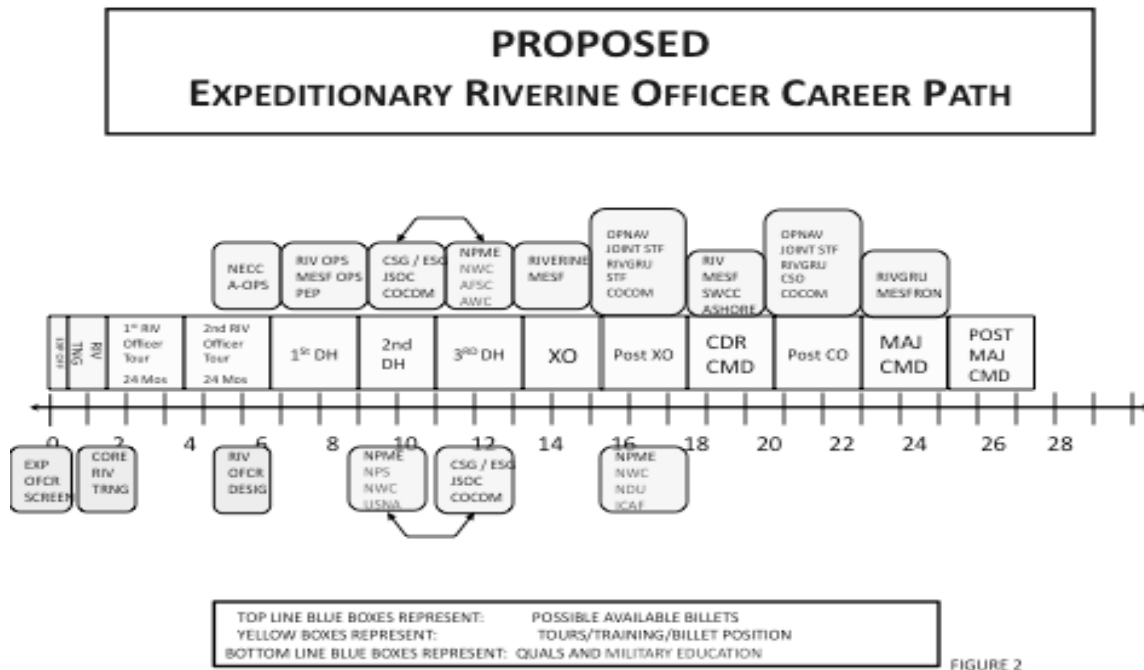


Figure 4: Proposed Expeditionary Riverine Officer Development Model

This proposal commences with a five to six month training window to develop basic expeditionary combat skills. It is at this stage where initial candidate screening is conducted. The following year of core training would develop Riverine capabilities, to include combat leadership skills. This year of training would be similar in design to EOD, SEAL, or flight training in that it would create the Riverine Officer's basic knowledge base.

Upon completion of core training, the Expeditionary Riverine Officer would complete two Riverine combat leadership assignments. This would be followed by future joint/sea service assignments. Professional Navy Military Education as well as Joint Education requirements have also been factored into the model to ensure proper

officer development. Sequential combat tours would occur in Riverine or Mobile Expeditionary Security Force commands, reinforcing combat leadership development and competency ashore attributes. Pre-command and command milestones have been factored into the model to reward exemplary performance. Joint assignments have again, been factored into the model at this stage to further develop and mature the expeditionary officer.

The most significant item this new proposal accomplishes is that it creates additional opportunities for Joint assignments to grow expeditionary Riverine officers and their knowledge base. These joint opportunities include billets to support all Combatant Commanders and the Joint Staff. It also provides opportunities to support the Sea Service and the NECC. This model adds the implied provision for expeditionary Riverine officer mentoring and combat leadership development, key facets that are not implemented in the previous model by CNA. The new model also addresses the promotion assumptions the CNA study highlighted. Just as the earlier case with the EOD community, the Expeditionary Riverine Officer Community would promote amongst fellow Expeditionary Officers.

#### Development of Expeditionary Combat Leadership

Simultaneously, while developing and creating an Expeditionary Riverine Officer career path, expeditionary combat leadership skills need to be developed within the entire expeditionary community. To develop those ideal Expeditionary Riverine Officer traits early in the career of a Riverine officer and to reinforce it later, the Navy should redefine its current Officer Command Excellence models-used in initial Expeditionary officer accessions, Department Head, Executive Officer (XO) and Commanding Officer (CO) developmental courses. These models should reflect combat-focused leadership

models currently used in the Army and USMC. Similarly, these models would require all entry level expeditionary Naval Officers, regardless of their designator, to attend a centralized Officer Training Course, comparable to what the Marine Corps executes in The Basic School (TBS), and the Army executes in the Basic Officer Leadership Course II (BOLC). The Army and Marine Corps both invest heavily in their officer corps early on in their career as Second Lieutenants. It is here at their first collective school that they learn the basics of their service and the core principles of small unit leadership. It is here that small unit tactics, squad, and platoon leadership is ingrained. Successful completion of this officer-training course would provide the sea service ideal candidates for future Riverine training.

The next step would be to develop an overall vision to begin such a new strategy for implementation. In the development of its vision, Navy leaders should follow John Kotter's advice for identifying effective characteristics of their vision, which means that the vision should be imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible and communicable.<sup>43</sup>

In Stage One, Navy leadership should establish a sense of urgency within the service. All of its expeditionary sub-culture's leaders that the 21<sup>st</sup> century sea power initiative may not be supportable if future non-combat leadership trends continue.<sup>44</sup> The CNO has mandated his focus areas, the imperative is that action is required now to develop the future officers of tomorrow.

In Stage Two, Navy leadership should build a guiding coalition by assigning a CNO-directed study of combat leadership and its impacts, with appropriate recommendations.<sup>45</sup> This study team should be comprised of combat-decorated Navy

men and women who have served in combat tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa (HOA). As mentioned earlier, the Navy should also leverage proven ground combat leadership doctrine and models utilized in the Army and Marine Corps leadership schools.

In Stage Three, Navy leadership should develop a combat leadership vision and strategy to redefine leadership roles within the expeditionary Navy.<sup>46</sup>

In Stage Four, Navy leadership should communicate this vision to the Navy through CNO lectures and briefs, to Commander Fleet Forces Command, Commander Naval Surface Force, Commander Naval Air Force, Commander Submarine Force and the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command.<sup>47</sup>

In Stage Five, Navy leadership should empower broad-based action by eliminating poor leadership practices within the Navy and Expeditionary Officer sub-cultures thus creating a mind-set across the Naval force of combat leadership.<sup>48</sup> Also, the Navy should “tell its combat story” as the USMC does. It should convey its new vision of leadership so members of the Navy can communicate it both internally and externally.

In Stage Six, Navy leadership should generate short-term wins by rewarding the best combat leaders.<sup>49</sup> This can be accomplished by offering guarantees of next duty assignments, selection to higher-level combat schools followed by leadership roles in follow-on combat tours (Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) assignments, Riverine Officer In Charge, or an assignment into Explosive Ordnance Disposal).

In Stage Seven, all Navy leaders should consolidate their gains and produce more change.<sup>50</sup> It is imperative that this envisioned leadership change begin with

leadership implementation in the training cycle for officer candidates in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC), the US Naval Academy (USNA), and Officer Candidate School (OCS). The new combat leadership ethos should subsequently be reinforced at the proposed Officer Training Course, Department Head School, Executive Officer School, and Commanding Officer School.

Finally, in stage Eight, the Navy needs to anchor its' new approach in the culture of the entire Navy.<sup>51</sup> This approach can be accomplished by redefining the officer fitness report evaluation (FITREP) leadership blocks and recalibrating it to reflect additional objectivity. Navy selection boards should consider combat leadership when selecting officers for promotion. Future joint assignments should match their demonstrated combat leadership traits. This cultural change would assure to the joint war fighter that the entire U.S. Navy, especially the Expeditionary Community, is a profession of arms.

### Conclusion

The Riverine community has brought to bear significant capabilities for the Joint force and to combat the Global War on Terrorism. This capability will be in jeopardy in the future if the developmental process of growing Expeditionary Riverine Officers is not changed. With the development of the new Expeditionary Riverine Officer progression model and the incorporation of new combat leadership models throughout the Navy, the anticipated asymmetric threats of the future would be met with a competent joint maritime force. This new Expeditionary Riverine Officer force would be capable of meeting the Navy's new maritime strategy.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Authors experience as the Commanding Officer of Riverine Squadron Three while deployed in Iraq April through November 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Draft Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) instruction 5400.1, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command Force Organization and Capabilities, November 23, 2009, enclosure 9,1.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, October 2007), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *The United States Navy Home Page*, <http://www.navy.mil/maritime/display.asp?page=strglance.html> (assessed September 13, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, October 2007),10.

<sup>7</sup> CDR Gary Leigh and LCDR Matt Andrews, Twelve Boats for Anbar, Draft article submitted to *Proceedings Magazine*, August 18 2009, 1.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *U.S. CNO Guidance for 2010, Executing the Maritime Strategy*, of September 2009, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Seutro, In-Demand Riverines May Add 4<sup>th</sup> Squadron, *NAVY TIMES*, October 19, 2009, [http://www.navytimes.com/news/2009/10/navy\\_riverine\\_101709w/](http://www.navytimes.com/news/2009/10/navy_riverine_101709w/), (accessed December 14, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> "Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC)," briefing slides with scripted commentary, Carlisle Barracks, PA, U.S. Army War College, (presented January 2010), 25.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. The term “in lieu of” is utilized in this instance to indicate substitute or replacement functional areas.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Department of the Navy, *US Riverine Group Concept of Operations (CONOPS)*, 28 September 2006, 7, and BLOG posted by HumanCOGRachel providing summary of the Riverine CONOPS.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Raul Gandara and Greg Sandway, “Irregular Warfare”, briefing slides with scripted commentary, Little Creek, VA, Riverine Group One, March 12 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Department of the Navy, Riverine Squadron Three Change of Command Program, June 26, 2009, 15.

<sup>29</sup> LT Daniel A. Hancock, “The Navy’s Not Serious About Riverine Warfare”, *Proceedings Magazine*, January 2008, Vol. 134/1/1,259, [http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/archieve/story.asp?STORY\\_ID=1310](http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/archieve/story.asp?STORY_ID=1310) (accessed December 14 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Moskowitz, Ann Parcell, David Rodney with Martha MacIvaine, “Developing an Expeditionary Warfare Office Career Path” Copyright July 2009 by CNA, CRM D0020602A2/Final, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *The Navy Personnel Command (BUPERS) N41 website*, <http://www.npc.navy.mil/Officer/SurfaceWarfare/>, SWO Expeditionary Warfare Career Path (assessed February 27, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> This thought is based upon the Surface Warfare and expeditionary experience of the author. The first five years of his career were in the Surface Amphibious Navy, stationed on the Command Ship USS Blue Ridge (LCC) and assignment to the Navy's Landing Craft Air Cushioned (LCAC) unit. He subsequently transferred into the EOD community and is an EOD officer. He has completed numerous worldwide deployments into the Central Command Area of Operations including most recently thirteen months in Afghanistan and seven months in Iraq. His last tour was a seven month combat tour in Iraq as the Commanding Officer of Riverine Squadron Three.

<sup>42</sup> *The Navy Personnel Command (BUPERS) N41 website*, [http://www.npc.navy.mil/Officer/SurfaceWarfare/Detailers/416\\_EOD/EOD+Career+Path.htm](http://www.npc.navy.mil/Officer/SurfaceWarfare/Detailers/416_EOD/EOD+Career+Path.htm), EOD career path, (assessed February 27, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Harvard Business School Press, Boston MA, 1996) 72.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

