

Concept for Sustained Operations Ashore

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CONCEPT FOR SUSTAINED OPERATIONS ASHORE

by

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ABSTRACT

Marine Corps policy makers are testing operational concepts which will increase assault force maneuverability by seabasing logistical

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support which traditionally had gone ashore. However, seabasing logistics presents a major challenge to the logistician when a Naval Expeditionary Force (NEF) is involved in extended operations ashore.

Seabasing logistics during extended operations is often not possible due to transportation shortfalls, weather, logistical equipment vulnerabilities, and issues encountered with the distances inland the assault force may be operating from in future operations. Thus the major focus of this paper is on how best to logistically support assault force missions while utilizing the future operational concepts of OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond.

In this paper arguments are made that during certain operations both seabasing logistics as well as sending a mobile ground logistical task force ashore become the only means of guaranteeing seamless resupply to the assault force. While it is understood that sending a mobile logistics task force ashore is contrary to the goals of OMFTS and STOM, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and are discussed thoroughly in this paper. All other operational goals are preserved.

This paper takes into consideration the assets available to the Marine Corps in the year 2010 and lays out the pros and cons of implementing five proposed recommendations. The solutions discussed suggest changes in infrastructure, manpower, and equipment but protect the Marine Corps as an expeditionary force. Costs associated with this proposed concept were not considered in the final recommendations.

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CHAPTER 1

LAYING TEE GROUNDWORK FOR CHANGE

The National Military Strategy of the United States directs the armed forces to be prepared to respond to crises across a full range of military operations from humanitarian assistance to fighting and winning major theater wars. United States strategy further directs our military forces to be ready to fight as a coherent joint force, fully interoperable and seamlessly integrated.

Marine Corps policy makers are following this guidance by developing and testing unique operational concepts which are aligned with U.S. military strategy projected for the year 2010. The Marine Corps amphibious concepts of Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS) and Ship-to-Objective Maneuver (STOM) are testing whether principles of maneuver warfare can be applied to the littoral battlespace. A third concept, Marine Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond (MPF 2010 and Beyond) as an enhancement to the OMFTS and STOM concepts, is testing whether seabasing a Naval Expeditionary Force's (NEF) logistic support is possible in order to improve the NEF's ground maneuverability. Adversary technology, changes in enemy warfare and tactics, and changes in U.S. military strategy have created additional risks in traditional amphibious ship-to-shore movement and lodgement thus creating a need for the implementation of the three new concepts.

Seabasing of logistics as proposed by these concepts creates additional challenges which confront the Marine logistician.

Sustainment operations must not only complement the goals of OMFTS,

STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond, they must also remain capable of supporting a force up to the size of a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) should they become involved in extended ground operations. Extended operations are defined by this author as additional logistical supplies needed by the ground element beyond which they can carry with them in their basic load.

The conclusion reached in this paper is that in order to sustain from the sea the various size and type of forces that may be operating ashore, some modifications to the current ideas in the OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond operational concepts must be made. Relying on seabased logistics for sustainment operations as currently designed in the concepts is often not possible nor necessary. Transportation shortfalls, weather, logistical equipment vulnerability, and demands associated with resupplying ground forces the distances inland 'from shore they may be operating from in the future all must analyzed further before final approval of the operational concepts can be made.

The major recommendation of this paper is that in order to support the Marine Corps' futuristic operational concepts, a mobile ground logistical task force must go ashore with the NEF. Though this increases the footprint of the assault force and appears as if this concept is contrary to the OMFTS and STOM goals, in actuality this ground logistics task force is necessary for the operational concepts to work. When comparing this proposed mobile ground logistical task force to the Mobile Combat Service Support Detachment (MCSSD) used in today's operations, one will see many of the same principles are applied. The difference in this future sustainment concept is that the task force is

fully capable of supporting a force the size of a MEF and its structure is designed to be more proactive in resupply operations providing more efficient support to the assault force. Additionally, development of this mobile logistics task force will not interfere with the chief objectives of the proposed operational concepts of OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond. Landing forces will not be required to protect supply dumps ashore, and no operational pauses will be created on shore as currently occurs in traditional ship-to-shore operations. Because the development of this logistics task force is not a totally new concept but rather a modification to an existing concept, implementation and adjustments to the changes should not be difficult. The greatest difficulty will be accepting the fact that some form of ground logistics is necessary in order to support an assault force involved in extended operations.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Historically, the Marine Corps has responded well to all missions they have been assigned. Logistical plans were often devised or adjusted during a crisis based on the situation, then executed with a great deal of flexibility. In fact, this flexibility has been key to many Marine successes and it must continue to be present in future operations. But flexibility cannot be the foundation for a solid logistics support concept. Therefore, the sustainment concept presented in this paper allows a great deal of flexibility in both the planning and execution phases of an operation, but also gives the logistician the solid framework from which he needs to build his final

sustainment plan. This proposed sustainment concept builds upon the idea that logistics is not a science but an art. This change in philosophy is necessary in order to coincide with the changes in the type of battlefield and enemy forces the United States may find themselves involved with in future operations.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union less emphasis is being placed on conventional warfare tactics. As warfighters gradually change their concepts on how to fight future conflicts, logisticians must also change their concepts on how best to support the force. Pentagon analysis projects the United States' future enemies will be smaller yet more chaotic than present enemies. Future enemies will be less predictable, more mobile, and harder to detect. They will have greater potential to develop and employ weapons of mass destruction.

Enemy forces and tactics are not the only things causing a change in the way the military must structure itself to fight in the future. U.S. military forces are being downsized and Pentagon projections up to the year 2010 see little chances of reversing this trend. As a result, the military forces of tomorrow will neither look like nor be organized like forces of today. Further complicating the shifts in warfighting philosophy is the fact that conventional fighting cannot yet be abandoned due to the ongoing threats from both North Korea and Iraq. Consequently, future logistic support must be flexible enough to perform in various types of warfare under various types of threats with, fewer forces and assets available than they have in today's logistics units.

As the United States becomes increasingly CONUS based yet another logistical challenge faces the logistician. Reestablishing military

forces into a country once abandoned may not be a simple task. Those countries may not willingly provide or be able to provide the support which was once available. Host nation support and accessibility to their sea and air ports is not guaranteed. The United States may find itself in the future conducting forcible entry operations into an area previously secured by its own forces. Support to those forces must then come either from the sea or by ground. With military planners predicting U.S. military forces in the future are likely to deploy to regions where ports cannot handle deep draft ships, airfields are not capable of supporting military aircraft, and roads and bridges are not structurally sound enough to support military traffic, support from the sea is becoming the obvious alternative.

As the likelihood of forcible entry operations increases, the Marine Corps must continue to rethink its current amphibious doctrine. In the future the United States will rely on a forward deployed Navy and Marine Corps to protect its vital security interests more than any time in history. Forward presence not only allows forces to operate in international waters without host nation support, it provides the U.S. the capability to rapidly respond to any type' of crisis nearly anywhere in the world. Two recent examples best illustrate this point. In 1995 Italy would not allow the U.S. to deploy Air Force F-117's to Aviano Air Base in support of operations in Bosnia. United States naval carriers deployed off Italy's coasts provided the air support base. In 1997, the Nimitz steamed into the Gulf packing three dozen F-18 Hornets and fourteen F-14 Tomcats as a show of force against Saddam Hussein. When joined with the 16 vessels already on station, these ships provided

enough of a deterrent to Saddam Hussein that a potential crisis was averted. These ships could just as easily have been the first forces in place had the military situation escalated. United States policy must continue to capitalize on the advantages of having Naval forces forward deployed.

Finally, the criticality of sea operations becomes inherently obvious when one realizes that over ninety percent of United States military equipment is deployed overseas by ship, and this percentage is -not expected to be reduced significantly in the next fifteen years. Regardless of how large our aircraft are getting, a thirty knot transport ship still outlifts even the largest transport aircraft in cargo weight by roughly 200:1.¹

The importance of seabased operations is best summed up with the words President Clinton spoke during a visit on the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt, "When word of crisis breaks out in Washington, it's no accident the first question that comes to everyone's lips is where is the nearest carrier?"² While Naval forces consist of more than carriers, the President's remarks clearly express the importance of sea operations.

In closure, a proposed logistical concept is necessary but it cannot be accepted until the reader first understands the intent of the Marine Corps operational concepts being tested. These concepts will thus be briefly explained in Chapter 2. The main chapter of discussion on the proposed sustainment concept will follow as Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF OMFTS, STOM, AND MPF 2010 AND BEYOND

OPERATIONAL MANEUVER FROM THE SEA (OMFTS) OMFTS is a concept being analyzed where planners are seeking better solutions to assault force amphibious operations based on future expectations. OMFTS is testing whether the applications of maneuver warfare can be applied to a maritime campaign. This concept attempts to use speed, sea maneuverability, and surprise to gain an advantage over adversaries using the sea as a friendly avenue for maneuvering rather than as an obstacle to movement. In OMFTS, assault forces are given freedom to move up and down a coastline and attack via the sea at a time of their choosing. Engagements with the enemy are avoided as much as practicable. When engagements with the enemy are unavoidable, assault forces land at a location where the enemy is most vulnerable. Their success is achieved by first surprising the enemy then dispersing quickly once on land. Initially logistics remains seabased, thus allowing the assault forces freedom to move towards their objectives without first accomplishing the build up and subsequent operations ashore phase traditionally done in amphibious assaults. The OMFTS concept is looking to be applied to any type of operation whether it involves an initial restoration of security, basic services in a disaster relief crisis, or seizure of a lodgement or key piece of terrain necessary for future decisive actions.

SHIP TO OBJECTIVE MANEUVER (STOM) The concept proposed under STOM takes OMFTS one step further. Tests are being conducted to determine if an assault force can perform a seamless air maneuver directly from the

ship to the objective. Expanding on the principles of OMFTS, the STOM concept deploys combined arms forces using air and surface means directly against deep inland objectives.³ Taking advantage of technological advances, STOM uses speed, maneuverability, deception, and surprise to conduct operations initiating from over the horizon. Under STOM, assault forces proceed directly from the ship to the objective. As in OMFTS, assault forces do not stop first to seize, defend, or build up a beachhead since logistics and other assets which once went ashore now remain seabased.

Combined, the STOM and OMFTS concepts allow the commander greater flexibility in getting to the objective without sacrificing the detailed plans in achieving the objective. As necessary, in both concepts additional vertical forces complement the assault force by simultaneously attacking key defensive positions. By seabasing the logistics on the amphibious task force, both the OMFTS and STOM concepts envision the resupply of the assault force coming from Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) and the MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft.⁴

MPF 2010 AND BEYOND. This improved Maritime Prepositioning Force concept is essential if OMFTS and STOM are to be effective in extended operations. Under this concept, platforms will be developed which will

provide a full range of logistics support from the sea. MPF 2010 and Beyond ships will include aviation logistics, hospital ships, and offshore petroleum distribution systems to support follow-on forces up to the size of a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) for an indefinite period of time.⁵ Reconstitution capability will also be available from these platforms to either support the assault force commander during his operation or reconstitute his force for future operations upon termination of the mission. Using an MPF as a faster means of deploying to a location is not new and has already proved its worth. During Operation Desert Shield / Desert Storm, prepositioned equipment joined with MPF Expeditionary Brigades in Saudi Arabia shortly after unit notification and went on to play a significant role in the campaign. MPF 2010 and Beyond simply expands existing MPF capability by reconfiguring its platforms to perform functions from the sea that were previously done ashore. MPF 2010 and Beyond will be designed to support forces ashore in sustained operations until termination of the operation. While these platforms are still in their conceptual stages, it is crucial that these platforms continue to be developed with the capability to operate in conjunction with the LCAC as well as conduct cargo operations via helicopter and the MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft from over the horizon.

In its final configuration, MPF 2010 and Beyond will allow

combat commanders and the National Command Authority multiple strategic options as well as provide maritime forces the ability to perform any type of operation.

CHAPTER 3

SUSTAINED OPERATIONS ASHORE (SOA)

All three of the operational concepts discussed in Chapter 2 stress seabased logistics, though it is necessary to understand that seabasing is not an absolute requirement under OMFTS.⁶ The commander still has flexibility to establish support operations ashore as the situation dictates. SOA simply attempts to seabase as much logistics as possible in order to facilitate freedom of maneuver for the assault force while protecting its supplies from enemy attacks. Typically, the assault force has had to first establish and then protect supply dumps ashore. This caused a disruption in momentum, exposed friendly forces to the enemy, and gave the enemy an unnecessary advantage as they maneuvered to fight friendly forces who were concentrating their efforts on protecting their supply dump. Seabasing logistics eliminates much of this enemy edge.

Increasing assault force optempo and logistics survivability are not the only benefits of seabased logistics. Upon termination of a mission which has no ground based logistics, the assault force is more rapidly backloaded which facilitates its departure, reconstitution, or redeployment to another operation. However, one should not assume seabasing logistics is a fix to all sustainment problems. Supplies still must be protected from the time they are placed on the ship until they are consumed. In 1982 the greatest British losses in the Falklands were to its ships when they were sunk by Argentine air-to-surface missiles.⁷

SUSTAINED OPERATIONS ASHORE EXECUTION

Sustainability by definition is the ability to maintain the necessary level and duration of operational activity required to achieve military objectives. It is a function of providing for and maintaining

the levels of forces, materiels, and supplies needed to support a military effort.⁸ SOA expands that definition by attempting to support a task force military effort fighting over an indefinite period of time as a land force rather than as an amphibious or seabased naval force. Under the SOA concept, supply operations are to support up to a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) without violating the objectives of OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond.⁹

SUSTAINED OPERATIONS ASHORE ANALYSIS

As mentioned earlier, the major objective of the OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond concepts is for landing forces to gain an advantage over their enemy by deploying, quickly with, less equipment allowing them to disperse before the enemy has time to react. For the logistician this focuses his concerns on whether there are sufficient transportation assets available to sustain this type operation and whether the assault force can be sustained from the sea based on the distance- inland they may be operating. He must also be concerned with the enemy situation as well as the amount of time he has to accomplish his resupply missions.

A 1997 study conducted by Lieutenant Mark W. Beddoes, U.S. Navy, as part of his master's thesis at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, determined that the only way to sustain forces for an indefinite period of time as proposed by the operational concepts is through extensive use of the MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft.¹⁰ He reasoned that due to the distances inland from the shore where landing forces are expected to operate, the LCAC is virtually useless as a mode of transport for resupply. Considering that one concept of OMFTS envisions landing forces dispersed

over the battlefield up to two hundred miles wide as well as deep, Lieutenant Beddoes' conclusion is reasonable.¹¹

Using the MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft as the only mode of transport to sustain forces deep inland, Lieutenant Beddoes next began calculating daily sustainment requirements of subsistence, fuel, and ammunition for a typical MEU (SOC) sized force to determine if he had enough aircraft to meet this type of unit's demands. After factoring in refueling times, distances the MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft will travel from the ship to the shoreline as envisioned in the OMFTS and STOM concepts, and the maximum daily flight time per aircraft based primarily on aircrew endurance and maintenance, Lieutenant Beddoes concluded that the concepts of OMFTS and STOM were not logistically supportable from the sea. His study delved further into using only non-mechanized forces as a possibility to easing the sustainment problems but the same conclusions were drawn. Lieutenant Beddoes' recommended solutions to the problem were to either shift to a landing force with smaller logistical requirements, increase additional lift capability, or support the force from locations closer to the shoreline.

While all of Lieutenant Beddoes' logic and quantitative calculations are correct, faulty analysis led him to a poor conclusion. Using quantitative analysis is important in predicting logistical

shortfalls, but it should not be the determining factor in validating a concept. To solve this logistical problem a combination of efforts are needed.

One effort needed to solve the sustainment shortfall is to do just

what Lieutenant Beddoes did. Times, distances, weights, and volumes of supplies needed to sustain the assault force must be calculated and then how many more aircraft are necessary to accomplish the mission must be determined. Once this number is identified, the number of aircraft on the platforms can be increased to the maximum amount the platforms will hold or to the maximum number of aircraft available.

A second solution to this problem is to seek out technological advances which will increase airlift capability. The objective here is to reduce to the smallest amount the number of aircraft needed to sustain the force ashore. Much progress is already being made in this area by the Marine Corps as a way to increase both airlift and surface craft capability. The MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft is replacing the CH-46E as the Marine Corps' primary assault support aircraft. This new aircraft nearly triples the capability of the existing CH-46E in range, speed, and payload. With an internal lift capacity of ten thousand pounds, the MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft will be capable of carrying twenty-four combat loaded Marines a radius of up to five hundred nautical miles.¹² Its aerial refueling capability will also greatly aid in sustaining assault force operations from-the sea.

By the year 2006 the new AAV assault vehicle will have replaced the AAV7A1 as another valuable asset in seabased operations.¹³ The

AAV's increased sea and land' mobility capability, together with its increased firepower, will aid seabased operations by being able to secure landing areas more quickly than with the AAV7A1.

By thinking more creatively, Lieutenant Beddoes' proposal of moving

the seabased platforms closer to the shoreline is yet another solution to increasing the number of supplies which can be moved from the ships. As ships are positioned closer to shore, transportation asset turnaround times are shortened. Fewer assets would then be required to move the same amount of supplies from ship to shore. However, caution must be taken when considering this idea as a solution to a transportation shortfall. It should only be considered after a thorough threat analysis has been made. Ships positioned closer to shore increase their risk of continual surveillance by an enemy coastal defense system which in turn makes them more vulnerable to enemy direct fire attacks than a ship positioned farther out to sea or over the horizon.

The real problem is while all of these solutions increase the capability of sustaining operations directly from the ship to the shore, the combined effort of all three solutions still does not totally resolve the problem of providing full support to the assault force using only seabased operations. Even if calculations determined that ground force requirements equaled support deployment capability, transportation shortfalls for sustaining the assault force would still likely exist. Assault forces on the ground will be competing with logistic forces on the ship for the limited air assets. The MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft is

not an aircraft dedicated to logistical resupply purposes only. It will be tasked for additional operations such as decoy missions or other missions once the capabilities of the aircraft are fully recognized.¹⁴

SUSTAINED OPERATIONS ASHORE PROPOSAL

The best way to provide continuous uninterrupted resupply to the assault force during extended operations is to continue executing the three solutions mentioned above and to add two more to them.

Therefore, the fourth recommended solution and the key to the sustained operations ashore concept involves an insertion of a mobile ground logistics task force ashore. This task force would go ashore with the assault force or as shortly afterwards as possible, based on the conditions of mission, enemy threat, and time criticality. The mission of this mobile task force would be to receive supplies from the ship that cannot be air delivered directly to the assault force in order to provide back-up support to the assault force. Having this mobile logistics task force allows the LCAC to become the primary delivery vehicle to the task force freeing up the MV-22 aircraft to do other missions. The MV-22 aircraft then becomes a secondary means of carrying supplies from the ship to the logistics task force. By employing a ground logistics task force ashore, the assault force is now capable of being resupplied by either ground or air regardless of how far inland they are operating. Additionally, no supplies are ever stockpiled on the ground. What this sustainment concept does is provide back-up sustainment to the assault force when it cannot be directly resupplied via air.

As a continuation to this fourth solution, any time the requirement to perform resupply missions from the ship to the assault force cannot be accomplished due to temporarily lift shortfalls, the mobile ground logistics task force immediately becomes the primary supplier to the assault force. The ground logistics task force may then

provide all or partial supplies to the assault force depending on the situation. For example, the assault force requires ten boxes of MRE's. The ship can only supply seven of those boxes due to a transportation shortfall. In this situation the ship would issue its seven boxes of MRE's directly to the assault force while the remaining three boxes would be supplied from the ground logistics task force. By the year 2010 advanced informational awareness should allow this task to be accomplished relatively easily using interconnected terminals. The idea in this concept is to keep supplies flowing from the ship any time transportation assets are available without ever allowing the assault force to be uncovered from some type of logistics support. First priority will always go to the assault force. Only when supplies cannot be delivered directly to the assault force is resupply shifted to the ground logistics task force.

Having both a flexible and redundant supply system helps to ensure the assault force never runs out of critical supplies. Only through a redundant supply system provided by both ground and sea support can the assault force be guaranteed to receive some supplies should one source of their resupply be unavailable. One should also keep in mind that a lack of transportation may not be the only reason support may not be available to the assault force. Capitalizing on lessons learned by the U.S. Army, a supplier under attack or moving has extreme difficulty performing simultaneous resupply missions. These lessons learned must be analyzed as to- the affects- they have on sea operations as well.

TYING THE PROCESS TOGETHER

In order to meet the-objectives proposed in the OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond objectives, the ground logistics task force must be configured as small as possible. Its composition of personnel, supply, and equipment must be theoretically the difference in the shortfall between seabased logistics transportation capabilities and the landing force requirements. The actual size would vary slightly based on the mission, enemy situation, and the assault commander's intent. Regardless, the mobile ground logistics task force would not carry every class of supply. It would carry only those critical supplies essential for assault force operations much like today's MCSSD. However, keep in mind that, unlike the MCSSD, the logistics task force would only resupply the assault force if a shortfall existed in direct ship to assault force resupply operations. Additionally, all supplies would always remain uploaded on the mobile ground logistical task force's vehicles until they are issued, allowing both units the maximum freedom to maneuver.

Survivability is key to sustainment operations and cannot be overemphasized. The benefit of having a mobile ground sustainment task force is that without maintenance parts, ammunition, fuel, and other supplies stockpiled on the ground the chances of their survivability against enemy attack greatly improves. Supply survivability increases further when this mobile logistics task force either occupies ground somewhere near the center of where the assault force is located or is brought under the assault force's air defense umbrella. In an operation involving joint forces, the sustainment task force may collocate with another service as yet another means of protection. The

objective is to create a sustainment organization that not only offers as much flexibility and redundancy as possible, it does so without unnecessarily risking its survivability.

Even after identifying the numerous benefits of a ground logistics task force, it may still be difficult to convince some key players that an increase in the land footprint produces more advantages than disadvantages to the assault force. The increase in vehicles and people ashore violates the principles on which the OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond concepts were built. Unfortunately, all other alternatives lead this author to the same conclusion drawn by Lieutenant Beddoes. Without a mobile ground logistics task force to support an assault force in extended operations, the concepts of OMFTS and STOM are not logistically supportable. A mobile ground logistical task force is necessary if the concepts of OMFTS and STOM are to become reality. Thus the remainder of this paper does not focus on the *why* a mobile ground logistics task force is needed but rather on the *how* this proposed logistics concept would work.

SUPPORT FROM THE MOST' REARWARD LOCATIONS FIRST

All attempts 'must be 'made to support the assault force first from other sources before using the supplies from the ground logistical task force. In an optimal situation the assault force will be resupplied from the most rearward support base possible. This concept ensures the assault force has the necessary supplies available only a short distance away when needed most and preserves the forward transportation assets to react to unknown contingencies.

Under this concept, the assault force may find itself receiving supplies directly from the ship to its drop zone or possibly from a transportation asset directly from the United States to the assault force drop zone. The concept is built on the premise that a supplier never uses its own assets if there is an organization behind it which can do the mission. In a different scenario supplies may be delivered directly from the United States to the ground logistics task force demonstrating the flexibility of the concept. Nevertheless, the receiving unit should not be concerned with who delivers its supplies but should only be concerned with receiving the correct supplies in the proper quantity at the agreed upon time and location.

The types of supplies to be delivered to the assault force is just as important as how they will be delivered. Marines are expeditionary forces and expeditionary implies austere conditions and support. Therefore supplies, as well as the equipment and personnel on the ground, must be limited to operational necessities only. The only critical supplies necessary for every type of unit are Class I (food and water), Class III (petroleum, oil, and lubricants), Class V (ammunition), Class VIII (medical), and Class IX (maintenance). Supplies needed outside of these classes of supply should be by exception only based on the mission or as directed or approved by the assault force commander.

GROUND SUSTAINMENT TASK FORCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Another important principle in sustainment operations is to never allow logistics to hinder assault force operations. To do this the assault force must stay mission focused and expend minimal effort on

sustainment issues. A ground logistical task force provides that ability to an assault force. Under this sustainment concept the ground logistics task force commander becomes the assault forces' single point of contact for sustainment issues. He assists the assault force in calculating their required supplies and is responsible for coordinating all supplies coming from the ship. The logistics task force commander ensures all supplies are delivered to the assault force at the coordinated time and location agreed upon by the two parties.

The ground logistics task force commander is also responsible for the evacuation of all supplies, equipment, or personnel from the assault force. Through coordination with the assault force, maintenance and medical evacuation drop sites are determined thus relieving the assault force of the burden of carrying unusable assets with them. Only with a ground logistics task force is the assault force able to stay focused entirely on their missions.

As information technology improves, the ground logistics task force commander will gain a better appreciation of and will be better able to forecast assault force needs. Information monitored over the network by the logistics commander would be forwarded to the seabased logistical commander where modular support packages would then be built and readied for transport even before the assault force recognizes their own requirements. In many instances the slower "pull" system of obtaining supplies will be replaced by the faster "push" system as the assault force and the logistical task force personnel become a team.

Building a solid relationship between the assault force and the support force becomes essential to sustain an operation by both sea and

ground. The ground logistical task force commander and the seabased logistical commander need to understand the assault force mission, tactical plans, and time/space implications for support. Reciprocally, the assault force, too, must understand the data required by the logisticians in order for them to plan and provide their support. As the team continues to develop, proactive rather than reactive support will be the norm.

Lastly, as important as it is for the assault force and the ground logistics task force to work together, it is equally important for the ground logistical task force commander to understand his relationship with the designated seabased commander. The seabased commander remains ultimately responsible for all sustained operations ashore even though the logistics task force commander is the assault force single point of contact and all requests pass through him. Primary support to the assault force still comes from the sea. Calculating initial support requirements, projecting capabilities, determining priorities, and notifying all concerned personnel of logistical shortfalls remains the responsibility of the seabased commander. He must remain responsible for overseeing the entire operation. The seabased commander must also be responsible for the approval of all logistic plans, contingencies, and future operations. He must be attuned to what the assault force is doing and be integrated into all fire support plans. Responsive logistics depends on the ability of the seabased commander to anticipate events on the battlefield and pass to the ground logistics task force commander issues affecting ground support. Throughout the operation the seabased commander must be able to sustain the assault force until the

mission is complete.

CAPTURING DATA

As real world experiences are documented and historical data is analyzed, shelved support packages of similar missions will be updated. Ultimately a support base will be established. This support base will be the starting point for determining the initial support needed to implement similar types of operations. As more operations are analyzed and the support packages are shelved, additional analysis will eventually create a standard support package for any type of operation. Once these historical documents are available, determining the initial support package should be much like the operation of a slide rule. As Marine Corps planners determine the number and type of forces required to accomplish an operation, the logistics slide rule moves to that number and the predetermined logistics package is noted. These figures will form the basis of personnel and equipment required to sustain the assault force. Just as MAGTF operations rely upon scalable task organizations to build whatever force is necessary to accomplish the mission, logistics organizations would be built under the same principles.

CONCLUSION

There continues to be much speculation as to whether seabased operations are feasible. Under the proposed operational concepts being tested many Marines still contend the LCAC can only be used for the initial delivery of equipment and Marines ashore but not for continuous

sustainment operations. They believe there is not enough airlift capability to sustain a landing force. They also do not believe a ground logistical task force is advantageous to landing force operations.

Using quantitative analysis and an unwillingness to break paradigms, their arguments against seabased logistics are convincing. However, for the innovative logistician who is willing to part from the norm and is not willing to let statistics be the defeat mechanism to a strategy, solutions are achievable.

The concepts of OMFTS, STOM, and MPF 2010 and Beyond are sound ideas which take into consideration the multitude of changes affecting our military forces both today and in the future. They are necessary to ensure the United States maintains an edge over its adversaries and the testing of the concepts must continue. These concepts are logistically supportable if the doctrine writers allow a mobile logistical task force ashore even though it is against their intended objectives. Having a mobile ground logistics task force ashore does not hinder assault force operations. In reality, this task force becomes the means for the operational concepts to work.

As world events continue to change the way our armed forces prepare to fight future conflicts, only through logistic ingenuity will words like flexible, mobile, seamless, focused, anticipated, precise, and tailored be turned into concepts for fighting tomorrow's wars. It is the logistician's responsibility to ensure operational planners are not lured into believing these words can be independently plugged into existing logistics models to create plans capable of sustaining an

operation.

Today's military forces must be prepared to deploy and execute an operation with very little advance notice. Since forces will have to respond quickly to a crisis there is not enough time available to construct a sustainment plan starting from scratch. Generic sustainment plans must already be developed and readily available for execution. They must be written in such a way that they are flexible enough to work in a broad range of operating environments.

Having a ground logistical task force is just one of multiple solutions which must be implemented in order to support seabased logistics. The ground logistics task force provides a supply source capability to the assault force that they would not have in an exclusively seabased operation. Additionally, without this redundant supply capability an assault force's chances of mission accomplishment and survivability are drastically reduced.

ENDNOTES

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2. Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, "The role of the Navy's aircraft carriers", *San Diego Union Tribune*, pg.21
3. U.S. Marine Corps, *Ship-To-Objective-Maneuver* (Quantico, Va.: Marine

- Corps Combat Development Command, 1997) pg.3.
4. Ibid., pg.9.
 5. Ibid., pg.10.
 6. U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 3, Expeditionary Operations, pg.91.
 7. Ibid., pg.7.
 8. Draft Marine Corp's Mid-Range Threat Assessment 1997-2007, pg 1-2.
 9. U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 3, Expeditionary Operations, pg.105.
 10. Lieutenant Mark Beddoes, U.S. Navy, "Logistical Implications to Operational Maneuver from the Sea," Naval War College Review, Autumn 1997, pg.33.
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 12. Naval Surface Warfare Center, "Landing Craft Air-Cushion," 1997.
 13. Ibid., pg.34.
 14. U.S. Marine Corps, "Operational Maneuver from the Sea," pg. 6.

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