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TITLE

The Future of Amphibious Operations: Shaping the Expeditionary Strike Group to Fight
in the Joint Task Force.

By

Gilmore N Birklund

Captain, USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial
satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning
and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by
the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

Signature: _____

February 2010

Advisor: Dr. Paul Melshen, JFSC

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: Maritime strategists continue to assess the challenges involved with projecting naval power. From the historical writings of Thucydides in evaluating the key events of the Peloponnesian War to the Inchon landing in 1950, the delivery of ground forces from the sea has been a central function of naval forces. The Anglo-American Allies further developed the ability to plan and execute Joint Combined amphibious operations during the World War II island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific and more recently during the deceptive feint in Desert Storm. Today, the ever changing strategic landscape requires naval forces to be increasingly flexible, scalable and rapidly deployable in order to meet the diverse set of strategic imperatives outlined in the 21st century joint Maritime Strategy. The Expeditionary Strike Group of the future must be structured and aligned to provide ready, capable and sustainable expeditionary naval forces to fit and fight in the modern Joint Task Force.

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INTRODUCTION

Expeditionary warfare from the sea and the associated amphibious capabilities has been a critically important element of joint warfare for centuries and the cornerstone of U.S. Naval operations since World War II. The ability of naval forces to conduct the full range of Joint and combined amphibious operations within the Joint Task Force in defense of national interests around the world has never been more critical. The emerging threats from state and non-state actors continue to create new challenges within the evolving strategic landscape and require naval forces to be more flexible, adaptive and capable than ever before. Additionally, in order to maintain effective sea control on a global scale and counter the growing threats to our nation and those of our allies, U.S. naval forces must be prepared to work jointly with the other services, government agencies, non-government agencies, international organizations and with partner nations to combat the myriad of threats that exist today. As outlined in the new Maritime Strategy, *A Cooperative Strategy for the Century Seapower*,

The security, prosperity, and vital interests of the United States are increasingly coupled to those of other nations. Our nation's interests are best served by fostering a peaceful global system comprised of interdependent networks of trade, finance, information, law, people and governance. We prosper because of this system of exchange among nations, yet recognize it is vulnerable to a wide range of disruptions that can produce cascading and harmful effects far from their sources. Major power war, regional conflict, terrorism, lawlessness, and natural disasters all have the potential to threaten United States national security and world prosperity.¹

Considering that two-thirds of the globe is covered in salt water and that 90 percent of the world's trade is transported over international sea lines of communication,

¹ United States, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (Washington, D.C.: United States Marine Corps; United States Dept. of the Navy; United States Coast Guard, 2007), Introduction.

it becomes clear why the safety and security of the maritime domain is a preeminent national and international priority. While globalization, industrialization and advances in technology have made many nations more prosperous, it has also resulted in vastly increased competition for vital and limited resources and created a number of emerging threats including narco-terrorism and proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

As an example and to highlight the diverse nature of the maritime security issues that exist today, piracy has become one of the fastest growing and most disruptive threats to international shipping in this century. Although one of the oldest forms of criminal activity on the high seas, the irregular tactics used by the pirates, along with the constraints of international law and the sheer volume of ocean surrounding commercial sea lanes, make counter-piracy operations one of the most challenging missions facing naval forces today. To offer some perspective, it is useful to look at a comparatively small but significant segment of the maritime domain in and around the Horn of Africa. The gulf of Aden, commonly referred to as “Pirate Alley,” is a body of water approximately 300 nautical miles wide by 900 miles long encompassing nearly 205,000 square miles of surface area and home to Somali-based pirates that committed over 100 acts of piracy and collected roughly 30 million dollars in ransom in 2008 alone. The fact that over 21,000 commercial ships transit through the Gulf of Aden every year, including the waterborne transport of over ten percent of the world’s oil to and from Europe, East

Africa and Asia is illustrative of the magnitude of the maritime security challenges that face the United States and the global maritime partnership.²

Among the myriad of challenges facing the blue-green team, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps engagements in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have had a significant impact on the ability of naval forces to conduct expeditionary operations from the sea. Specifically, the demands of land-centric operations in theatre, extremely demanding deployment cycles and a paucity of resources have precluded naval elements from conducting the dedicated training required to maintain critical core competencies. Moreover, the disestablishment of the Navy's Amphibious Groups and subsequent transition to the smaller and more operationally focused Expeditionary Strike Group has had a negative impact on amphibious ship readiness and overall naval capability throughout the force. Therefore, in order to provide the necessary organizational support and operational expertise to the expeditionary forces, the Navy and Marine Corps leadership must examine the structure, composition and alignment of the Expeditionary Strike Group in order to provide ready, capable and sustainable expeditionary forces that are prepared to conduct the full range of amphibious operations within the Combined Joint Task Force. As outlined in the 2006 Naval Operations Concept, the challenges facing today's naval forces are significant and will require considerable resources and dedicated leadership in order to succeed.

U.S. Naval forces have historically accomplished the important naval missions of forward presence, crisis response, deterrence, sea control, and power projection. These missions remain the cornerstone of our force capability. The post 9/11 security environment has, however,

² James Jay Carafano, Richard Weitz, and martin Edward Andersen. *Maritime Security: Fighting Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Beyond*. (Washington, D.C. Heritage Foundation, 2009), 7.

increased emphasis on the non-traditional mission areas of civil-military operations, counterinsurgency, counter-proliferation, counterterrorism, maritime security operations (including drug interdiction), information operations, air and missile defense, and security cooperation with an expanded set of partners. The challenge for the navy and Marine Corps today is to remain capable of traditional naval missions while simultaneously enhancing our ability to conduct non-traditional missions in order to ensure that naval power and influence can be applied at and from the sea, across the littorals, and ashore, as required.³

To fully understand the issues currently affecting the state of amphibious warfare, it would be prudent to take a holistic approach that considers a wide range of variables to include the historical foundations, mission requirements in the joint environment, the current state of shipboard material readiness, and a host of other relevant contemporary issues. In addition, it will be necessary to examine the organizational structure of the Expeditionary Strike Group in an effort to identify both operational requirements and Title X functions that are required to support and enable naval forces to conduct the full range of expeditionary operations. The questions and ensuing argument are essentially twofold. First, should the Navy and Marine Corps make the commitment and subsequent investment in time, resources, and manpower to retain a robust amphibious capability or has the strategic landscape changed to the point that this unique type of warfare is no longer worth the return on investment? And second, should the operationally centric Expeditionary Strike Group staffs be shaped (manned, trained, and equipped) to not only lead a Marine Expeditionary Brigade level amphibious task force but also act as the Navy's designated staff for all naval requirements including the Title X responsibilities to oversee integration, training and readiness of naval forces. Regardless of which position this research ultimately supports, there should be a clear set of recommendations on how

³ Naval Operations Concept (2006), 11.

the Navy and Marine Corps should proceed to posture, organize and structure for future operations in the Joint task force.

KEY CONCEPTS

The discussion of naval operations, particularly expeditionary warfare, requires the understanding of a variety of concepts found in references like the Naval Operations Concept, Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower (the maritime strategy), the Policy for Baseline Composition and Basic Mission Capabilities of Major Afloat Navy and Naval Groups and a number of other naval and joint doctrine publications. While most of the common terms and definitions are easily referenced, there are some that while widely used, are frequently subject to misinterpretation, and therefore should be addressed up front. In the case of expeditionary warfare, there is no single-specific definition listed in any joint publication; however, a number of joint and service articles and publications address the term and offer both similar and unique perspectives on the concept. The following key concepts and accompanying descriptions are provided to help facilitate a better understanding of expeditionary warfare, amphibious operations, maneuver warfare and the associated elements of each.

Expeditionary Warfare

An armed force organized to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country is used to describe the organization of a nation's military to fight abroad. Expeditionary warfare forces can take the shape of their mission or operating environment. They are not bound by tables of organization, but are like kaleidoscopes: changing the mission is like twisting the prism, but instead of a new pattern a new force will emerge. These configurations can include naval forces for blockades, with emphasis on air for deterrence or extraction of those in harm's way. They may include a ground mantle for security, perhaps of a peace enforcement mission. Or they may have a CSS/logistics character for humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief missions. Expeditionary forces were in part the antecedent of modern concept of rapid deployment forces; however, traditional

expeditionary forces are essentially self sustaining with an organic logistics capability and with a full gamut of supporting arms.¹

Amphibious Operation

An amphibious operation is a military operation launched from the sea by an amphibious force (AF), embarked in ships or craft with the primary purpose of introducing a landing force (LF) ashore to accomplish the assigned mission. Amphibious operations can be designed to achieve operation or campaign objectives in one swift stroke; comprise the initial phase of a campaign or major operation to establish a military lodgment; serve as a supporting operation to deny the use of an area or facilities; to fix enemy forces and attention; to outflank an enemy; or to support military engagement, security cooperation, deterrence, humanitarian assistance, and civic assistance.²

Maneuver Warfare

An amphibious operation applies maneuver principles to expeditionary power projection by establishing a LF ashore. The AF executes rapid, focused operations to accomplish the JFC's objectives. Regardless of the type of amphibious operation, the commander landing force (CLF) and commander amphibious task force (CATF) plan and execute operations based on maneuver warfare philosophy and the following general concepts:

All actions focus on achieving the commander's objectives. The concept of operations (CONOPS) guides the decisive actions to exploit enemy vulnerabilities and attack enemy center of gravity (COG) and selected decisive points.

The use of the sea offers maneuver space. Operations should create freedom of action for the AF, while creating a tempo greater than the enemy can withstand. The AF commander should exploit evolutionary advances in electronic warfare (EW), precision targeting systems, waterborne/airborne transportation craft, and anything else that allows for the introduction of the AF at the time and place of his choosing. Maneuver can begin long before closing the shoreline as the sea offers many avenues of approach.

¹ Charles E. Wilhelm, Expeditionary Warfare.marine corps gazette, 79(6), 28-30. Retrieved October 15, 2009, from Career and Technical Education. (Document ID: 4455650, June, 1995), 28.

² Joint Pub 3-02 *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations* (19 September 2001), III-i.

The key to successful LF operations is the rapid build up of combat power ashore. Therefore, it is imperative that commanders seek to pit friendly strength against enemy weakness.

The preferred tactic for AFs operating against coastal defenses is to avoid or bypass the strong points if unable to exploit gaps in these defenses. Operations that emphasize intelligence, deception, and flexibility will help identify and create gaps while also enhancing the force protection of the entire joint force. If unable to bypass the strong points, the AF will be required to neutralize an adversary's anti-access systems.

The complexity of amphibious operations and the vulnerability of the AF as it builds combat power ashore require the full integration of organic assets as well as those of other joint and multinational forces. The AF realizes maximum effectiveness by using all available capabilities.³

³ Ibid., III-i.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

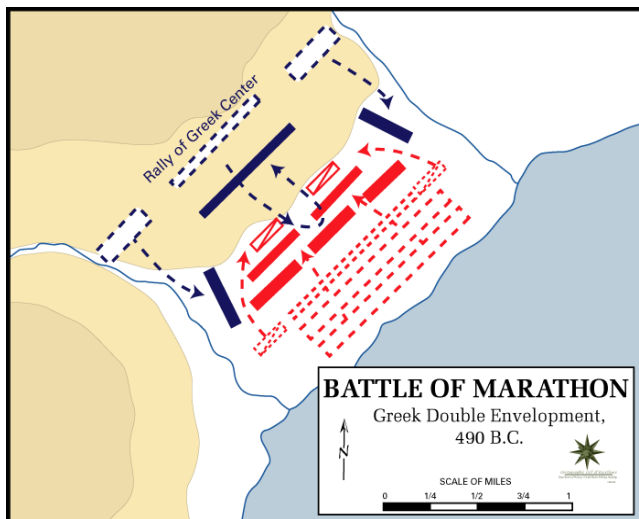
In an effort to better understand the direction amphibious warfare should take in the future, it is useful to look back and explore some of the historical foundations that have helped shape expeditionary warfare today. A brief review of some of the more notable operations from approximately 490 B.C. through the 21st century highlights the role and impact of various amphibious operations in the overall scheme of joint warfare as well as the unique challenges associated with conducting expeditionary maneuvers in that particular era. Though not necessarily considered “Joint” at the time, some of the earlier operations were clearly dependent on the ability of land and maritime forces being able to coordinate efforts and effectively operate together in order to reach operational campaign objectives.

Another, and arguably more pragmatic reason for reviewing the historical examples of expeditionary warfare, lies not only in the ability to garner important lessons, but to help determine whether or not this type of capability is applicable in future joint operations. When considering the keen competition among services for limited resources and the nature of the counter-insurgency operations that U.S. forces and coalition partners are engaged in today and in the foreseeable future, it is only logical to question the utility of certain capabilities and whether or not they offer an acceptable return on investment for the future. The accompanying tables are designed to support the discussion with a concise summary of the operation being conducted, the general outcome, and additional points to consider.¹

¹ Nowa A. Omoigui, *Inter-service relations: Imperatives for Jointness* (Part 2). <http://www.dawodu.com/omoigui67.htm>. (Accessed January, 27 2006).

Greco-Persian campaign and Peloponnesian War

Greco-Persian campaign and Peloponnesian War		
Operation	Outcome	Comment
Persian naval Task Force conducted an amphibious assault against the Greeks at Marathon, 490 B.C.	Unsuccessful. Persian task force was defeated	Led Athens to develop a robust naval capability and become the most powerful maritime power in the Eastern Mediterranean
Amphibious operations at Salamis, 480 B.C.	Athenian naval forces defeated the numerically superior Persian fleet	One of the earliest clearly decisive naval battles on record
Amphibious operations during the fourth battle of Syracuse in 415 B.C.	Sicilian and Spartan forces defeated the Athenian expeditionary group during a combined sea and shore campaign in Syracuse	This was the turning point in the Peloponnesian War. Though not the defining battle, it marked a clear shift in maritime superiority

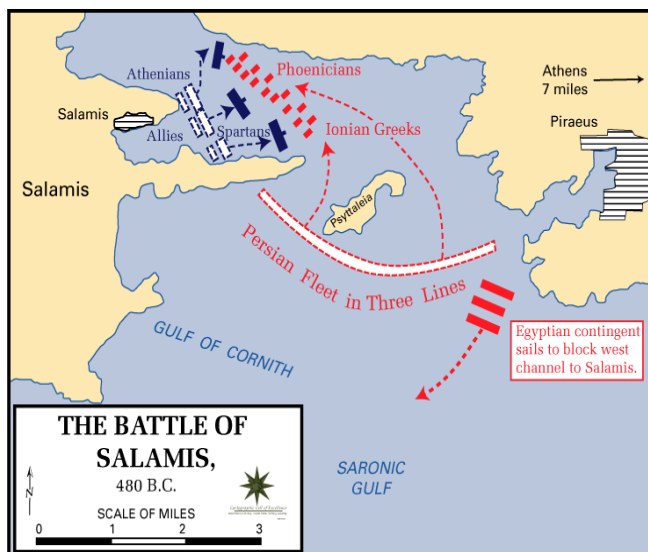


The Persian attack at Marathon during the Greco-Persian wars in 490 B.C. was one of the earliest examples of amphibious warfare on record. The Persian forces with an armada of 600 ships had embarked on an island-hopping

campaign that saw a number of victories prior to this battle. The task force, emboldened by the capture of the Cycladic Islands and Eretria, landed at Marathon enroute to the prize city of Athens.² The Athenian hoplites, although vastly outnumbered by the

² Tom Holland, *Persian Fire: The First World Empire and the Battle for the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 168, 177, 184.

Persian forces, prevailed by preventing the Persian task force from advancing forward from the coastal landing area and out maneuvering with attacks to both flanks and then striking the main body of the force in the center. It would appear that the planners for this operation made a number of errors including poor intelligence preparation of the battlefield and underestimating the capability of the more heavily armored and exceptionally capable Greek citizen soldiers.³ If nothing else, the battle at Marathon provides a snapshot of the ancient amphibious forces and the challenges associated with early expeditionary warfare.



The battle of Salamis in 480 B.C was the first recorded full-scale naval battle in history. It provided an excellent contrast in naval capability and the importance of deception and expeditionary maneuver warfare. The Persian task force was far stronger than the

Greek maritime force with a nearly three to one advantage in both number of ships and soldiers. The Greeks knew they were in trouble and needed to quickly find a way to level the playing field. They dispatched a messenger who posed as a deserter to inform the Persian commander that the Greek fleet was in trouble and at the point of retreating back to port. This led the Persian commander to surge his force forward, rowing forcefully

³ Ibid., 196-198.

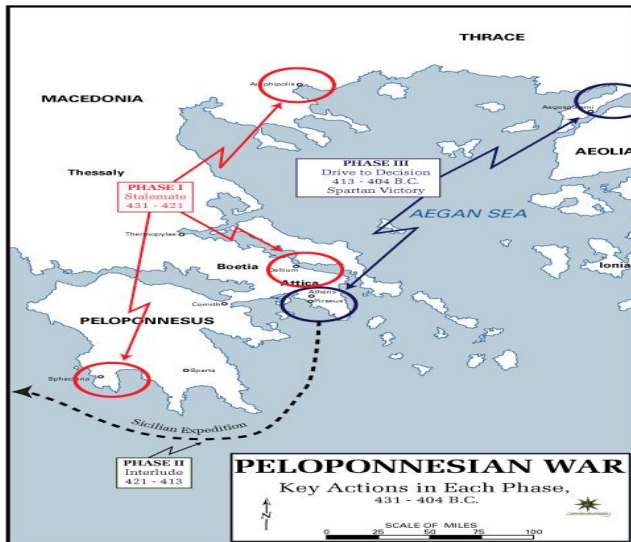
throughout the night in order to locate the Greek naval group and attack at first light.⁴ The Greeks who had spent the night ashore to finalize plans and ensure the force was well rested, got underway just before daybreak and were ready for the engagement. Although the Greek task force was clearly outnumbered, they were highly skilled in maneuver and close quarters naval warfare, often called Galley Warfare. At the core of the Greek task force was a new ship called the “Trireme.” At 120 feet in length with a 20 foot beam, it was much smaller than the heavy Persian warships and carried approximately 200 Sailors and soldiers. The advantage, however, was in the speed and maneuverability it brought to the fight. With 170 oarsman providing horsepower, the Trireme could reach and briefly sustain a speed of nearly ten knots fully loaded.⁵ The Trireme also had a heavy bronze covered ram that was designed to strike an enemy ship below the waterline and retract quickly enabling the crew to retreat or reposition for another attack. To take advantage of this unique capability and help offset the numerically superior Persian task force, the Greek ships led the Persian fleet into a narrow strait where they were able to outmaneuver the larger vessels and execute a series of flanking attacks which resulted in a four-to-one kill ratio and an overwhelming victory for the Greek naval force.

The defeat of Persian naval forces and the subsequent campaign to conquer Athens marked the beginning of a shift in the balance of power that set Athens on a course to become one of the world’s foremost cultural empires and home to the most powerful maritime force in the region. During the next fifty years, the Athenians accrued

⁴ R.G. Grant, *Battle at sea: 3000 Years of Naval Warfare* (London: Dorling Kindersly, 2008), 34.

⁵ Victor Davis Hanson, *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War* (Random House, New York. 2005), 238.

significant wealth and developed military capabilities that were both revered and feared as being expansionist by neighboring Greek city-states. The unprecedented growth and refinement of Athens which included the formation of the Delian league, a coalition between Athens and neighboring coastal cities, would ultimately lead to a war between the most capable land and maritime forces in all of Greece.⁶



The Peloponnesian war, fought between Athens and Sparta, from approximately 431 B.C. to 404 B.C. was another well-documented example of early amphibious warfare. Thucydides, an Athenian writer, historian and General who was born on or about 460 B.C. provided a

thorough account of the 27-year war between Sparta and Athens including details of the more significant maritime battles.⁷ Although there are conflicting reports as to the cause of the war, the most prominent themes revolve around two schools of thought. First, through the eyes of the Spartans, the city of Athens was growing too powerful with nearly 300,000 residents and over 300 ships.⁸ The Athenians also enjoyed a well established, prosperous and culturally advanced society that had the advantage of a fortified sea port with deep water access to the Mediterranean. Sparta, on the other hand, was an inland territory that was considerably smaller than Athens with a standing army of

⁶ Grant, 36.

⁷ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Penguin Group, New York. 1972), 7-10, 21-25.

⁸ Hanson, 6.

approximately 10,000 soldiers, less than 100 available ships and far fewer organic resources than their Athenian counterparts. Early historians also believed that a clash of conservative and liberal ideologies may have sparked the aggressive Spartans to engage in a civil war in an effort to overthrow a growing democratic tide that might spread throughout Greece and neighboring countries.⁹ The Athenians likely viewed the Spartans as an aggressive horde of unrefined and barbaric warriors that coveted the land, wealth and cultural refinements in the greatest city of Greece. Unfortunately for the Athenians, who had previously defeated the much larger Persian forces at Marathon and Salamis, underestimated the smaller and in their minds, less capable Spartan forces during the battle of Syracuse.

While the fourth battle of Syracuse was not the defining naval engagement of the Peloponnesian war, it is demonstrative of the challenges associated with trying to sustain a forward deployed expeditionary force that was engaged in simultaneous battles against an enemy that was attacking both the land component ashore and the supporting ships at sea. Additionally, the battle underscores how planners incorporated critical lessons from previous naval battles and used elements of maneuver warfare to trap, neutralize and defeat a highly maneuverable fleet of ships in a littoral environment. By 415 B.C., the Athenians were in need of additional resources to support the campaign and sent an expeditionary force to land at Syracuse in hopes of capturing what was considered the wealthiest and most resource laden city in Sicily. The Athenian leadership asserted that

⁹ Ibid., 7.

by gaining a foothold in Syracuse, it would provide the strategic advantage necessary to defeat Sparta and end the war.¹⁰

Plagued by significant losses during a series of skirmishes with Sicilian and Corinthian forces both ashore and at sea, the Athenian expeditionary group, faced with limited options and on the verge of defeat, elected to try and run the enemy blockade that was positioned at the mouth of the harbor and retreat to open ocean. Having learned from previous encounters with the Athenian triremes, the Syracuse maritime forces modified their strategy which forced the Athenian task group into a narrow passage and then cut off any chance of escape to open ocean by flanking both sides of the force. Once encircled, The Athenian task force was unable to maneuver effectively and had no choice but to fight on the enemy's terms or retreat back to shore. Additionally, the Syracuse Sailors had reconfigured their ships by adding material to the prows and side rails in order to prevent the enemy from hooking and boarding during the fight.¹¹ In the end, Athens lost half their ships and those that made it back to shore were quickly captured.

The Greco-Persian and Peloponnesian wars illustrate a number of points that demonstrate the necessity of maritime nations having a strong expeditionary naval capability. First, both the Athenians and Peloponnesians realized early in the initial planning phase that they would require a capable and credible fleet of warships in order to execute their respective campaigns. Second, that tactics, techniques and procedures had to be continually reassessed and matched to existing capabilities in order to effectively employ forces and achieve operational goals. And that even during the

¹⁰ Grant, 36.

¹¹ Ibid., 37.

earliest campaigns, operational planners had to consider both land and maritime capabilities jointly in order to field an effective force.

During the next few centuries there were a significant number of well-documented naval engagements conducted throughout the world that involved expeditionary forces; however, amphibious operations continued in much the same vein as the Greco-Persian and Peloponnesian campaigns in terms of shipbuilding, tactics, and technology. It was not until the 1800s and the advent of steam powered ships, that shipbuilders and warfighters would begin to usher in a new era of expeditionary warfare and amphibious operations.

American Civil War

American Civil War		
Operation	Outcome	Comment
Battle of the Ironclads	Union forces defeated the Confederate fleet on the Mississippi river	First battle between Ironclad ships
The battle of Hampton Roads	Union blockade remained intact	Ironclad capability validated

The U.S. Civil War, fought between 1861 and 1865, saw the first encounter between steam powered and steel hulled vessels in U.S. waters. Although the technology of steam propulsion and incorporation of metal alloys into shipboard hull design was in its infancy, the naval battles during the Civil War ushered in a new era of shipbuilding and changed the course of future expeditionary and amphibious operations.

In 1861, shortly after President Davis issued a call for privateers, President Lincoln issued his own proclamation that outlined the need to blockade major ports in the South in order to stem the flow of food, weapons and other critical supplies to the confederate forces.¹² The complexity of implementing and sustaining a series of strategic blockades throughout the Southern access points was immense and prompted the first large scale joint army-navy planning effort within the union forces. Additionally, the requirement to flow forces and supplies to and from the sea and river ports in support of joint operations while simultaneously conducting expeditionary strikes against selected ports, industrial complexes and enemy fortifications, would demonstrate a number of naval capabilities that would be built upon during the forthcoming world wars and would

¹² Paul Calore, *Naval Campaigns of the Civil War* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2002), 62.

eventually form the tenets of modern day joint amphibious operations and naval core competencies. Additionally, union leadership recognized that the scope of this campaign would require a much larger fleet of high tech ships capable of fighting both in the shallow waters of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, their associated inland waterways as well as the deep water littoral operating areas along the Eastern seaboard. The aggressive campaign to strike Confederate forces at sea and ashore, blockade critical sea ports of debarkation and sustain forward deployed blue forces in an operating area spanning over 3000 nautical miles, marked the beginning of a significantly expanded role for U.S. naval forces in the Civil War and in the future.¹³

The Battle of Hampton Roads provides a good example of the early employment of steam driven, iron clad ships and how they performed in battle. During the two-day battle, the outnumbered Confederate naval forces attempted to even the odds and break the blockade established in Hampton Roads by steaming the fully armored ironclad CSS Virginia out of the Norfolk shipyard directly into Union frigates positioned off of Sewell's Point. Armed with 104mm steel armor, an iron ram, and twelve guns, the Virginia attacked and effectively destroyed the wooden frigates Cumberland and Congress on the first day.¹⁴ During the night, the Union navy positioned its own ironclad vessel, the USS Monitor, just off the Newport News shoals to protect the grounded USS Minnesota and maintain the fragile blockade. The historical battle that ensued on March, 09, 1862, became legendary for the unique nature and outcome of the engagement. For over four hours, the Virginia and Monitor exchanged volleys at nearly point blank range,

¹³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁴ Grant, 235-237.

firing every weapon available and ramming the other vessel when the opportunity to maneuver into position presented itself. At the conclusion of the battle, both ships, having suffered minimal damage, steamed away in opposite directions with both sides claiming victory. Although these battles did not necessarily shape the outcome of the war, the validation of steam and steel technology clearly marked a turning point for future amphibious tactics, techniques, and procedures that would be developed in the coming World Wars.

Korean War

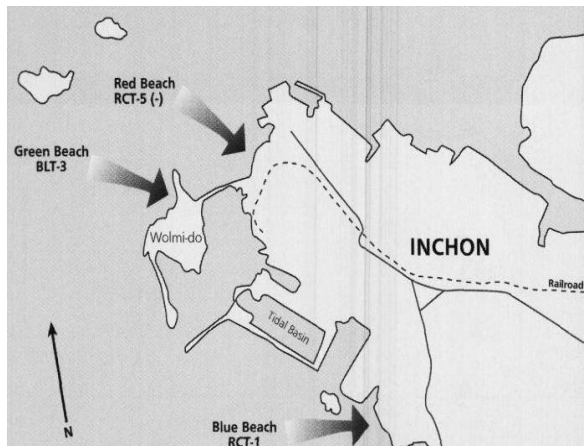
Korean war		
Operation	Outcome	Comment
Operation CHROMITE, Amphibious landings at Inchon in 1950	Coalition forces defeated North Korean forces at INCHON and recaptured Seoul, South Korea	A well planned and executed, joint, combined operation that revalidated the requirement for maintaining naval amphibious capability

Between 1942 and 1945, U.S. expeditionary forces would be put to the test in a number of high profile amphibious operations conducted during an expansive Island hopping campaign in the Pacific against the imperial Japanese army and navy. Soldiers, Sailors and Marines would advance and codify the art of amphibious assault on the distant shores of Guadalcanal, Leyte Gulf, Tarawa, Tinian, Saipan, Iwo Jima, Peleliu, and Okinawa. By the end of World War II, naval forces had established their place in 20th century joint warfare and proven the value of capable expeditionary forces by taking the fight forward and defeating a determined enemy far from the U.S. mainland. Despite these formidable victories, there were many critics in the administration, including newly appointed Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, who thought that there would no longer

be a requirement to employ amphibious forces in future conflicts. In 1949, during a conversation between Secretary Johnson and Admiral Richard Connally, the Secretary stated:

Admiral, the Navy is on its way out. There's no reason for having a Navy and a Marine Corps. General Bradley tells me amphibious operations are a thing of the past. We'll never have any more amphibious operations. That does away with the Marine Corps. And the Air Force can do anything the Navy can do, so that does away with the navy.¹⁵

As with World War II, Korea came as a surprise and caught the U.S. forces in the midst of a draw down with troops widely distributed and engaged in the post-war occupations of both Japan and Europe. At the conclusion of WW II, few national leaders or political scientists would have predicted that the U.S. would be involved in yet another major war, with forward deployed expeditionary forces fighting against the spread of communism on foreign shores.



In August 1950, UN Supreme Commander, General Douglas MacArthur began planning for what would be one of the most difficult and dangerous amphibious landings ever attempted by U.S. naval forces. In an

effort to support UN troops that were under fire in the Pusan area of South Korea, General MacArthur and his planners orchestrated a massive combined, joint operation with British and Canadian support that would include 261 ships and over 50,000 Soldiers,

¹⁵ Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: an inside view of the U.S. Marine Corps*. (U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis. M.D. 1984), 120.

Sailors and Marines.¹⁶ The operation would require a coordinated series of air strikes combined with precision naval gunfire prior to disembarking ground forces ashore by amphibious landing craft. Moreover, the amphibious ships, destroyers and craft would have to negotiate an extraordinarily difficult approach and landing through narrow and well defended channels to reach a coastal area surrounded by mudflats that could be quickly hidden or exposed by one of the most divergent tidal ranges in the world. With a tidal shift of nearly 36 feet, the ships and craft would have to time the approach and landing perfectly or risk being grounded within range of North Korean artillery and small arms fire. In end, the swift defeat of North Korean forces on the island of Wolmi-do and Inchon led to the recapture Seoul, South Korea and marked a turning point in the war.¹⁷

In the context of historical military operations, it is relatively easy to make a case for having a robust expeditionary and naval amphibious capability resident and ready to fight within the U.S. joint forces. The question that emerges, and that will be examined in subsequent chapters, is whether or not the U.S. joint forces should continue to invest in the ships, aircraft, weapons systems, equipment, training and manpower to field an expeditionary force capable of conducting the full range of amphibious operations in the 21st century?¹⁸ Additionally, whether or not the Expeditionary Strike Group should be task organized as an operational staff, administratively with TITLE X responsibilities for expeditionary and amphibious requirements or both?

¹⁶ Grant, 330-331.

¹⁷ Ibid., 330.

¹⁸ Expeditionary Warfare, Shaping for the Future (October 2008), 3.

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

The Strategic Landscape

The United States and partner nations face an ever evolving and complex set of security challenges in highly globalized world. Opposing ideologies, cultural precepts and states that sponsor terrorism combined with advances potentially harmful technology create a volatile and uncertain security environment. Additionally, competition for limited resources among highly industrialized nations, developing nations, and violent non-state actors add to the complexity and magnitude of the challenges. The Capstone Concept for Joint Operations in concert with the Navy Strategic Plan In Support of Program Objective Memorandum 08, the Naval Operations Concept, and the Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, provide a comprehensive overview of operational requirements and ideas for how joint forces should be employed to meet the full range of strategic challenges in the 21st century and beyond.¹

In addition to fighting in both conventional and irregular campaigns, naval forces must be equally adept at conducting the full spectrum of Military Operations Other Than War including non-combatant evacuation, maritime-theater security cooperation, crisis response, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief operations in every region of the world.² To be fully effective, naval forces must be properly manned, trained, and equipped with the best possible weapons systems and be able to integrate seamlessly in the joint environment and operate with a wide variety of civilian agencies and coalition partners.

¹ Naval Operations Concept (2006), 5.

² United States, *Navy Strategic Plan In Support of Program Objective Memorandum 08* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of the Navy, Chief Information 2006), 3.

Strategic Imperatives

In order to establish a framework for future joint and naval operations, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard have, for the first time in history, crafted a joint maritime strategy that integrates and leverages the combined capabilities of all three services in an effort to protect vital national interests, dissuade adversaries, and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to provide regional security where needed.³ In the new maritime strategy, the three service chiefs make a strong case for the importance of having a credible, forward deployed naval force, ready to defend and protect the global maritime domain and keep the world's sea lines of communication free and open for all law abiding nations. The following statement from the maritime strategy describes the importance and cooperative nature of U.S. seapower in today's global environment.

The oceans connect the nations of the world, even those countries that are landlocked. Because the maritime domain-the world's oceans, seas, bays, estuaries, islands, coastal areas, littorals, and the airspace above them-supports 90 percent of the world's trade, it carries the lifeblood of a global system that links every country on earth. Covering three-quarters of the planet, the oceans make neighbors of people around the world. They enable us to help friends in need and to confront and defeat aggression far from our shores. Our challenge is to apply seapower in a manner that protects U.S vital interests even as it promotes greater collective security, stability, and trust. While defending our homeland and defeating adversaries in war remain the indisputable ends of seapower, it must be applied more broadly if it is to serve the national interest.⁴

To help shape the force and provide guidance for building future capabilities and capacity, the maritime strategy outlines six key strategic imperatives that set the course

³ Naval Operations Concept (2006), 7.

⁴ *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, Introduction.

for joint maritime operations and the future of amphibious operations.

Limit regional conflict with forward deployed, decisive maritime power

Here, the strategy calls for a widely distributed and networked maritime force that is ready to react when a crisis occurs.⁵ Joint forces must be prepared to prevent, limit and contain a variety of threats and provide a wide range of options to the joint force commander. Although forces can not be prepositioned everywhere, policy makers should be aware that to have a credible forward presence, it is critical to have a capable fleet of forward deployed ships, sea and shore based aircraft, and a number of regionally based fleet activities prepared to deliver logistics and maintenance support around the clock.⁶

Deter major power war

Deterrence must be the primary goal in the face of any potential conflict. To prevent a crisis, the U.S. and all global maritime partners must be prepared to bring all elements of national power to bear to preclude the outbreak of war. As stated in the maritime strategy, “The expeditionary character of maritime forces-our lethality, global reach, speed, endurance, ability to overcome barriers to access, and operational agility-provide the joint commander with a range of deterrent options.”⁷ The challenge for the U.S. and multi-national partners to deter major conflict lies in the collective credibility of forces and perceived will to employ them when necessary in order to influence the thinking of adversaries not to take action.⁸ In order to be effective, deterrence requires a strong commitment from partners, persistent presence of forces, and a strategic message

⁵ Navy Strategic Plan In Support of Program Objective Memorandum 08, 17.

⁶ A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, 3.

⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸ U.S. Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Defense, 2009), 9.

that clearly states the consequences for taking inappropriate-aggressive action.

Win our nations wars

Expeditionary-amphibious capable forces give the joint force commander a distinct advantage by having a highly flexible and scalable maritime option in time of war. From short fused crisis response to forcible entry, naval forces bring the fight forward and become an invaluable part of the commander's arsenal. As the Chief of Naval Operations outlined in the navy's guidelines for 2009, "Our dominance is evident in our ability to rapidly generate persistent sea power anywhere in the world to achieve the six strategic imperatives of the maritime strategy."⁹ Of the five critical national security challenges highlighted in the Joint Operating Environment, the preeminent challenge remains fighting and winning our nations wars. The unpredictable nature of warfare in today's world requires the joint force commander to have a wide range of capabilities at his disposal including a naval expeditionary force that is able to gain access, sustain operations in the most challenging regions, and prevail against a determined enemy who may employ a variety of subversive and irregular tactics.

Contribute to homeland defense in depth

During the "conversations with the country" initiative that was a precursor to building the new maritime strategy, U.S. Navy and Marine Corps leadership traveled around the nation to ascertain what people valued most about the naval forces. Without question or hesitation, everyone from captains of industry to average citizens regarded defense of the homeland as the number one priority.¹⁰ While the goal is to neutralize

⁹ G. Routhead, *Executing Our Maritime Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy, 2008), 4.

¹⁰ *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, preface.

threats as far from U.S. shores as possible, the ability to conduct defensive operations in U.S. littoral waters is a key element to supporting the nation's collective security efforts. To be effective, naval forces must be able to fully integrate and operate seamlessly with the other services, international partners, and many other state and federal agencies to screen, and when necessary, interdict ships bound for U.S. ports.¹¹ Working in close coordination with U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other civil authorities, the Expeditionary Strike Groups based on the East and West coasts, would be a good option to provide the leadership and staff experience necessary to organize, train and lead a combined civil-military task force in response to an emergent threat. A well trained and equipped strike group would be a critical enabler to building an effective joint layered defensive capability in support of homeland defense initiatives.

Foster and sustain cooperative relationships with more international partners

As the world becomes more globalized and interdependent, expanding partnerships with other maritime nations and international organizations will become essential to protect shared interests and provide security and stability in the maritime domain.¹² Joint expeditionary and amphibious capability will not only provide the ability to defend against transnational threats in international waters, but also to flow forces ashore in remote areas in an effort to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief support when disaster strikes. The Global Maritime Partnership Initiative seeks to build and leverage the wide range of resources and capabilities resident in coalition and other

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹² Ibid., 6.

partner nations by building relationships through combined maritime and theatre security exercises and operations.¹³ U.S. naval forces deployed onboard amphibious ships have been the nation's first choice for providing humanitarian support to developing countries around the globe. Working closely with national and international agencies like Operation SMILE and Doctors Without Borders, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team provide a cost effective means for building long-term partnerships and conveying a positive strategic message while improving the quality of life for thousands of deserving people.

Prevent or contain local disruptions before they impact the global system

To prevent or contain disruptions on a global scale, the expeditionary sea services, working jointly with the other services and international partners, have to be more agile, responsive and globally distributed than ever before. The Expeditionary Strike Groups, Amphibious Ready Groups, and the assigned naval forces offer the joint force commander a flexible, scalable, and adaptable set of capabilities that can counter a number of disruptive and potentially catastrophic threats including proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, narco-terrorism, human trafficking, mine laying, and international piracy.¹⁴ By continuing to expand intelligence networks and improve interoperability with coalition partners, U.S. Joint Expeditionary Forces can continue to shape the battle space and prevent disruptions from becoming international incidents.¹⁵

Naval Roles and Missions: Making a Case for Amphibious Capability

¹³ Expeditionary Warfare, Shaping for the Future (October 2008), 8.

¹⁴ *A cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, 6.

¹⁵ Expeditionary Warfare, Shaping for the Future, 30.

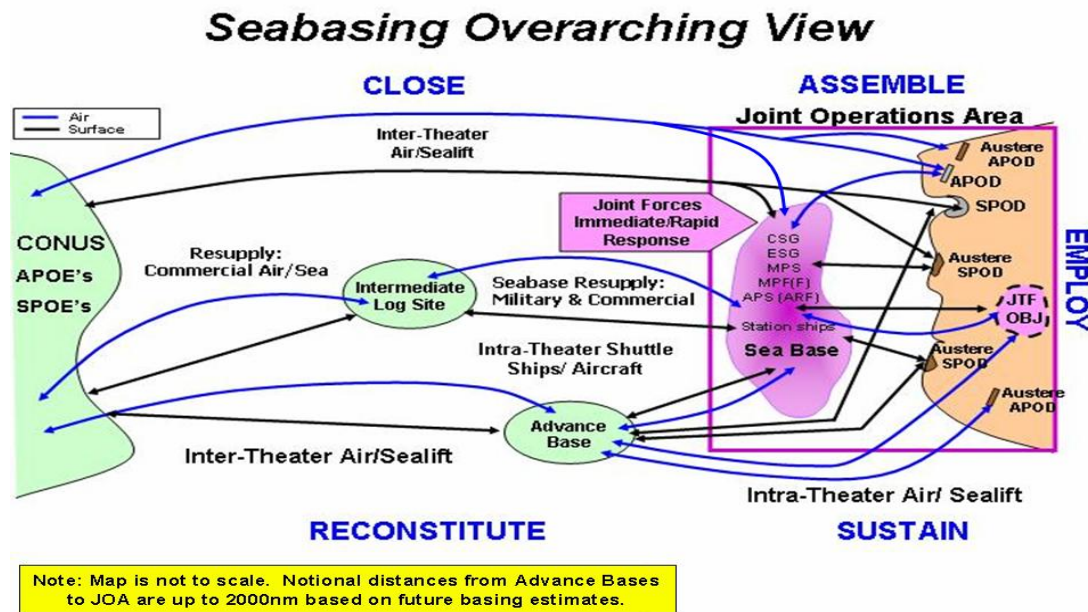
The 2006 Naval Operations Concept (NOC), signed by the Chief of Naval Operations and Commandants of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard was created to provide unified guidance to the Navy and Marine Corps team in the execution of all naval missions. The concept is carefully aligned with *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, *The National Defense Strategy*, *The National Military Strategy* for the Joint forces, and the *Navy Strategic Plan In Support of Program Objective Memorandum 08*.¹⁶ In addition to providing naval centric guidance, the document denotes specific “*commander’s intent*” that operationalizes the strategic imperatives outlined in the 2007 *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. The NOC is also designed to be evolutionary in nature with an inherent flexibility to capture and incorporate new ideas in order to ensure relevancy and the effective employment of forces in a constantly changing environment. Unlike the strategic level documents, the NOC, in concert with existing joint and service level doctrine, focuses specifically at the operational level of war and distills the strategic level concepts and national security requirements into specific mission sets that apply directly to the expeditionary and amphibious forces. The guiding naval principles, missions and methods discussed addressed in the NOC, in conjunction with the precepts defined in the *Policy for Baseline Composition and Mission capabilities of Strike Forces, Strike Groups, and other Major Deployable Elements*, provide a framework to study and help shape the future of amphibious operations as well as the organizational construct and composition of the Expeditionary Strike Groups. It is here that we will begin to make a tangible case for the importance and hopefully bona-fide requirement to retain and grow not only the

¹⁶ Naval Operations Concept (2006), 1.

amphibious capability, but also the Expeditionary Strike Group Staff to lead and support naval expeditionary forces. The following roles and missions form the core competencies of the naval expeditionary service and should be considered carefully when thinking about the viability and future of amphibious operations.¹⁷

Forward Naval Presence

As discussed in the previous section, forward naval presence is a key enabler that confers relevancy to the naval forces. The Combatant Commanders (CCDRs) will likely continue to demand a 1.0 (plus) Amphibious Ready Group presence (with additional



surge capability) in their respective Areas of Operation (AOR) to support Joint Task Force Commander and Maritime Component Commander (MCC) mission requirements.

To help meet the challenge of sustaining forward deployed maritime forces, the concept of “Seabasing” has been developed and operationalized during the past few years by conducting annual exercises with the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Maritime

¹⁷ Naval Operations Concept (2006), 9.

Sealift Command assets. Since a number of overseas bases have been realigned or closed, naval forces can no longer rely exclusively on the traditionally available access and logistics support that was afforded by the bases that were staged near most major international port facilities. Seabasing was designed to use the maneuver space and freedom of international waters to secure an area for U.S. forces to operate safely and receive logistics support and tailored capability packages to conduct the full range of military operations.¹⁸ Furthermore, the concept of Seabasing is predicated on the principle that open ocean can be used to assemble, move, project, support and sustain forces much as they are on land with the distinct advantage of operating outside any nation's sovereign territory.¹⁹

As noted in the 2007 maritime Strategy, "In an era of declining access, maritime forces play a critical role in projecting U.S. power overseas. Maritime forces that are persistently present and combat-ready provide the nation's primary forcible entry option in an era of declining access, even as they provide the means for this nation to respond quickly to other crises."²⁰ Although created and sourced by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, the concept of Seabasing was formulated as tool to support the entire joint force. In a testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2008, the General James Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps stated, "Seabasing is not exclusive to the Navy and Marine Corps-it will be a national capability. In fact, we view joint seabasing as a national-strategic imperative."²¹ Amphibious Ready Groups are particularly well

¹⁸ Expeditionary Warfare, Shaping for the Future, 57.

¹⁹ Dakota L. Wood, *Strategy for the Long Haul CSBA: The US Marine Corps, Fleet Marine Forces for the 21st Century* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2008), 6, 7.

²⁰ *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, 3.

²¹ Expeditionary Warfare, Shaping for the Future, 57.

suited to support and be supported by Seabasing operations. The well decks in the Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD), Landing Ship Dock (LSD), and Landing Platform Dock (LPD) class ships that are typically assigned to the groups in conjunction with the wide variety of organic landing craft provide a high speed-large capacity capability to flow supplies, equipment and manpower ship to ship or ship to shore in almost any maritime environment. When combined with heavy lift helicopters and long range V-22 tilt rotor aircraft that are embarked with the Air Combat Element (ACE), the amphibious naval forces can support and sustain joint forces afloat or ashore for extended periods from a sea base in virtually any Combatant Commander's area of responsibility.

The challenge for Navy and Marine Corps leadership remains the ability to man, train, equip and deploy the right mix of capabilities within the Expeditionary Strike Groups and Amphibious Ready Groups in support of national tasking. Sustained forward presence does, however, come with a significant price tag and will require careful allocation of resources and identifying the right staffs and maintenance organizations to oversee and support these high demand-low density capital assets.

Crisis Response

The Navy and Marine Corps team has always been at the forefront of providing crisis response in the midst of some of the world's most devastating natural and manmade crises.²² Leading a multifaceted team of military and interagency partners, the amphibious forces provide a core capability to the Joint or Combined Task Force Commander in the event of a crisis. One of the notable advantages to having an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) available to respond in a crisis is that there is a highly

²² Naval Operations Concept (2006), 12.

capable and fully trained Command Element (CE) built into the group. Every ARG has an O6 (Colonel, USMC and Captain, USN) led Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) staff onboard as part of the adaptive force package.²³ In addition, the Flag or General Officer (FO/GO) led (Rear Admiral-lower half or Brigadier General) sixty person Expeditionary Strike Group staff can be deployed on short notice and quickly integrated into the MEU and PHIBRON staffs in order to have a larger and more capable Task Group should the situation warrant. In the event of a truly large scale catastrophic event that requires even greater afloat capability, the Carrier Battle Group and Expeditionary Strike Group can be merged into a single Joint or Combined Expeditionary Strike Force (ESF) with little or no prior coordination or planning.²⁴ There are a number of recent cases including tsunami relief efforts in South East Asia, disaster relief in Bangladesh, and post-hurricane support in New Orleans and Texas, where the ARG-MEU, ESG, and ESF were tasked in support of crisis response operations. The ability of naval forces to respond rapidly, provide a highly flexible and scalable force package that can gain access to virtually any coastal area in the world and operate unencumbered from international waters, provides the Joint Force Commander a powerful and versatile capability that can be employed seamlessly with any number of global maritime partners and governmental organizations in time of crisis.

Expeditionary Power Projection and Deterrence

Sustainable power projection with global reach can be a critical element in deterring and dissuading potential adversaries from taking inappropriate action against

²³ OPNAVINST 3501.316A, *Policy for Baseline Composition and Mission capabilities of Strike Forces, Strike Groups, and other major Deployable Elements* (2007), 5, 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

the U.S. or partner nations. The Navy and Marine Corps team can project power and contribute to the joint force with a number of capabilities including amphibious operations, strike warfare, information operations, and naval special warfare to name a few. The ability to aggregate and disaggregate selected elements of the Amphibious Ready Group and Expeditionary Strike Group (ships, aircraft, landing craft, combat troops, Command Element) quickly and seamlessly enables the Joint Force Commander to employ a highly flexible response that is ready to perform several missions simultaneously both at sea and ashore.²⁵ During operation ENDURING FREEDOM in 2009, Expeditionary Strike Group II effectively disaggregated the staff to provide a Flag officer led command element (Commander Task Force 151) onboard USS BOXER (LHD-4) to support counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, support contingency operations in the Arabian Gulf from Commander Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain, while simultaneously preparing amphibious ships to deploy from the group's headquarters located in Norfolk, Virginia. While not optimal, the "three way" split staff demonstrated the exceptional flexibility of the strike group and the ability to accomplish multiple missions in theater while fulfilling Title X requirements in support of global joint operations at home.

Enabled by "Seabasing," naval forces can now exercise an exponentially increased level of sustainability in both the littoral and blue water environments.²⁶ This improved sustainability combined with the available technologies resident in the newer class of amphibious ships allow the Amphibious Ready Groups and Expeditionary Strike

²⁵ *Navy Strategic Plan In Support of Program Objective Memorandum 08*, 16.

²⁶ *Naval Operations Concept* (2006), 13.

Groups to operate in a more widely distributed posture, with better connectivity and significantly improved command and control. In addition, the forces can now strike deeper, from greater distances, and for considerably longer periods of time which equates to greater power projection, lethality and ultimately a more effective deterrent option.

Maritime Security Operations and Sea Control

Providing security and sea control across the global maritime domain will require a robust and arguably wide range of capabilities to counter the diverse nature of the conventional and irregular threats that exist today. Moreover, due to the sheer magnitude of the world's oceans and the vast number of belligerent state and non-state actors distributed across the commons, the U.S. cannot go it alone. As discussed earlier, the maritime strategy depends heavily on willing partners, international organizations and federal agencies to conduct the full range of operations necessary to deter and defeat these threats to freedom and democracy. The original initiative to build a number of credible partnerships that was started under the auspices of the "1000 ship navy" has matured into what is now termed the "Global Maritime Partnership Initiative." This initiative seeks to leverage capability and improve interoperability among the members through a series of multi-national military exercises and joint-combined security operations.²⁷ The Amphibious Ready Groups and Expeditionary Strike Groups are particularly well suited to the task, primarily due to the inherent mobility and flexibility of the organizations. When paired with U.S. Coast Guard elements deployed in key regions, the combined tactical strength and enhanced legal authorities result in a highly adaptive force package that has the ability to engage a number of transnational threats

²⁷ *Navy Strategic Plan In Support of Program Objective Memorandum 08*, 20.

including terrorism, proliferation and transport of weapons of mass destruction, piracy and drug trafficking.²⁸ When complimented with joint and international military Special Forces, the ARG can execute the full range of interdiction requirements from unopposed to non-compliant visit-board-search and seizure operations against any class vessel in the world. As an example, Expeditionary Strike Group EIGHT in coordination with Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South, which included elements from eleven nations, nine government agencies and all five uniformed services, combined to successfully interdict over 200 metric tons of narcotics in 2004 and 2005. This ongoing cooperative effort has grown in recent years and has become an extremely effective means of combating narco-terrorism and protecting the flow of commerce and freedom of navigation in the maritime domain.²⁹

Security Cooperation and Civil Military Operations

Perhaps the most prolific and rewarding service the expeditionary forces provide is in the realm of international Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) operations. Arguably the bread and butter for the ARG and independent amphibious ship deployments, Theater



Security Operations are, by design, truly joint-interagency endeavors that require extensive planning and coordination with a variety of government and non-governmental organizations. Typically four months

²⁸ Ibid., 18, 20.

²⁹ Naval Operations Concept (2006), 14.

in length, dedicated TSC missions not only help to build partnerships in strategically important regions, they dramatically impact the lives of literally thousands of people in under developed and developing nations. To illustrate the capability of large deck amphibious ships to support TSC operations as well as the utility and return on investment that this kind of operation garners for the United States, the following data is extrapolated from the recent deployment of the Amphibious Squadron VIII in support of operation “Continuing Promise” onboard the amphibious assault ship USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3). On August 6, 2008, USS KEARSARGE departed its homeport of Norfolk, Virginia, enroute to Central and South America with scheduled visits Nicaragua, Colombia, Panama, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana. Onboard, there were a number of embarked units and supporting organizations including the Amphibious Squadron staff, Fleet Surgical Team IV, members of the U.S. Public Health Service, Navy Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit 202, Air Force Civil Engineering Squadron V’s Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force, medical personnel from the armed forces of Canada, The Netherlands and Brazil; Navy Assault Craft Unit II, Naval Beach Group II, non-governmental organizations International Aide and Project Hope, U.S. Navy Maritime Civil Affairs Squadron II, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 28 and Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 464.

Additionally, personnel from the uniformed Public Health Service and civilians from Operation Smile and Project Hope were embarked to provide direct medical services to members of the host nation population.³⁰ In addition to building schools, orphanages, and providing hands on training in a number of disciplines, the joint military

³⁰ Amy Kirk, *Continuing Promise 2008 Public Affairs* (Navy News Stand, 2008), 1.

and international medical team treated more than 47,000 primary care patients, dispensed 81,300 prescriptions, provide veterinary care to nearly 5,600 animals, and conducted 198,600 medical, dental and optometric services. In addition to the primary basic medical care, 221 patients were flown to KEARSARGE for shipboard surgeries, including hernia repair, eye surgery and cosmetic surgery to repair birth defects. During the course of the mission, the ship was diverted to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) in Haiti after the country was struck by four tropical storm systems in less than a month. The ability to move cargo and personnel quickly by helicopter and landing craft made it the ideal platform to support the humanitarian relief mission on short notice. Embarked Marine and Navy helicopters flew more than 100 missions and led to the timely delivery of more than 3.3 million pounds of food, water, and other relief supplies.³¹

The Navy and Marine Corps team conduct this type of tailored TSC mission almost continually in Africa, South America and other underdeveloped areas. With a cost of approximately eighteen to twenty two million dollars for a four month deployment, the return on investment is considerable. The challenge, however, is to balance the ongoing requirements of operational missions in support of operations IRAQI and ENDURING FREEDOM with the almost insatiable demand for continuing security cooperation support to partner nations. Manpower and shipboard readiness are key concerns, especially when individual units are tasked to surge outside normal deployment cycles to meet these requirements. Maintenance costs and dwell time for military

³¹ Ibid., 1.

personnel are greatly affected and require hands on leadership and close management of limited resources to get the job done.

Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, and Counter-proliferation

Deployed naval forces are routinely engaged in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism actions in support of ongoing joint and coalition operations in the Central Command and Africa Command areas of responsibility. These irregular challenges and the associated tactics used by insurgent forces require a particularly flexible and adaptable joint capability in order to effectively counter the threat. When embarked in an Amphibious Ready Group, the Special Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) offers a formidable capability that can gain access and operate in almost any environment including littoral waters, shipping channels, choke points, and inland territories.³² With the recent modifications, amphibious ships are able to embark, launch and recover unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) which have drastically improved the ability to collect intelligence, attack networks, and strike at the heart of terrorist organizations with considerably less risk.³³ When coupled with the long range capability of the MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft and the close air support of the AV-8B harrier strike/fighter, Marine and special operations forces can execute strike and hostage recovery operations much further inland than ever before. These assets are currently being employed in operations IRAQI and ENDURING FREEDOM and have become a reliable force multiplier for the Joint Force Commander in the fight against violent extremists.³⁴

³² Dakota L. Wood, 48.

³³ United States, *Navy Strategic Plan In Support of Program Objective Memorandum 08*, 5.

³⁴ Naval Operations Concept (2006), 21.

Forcible Entry From The Sea

The last and perhaps most demanding core competency for the amphibious forces involve the ability to perform an opposed amphibious assault against enemy forces ashore. Marine Corps Strategy 21 describes forcible entry operations as one of the nation's primary means of projecting and sustaining power ashore in a hostile environment. In conjunction with prepositioning forces, the Amphibious Readiness Group-Marine Expeditionary Unit forms a highly capable and sustainable group level force that can execute forcible entry operations as required.³⁵ In his paper "Forcible Entry-The Purple Lie", Major R.G. Houck, USMC, describes a post 9-11 military environment that has largely discounted forcible entry capability within the joint forces. He argues that while the joint forces still advertise amphibious assault as an executable capability, the focus on land centric warfare in the Middle-East has caused a shift in focus away from amphibious assault operations and subsequently degraded the ability of naval forces to safely and effectively conduct an opposed forcible entry operation within the parameters of acceptable risk.

The concept of Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS), formally promulgated by the Marine Corps in 1995, emphasized the maneuverability of the Amphibious Task Force (ATF) which incorporates tactics of deception and surprise to circumvent enemy defenses and achieve operational objectives ashore.³⁶ With the advent of newer and more lethal technologies including Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC), V-22 Osprey tilt rotor aircraft, and the forthcoming F-35B Short Take Off Vertical Landing

³⁵ United States, *Marine Corps Strategy 21* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of the Navy, 2000), 2.

³⁶ Scott A. Edwards, *Forcible Entry in the 21st Century* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2001), 4.

(STOVL) fighter, the ATF will be exceptionally well positioned to execute complex assault operations in low intensity conflicts within the Joint Task Force. Although anchored in the National Security Act of 1947 and Title X of the U.S. code charter, the challenge for DOD leadership will be to determine whether or not forcible entry operations will be a viable capability to employ against future threats in the maritime domain. With a continually shrinking defense budget and numerous competing priorities, this may be an extremely difficult decision to make.

Although the future of expeditionary-amphibious operations is unclear, the premise of this section was to provide the reader with a context to compare and contrast the potential value of amphibious capability when looking at not only current requirements as they are outlined in the existing strategic and operational documents, but perhaps more importantly, when contemplating what capabilities should be considered for the future. As history has taught us, and Clausewitz iterated in his views on war, nations never know and seldom get to choose what kind of war they will face in the future. For the U.S. joint forces, that entails being resourced, postured, and prepared to prevail in a myriad of conflicts from conventional to irregular warfare as well as engaging in a number of military operations other than war. While amphibious capability is clearly a force multiplier for the joint forces and provides competitive edge in the operational and tactical employment of forces in the joint domain, Combatant Commanders will have to assess closely and clearly state where amphibious operations fall in the hierarchy of requirements.³⁷

³⁷ Dakota L. Wood, 44.

The next chapter will examine the Expeditionary Strike Group as an organizational construct and will make a case for how it should be shaped and aligned to support future joint requirements.

THE EXPEDITIONARY STRIKE GROUP

Contemporary Issues

In November 1944, Rear Admiral Jerauld Wright took command of Amphibious Group Five, a newly-created unit of the Amphibious Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, which at the time was commanded by Vice Admiral Richmond. Wright's group would be involved in the invasion of the Ryukyu Islands (Operation ICEBURG), with the Island of Okinawa being the key operational objective.¹ Over time, the Amphibious Group (PHIBGRU) would evolve into an organization with approximately 100-110 people that was chartered to provide oversight to all naval amphibious operations including both operational and Title X responsibilities for the ships and subordinate U.S. Navy commands.

In 2006, the Navy opted to downsize and transition the PHIBGRU staffs into a predominantly operational staff of approximately 60 Navy and Marine Corps personnel. The idea was to find efficiencies within the structure and redistribute personnel from the groups into various other organizations that required additional manpower. The problem, however, that became evident when the smaller Expeditionary Strike Group staff was deployed overseas, manifested itself in the lack of senior (Flag level) leadership available to support the amphib ships and Amphibious Squadrons (PHIBRONs) as they prepared to deploy. This shortfall had a direct impact on ship readiness and the ability to coordinate fleet level Navy and Marine Corps warfighting requirements. Moreover, the term Expeditionary Strike Group was being used to describe two separate organizations

¹ David M. Key, *Admiral Jerauld Wright--Warrior Among Diplomats* (Manhattan, Kan: Sunflower University Press, 2001), 222-223.

which created confusion for supporting staffs and organizations that had traditionally worked with the former Amphibious Groups and the Amphibious Ready Group-Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG-MEUs).

When the former three-ship ARG transitioned to the ESG construct, the afloat-group was expanded to include a command element (CE), staff element, three surface combatant ships, typically a Guided Missile Cruiser (CG), Guided Missile Destroyer (DDG) and Guided Missile Frigate (FFG), the Amphibious Squadron, Marine Expeditionary Unit, and all of the associated supporting elements.² Notionally, the deploying strike group could aggregate and disaggregate with additional vessels including submarines when required. While this construct provided considerably more flexibility and capability than the three vessel ARG, it posed additional challenges to global force managers who were tasked to source a number of competing requirements for the Combatant Commanders including counter-narcotic and missile defense missions that require surface combatant ships. In addition to the deployable ESG, the term ESG also represented the shore based Flag led staffs that replaced the Amphibious Groups. If this sounds confusing, it was, at least for those organizations who were not directly involved in the amphibious operations.

Recognizing the problem, the Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps authorized the establishment of a working group to begin looking at the issues affecting amphibious readiness. In January 2009, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces released a coordinated message with Commander, Marine Forces Command and Commander, Marine Forces Pacific that formally established the “ESG way ahead

² OPNAVINST 3501.316A (2007), 6, 7.

working group.” The charter for the group was to “discuss roles and missions of amphibious forces, identify key issues, develop tasks, and generate recommendations for the way ahead.”³ In a subsequent message that was released after the first meeting of the working group in March of 2009, the commanders issued the following official policy guidance regarding the ESG:

Effective immediately, the ARG-MEU term will replace the ESG term as the routine rotational amphibious force package. For example, BATAAN ESG will be referred to as BATAAN ARG/22 MEU. Deployed ESGs will also assume the ARG/MEU nomenclature. The nominal ARG/MEU will consist of an amphibious squadron (PHIBRON), 1 LHA/D, 1 LPD, 1 LSD, embarked naval support elements and an embarked MEU. The ARG/MEU will be led by the PHIBRON and MEU commanders.

In the event a requirement exists for an ARG/MEU, with or without surface combatants/submarine, to be led by a flag or general officer, the amphibious force package will be referred to as an Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) and use the name of its assigned LHA/D ship (i.e., BATAAN ESG).⁴



The remainder of the message discussed additional tasking for the working group which is ongoing today. In the following section, we will conduct a brief mission analysis and outline a series of specified

and implied tasks to inform the prospective ESG roles and missions.

³ Commander U.S. Fleet Forces Command. *Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) Way Ahead Message* ID:132118Z (January, 2009) , 1.

⁴ Commander U.S. Fleet Forces Command. *Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) Way Ahead second in a series Message* ID:092342Z (March, 2009) , 1.

Mission Analysis

Subsequent to the transition of Amphibious Groups to Expeditionary Strike Groups, the reduction in staff personnel by nearly fifty percent began to have a deleterious effect on amphibious ship readiness as well as a number of supporting functions that the larger PHIBGRU staffs had previously performed. Once the billets had been divested, much of the resident expertise left with them. When analyzing the impact of manpower reductions, it is helpful to use a mental model to fully understand the impact and potential long term effects. In this case, the BILLET-BODY-FUNCTION triad works nicely. When a billet is divested or no longer funded and the person (body) that filled it finally transfers, it begs the question as to whether or not the function or job that individual performed is still relevant and if so, who or what organization will assume the responsibility.

Although the original message that authorized the transition stated that the TYPE-Commanders would assume the preponderance of Title X responsibilities, it became evident that actual requirements were more significant than originally perceived and the Navy needed a core group of subject matter experts with amphibious experience, including Marine Corps communications detachment personnel and Navy steam and diesel propulsion engineers, to provide the necessary expertise to support the planning, maintenance actions, interoperability, and integration of blue-green assets in the Fleet Marine force.

For example, when the new ESG manpower document was filled, it was discovered that all the former billets to conduct amphibious warfare (AMW)

certifications had been divested and after approximately six months, all but one of the training and certification team members that filled these billets had transferred thus leaving the staff unable to perform the function. This is but one example of a number of shortfalls that had begun to impact the amphibious fleet.

In support of the ESG working group charter to review ESG roles and missions, the numbered fleet commanders issued guidance that directed their staffs to begin development of the ESG Required Operational Capabilities-Projected Operational Environment (ROC-POE) documents that would ultimately codify the specific roles and missions as well as provide a framework for manpower requirements. In the course of the development process, staffs were issued a number of fleet specific guidelines to help shape the process including:

- Review existing ROC-POEs.
- Develop the ROC/POE with a sense of capacity and resources.
- Achieve synergy between ROC/POEs and the Expeditionary Warfare Center of Excellence, Missions, Functions and Tasks (EWCOE MFT).
- ESG should focus on warfighting wholeness issues.
- Command and Control line for ARG/MEU runs through the ESG and the ESG has Direct Authority (DIRLAUTH) with Marine Expeditionary Force/marine Division.
- Continue to include surface combatants in the training and certification process when necessary and operational schedules can support.
- The PHIBRON staff must have the capacity to work the training and readiness issues.
- Determine periodicity of PHIBRON staff Combined Warfare qualification.
- The TYPE Commander (TYCOM) will retain Title X responsibilities to man, train and equip amphibious ships and units.
- Amphibious warfare remains an ESG and PHIBRON mission.

- An ESG Command Element (CE) must be certified and prepared to deploy in response to missions requiring enhanced Command and Control of amphibious forces.
- ESG 2 and 3 must be properly manned to sustain Immediate Superior In Command (ISIC) duties if/when the ESG CE deploys.⁵

In addition to this guidance, the working group would have to determine an appropriate alignment that supported the notional command relationships for both operational and administrative control which will be described later in the chapter. As a precursor to the ROC-POE, the combined ESG Operational Planning Team (OPT) would have to develop a series of specified and implied tasks to inform the higher level documents. The following list represents a summary of that effort.

ESG CE specified tasks:

- Maintain a combination of amphibious warfare and Navy Composite Warfare expertise.
- Be the navy's operational experts and advocates for amphibious warfare.
- Responsible for all amphibious operations planning and execution functions.
- Be prepared to be task organized and designated as a Task Force Commander under a Joint Functional Component Commander.
- Oversee the readiness and serviceability of their respective amphibious ships.
- Oversee interoperability issues with the Marine Corps.
- Oversee the ability to integrate with other Navy and Joint Forces.
- Oversee Title X accountability and authorities (OPCON, ADCON, etc.).

ESG CE implied tasks:

- Be certified to deploy as an ESG and Commander Maritime Prepositioning Force (CMPF).
- Conduct and/or support operations afloat or ashore.

⁵ Commander, U.S. SECOND and THIRD FLEET informal guidance, May 2009, ppt. slides, 3, 4, 7.

- Support initial crisis response planning and missions across the full range of military options (e.g. Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR), Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), etc.
- Be manned, trained, equipped, and organized to perform as Task Force Commander under a Fleet/Joint Functional Component Commander.
- Oversee the readiness of all amphibious shipboard equipment and provide technical assistance and contractor oversight when necessary to include regional maintenance activities.
- Maintain oversight of assigned amphibious unit progress during TYCOM-led unit level training and certification.
- Oversee intermediate and advanced training and certification to ensure readiness requirements are met.
- Be prepared to conduct Seabasing operations.
- Plan and execute operations as the Commander, Amphibious task Force (CATF) for Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)-level assault and other amphibious or expeditionary missions.⁶

It should be noted that this analysis was conducted by the author and his counterpart at ESG III in support of the ESG way ahead working group and is still a work in progress. Moreover, while these tasks were shared with the ESG VII staff, it may not reflect that organization's views as they operate under a unique split staff - command element construct that is permanently forward deployed in Okinawa and Japan.

Gaps and Seams

One of the most challenging aspects of redefining the ESG organization is to try and identify gaps and seams with regard to critical areas of responsibility that were divested during the transition from the Amphibious Group. Specifically, if the ESG is directed to be the Navy's operational experts and advocates for amphibious warfare to

⁶ Expeditionary Strike Group II and III Chief of Staff led Operational Planning Team analysis (2009), 10-12.

include being responsible for the readiness of amphibious ships, serviceability, interoperability with the Marine Corps, and the ability to integrate with the joint forces, then the staff must have the right mix of blue-green expertise permanently assigned to the organization. To add to the challenge, flag level direction to the working group included a number of stipulations that put a premium on finding efficiencies wherever possible and reminded all involved that there would be no blank checks to support the process.

First, analysts and planners would have to assume a zero-sum gain in manpower. In other words, if a function and subsequent billet were added to the organizational Activity Manpower Document (AMD), then the Sailor or Marine would have to come from an existing billet in another established Navy or Marine Corps organization. To coin the old adage of “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” there would quite simply be no additional funding available to stand-up new billets so the group would have to make a particularly convincing argument in order to persuade senior leadership to transfer a funded billet from one organization to another. Not a popular tactic during a service wide drawdown and when nearly every command in the Navy, including those sea going units preparing for deployment, are supporting Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom with Individual Augmentees (IA).

Second, the planners would have to proceed with a sense of realism when considering capacity and be sure to envisage the economy of force available in other Naval organizations including the Navy Type Commander (TYCOM), PHIBRON staffs, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC), Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), Navy Warfare Development Command (NWDC), and the various centers of excellence that may be positioned to assume some of the requirements. It was

clear that there would be no appetite for reverting back to a PHIBGRU sized organizational construct regardless of the potential benefits.

Third, that the fundamental differences between the East and West coast strike groups would have to be reconciled and standardized to the maximum extent possible to include a clear set of command relationships that would delineate both operational and administrative responsibilities and authorities.⁷

Divested Functions

Before proceeding to discuss the proposed required operational capabilities and projected operational environment, it would be useful to look at the principal administrative functions that were lost when the PHIBGRU was disestablished and make a recommendation as to which Title X functions should be performed within the new organization. Implicit in the discussion, is that the ESG will be smaller than the former PHIBGRU staff and therefore, not be able to accomplish all of the previously held requirements. Although it may seem like an overstatement of the obvious and previously discussed constraints, the predilection to try and do “as much”, if not more with less, tends to be a pervasive tendency during this type of process when all involved are looking for the most effective and efficient use of available resources and the best return on investment. This is especially true when competing for a viable position in the military structure that must be viewed as vital to the joint services if it is to survive. In a time of economic recovery, double digit unemployment, and waning support for the protracted operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it would be wise to understand that every

⁷ Expeditionary Strike Group Staff: *Missions, Functions, and Tasks* pre-decisional brief to U.S. Fleet Forces N3/5. 10 June 2009, slides 4, 5, 6.

option is on the table, including further dissolution and redistribution of ESG assets into other organizations that are making an equally compelling case for their survival.

Material Readiness (N4)

This may be the most significant area in terms of having an impact on amphibious shipboard readiness and involves the widest range of subject matter expertise within the organization. The former PHIBGRU had a cadre of approximately twenty engineers that provided direct support to the engineering departments onboard five distinctly unique classes of amphibious ships which include the LHD, LHA, LPD-4 class, LSD, and the new LPD-7 San Antonio class platform for a total of thirty four units Navy wide.

Among the more significant roles and missions these engineers performed were:

- The Propulsion Engineering Steering Committee (PESC) which provided leadership and professional oversight for all of the steam plant and diesel engine systems.
- Regional oil spill working group.
- Maintenance, training, and Immediate Superior in Command (ISIC) assessments and inspections for engineering, deck and hull maintenance which supported and evaluated a number of critical areas including safe to steam-safe to operate assessments, continued service assessments, contractor acceptance, sea trials involving the test and evaluation of new equipment and systems.⁸

Although some of these functions were transferred to the specific Class Squadrons (CLASSRONs), these organizations have a broad range of responsibilities and lack the manpower necessary to help train and prepare the crews for many of the major engineering milestones. The result has been a significant degradation in readiness across all classes of amphibious ships with a marked increase in failed assessments and inspections.

⁸ Expeditionary Strike Group Staff: *Missions, Functions, and Tasks* pre-decisional brief, BU slide 2.

Aviation (N8)

The former aviation shop conducted flight deck training for all amphibious ship air departments, acted as certifying agents for the type and fleet commander staffs, and provided subject matter expertise for both the Navy and Marine Corps staffs at the MEB level. When the MV-22 was introduced to the fleet and was preparing to integrate into the BATAAN ARG, the Marine Corps turned to ESG-2 to support the integration process only to discover that the ESG no longer had an aviation department and was incapable of providing the same level of support that was available in the former PHIBGRU staff.⁹

Administrative (N1)

Although the resulting lack of administrative support has not had as pronounced an effect on strike group readiness, there are few areas that are cause for concern because there is no longer a single entity at the one star level to manage:

- Management of Individual Augmentees (IAs) from the ships and subordinate commands.
- Subordinate command manpower management for the PHIBRONs and deployed ARGs.
- Chaplain, Command Managed Equal Opportunity, and medical planning support.
- Reserve force personnel management.¹⁰

The loss of this capability can be seen at the PHIBRON and deployed ARG level because the smaller staffs no longer have a single point of contact or an overarching flag led headquarters that can act as an arbiter in the IA process or as an advocate for other manning issues. Deployed units in particular have expressed frustration in not having

⁹ Ibid., BU slide 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., BU slide 3.

the amphibious community advocacy to help resolve these and other important administrative issues.

The debate regarding which functions should be retained in the ESG is ongoing; however, most strike group and PHIBRON staff leadership feel strongly that building a credible and capable engineering department should be a priority and at the top of the list for consideration. The draft ROC-POE, addressed in the next section, distills and refines the missions for ESG staffs and will ultimately drive overall manning and determine which functions will remain divested and which will be incorporated into the new ESG construct.

Required Operational Capabilities (ROC) and Projected Operational Environment (POE)

The ROC-POE is the authoritative document for operational commands that defines and codifies mission areas, the operating environment, and capabilities for which the ESG staffs are responsible. In addition, the instruction establishes staff capacity that will be used to calculate manpower requirements for the forthcoming Fleet Manpower Document (FMD).¹¹ Most importantly, the ROC-POE will provide a clear resume of capabilities that will enable the Joint Force Commander and global force managers to determine when to source and how to employ the ESG in support of joint operational requirements. Since there has never been a formally recognized ROC-POE for the ESGs, it will be important for staff planners to ensure the advertised capabilities and projected environment do not exceed staff capacity to execute both the Title X and operational responsibilities.

¹¹ OPNAVINST 3501.XXX “*Draft Required Operational Capabilities (ROC) and Projected Operating Environment (POE) for Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) Staffs*” (10 November 2009), 1.

The following discussion of proposed roles and capabilities will examine the more significant competencies of the ESG and underpin the argument for having a flexible, scalable and fully deployable Flag or General Officer led naval staff ready to conduct joint operations both afloat and ashore as well as being the operational experts and advocates for amphibious warfare within the joint services. Specifically, the ESG, in conjunction with the embarked MEU and PHIBRON staffs should be manned and equipped to conduct the following tasks:

Operating from a Naval Station and/or embarked on board shipping, the Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) staff provides centralized planning, embarkation, movement, control, coordination and integration of all assigned assets in support of Amphibious Warfare operations or exercises of an Amphibious Task Force (ATF) en route to and within an Amphibious Objective Area (AOA). ESG staffs execute similar tasking in support of Maritime Pre-positioning Force (CMPF). An ESG acts as Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) for a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)-sized Landing Force, and exercises tactical control of assigned Tactical Air Control units, Naval Beach Group units, and other support units as well as ships assigned as escorts and logistics support units. The ESG Commander controls all air, surface and subsurface units within an assigned AOA. The ESG staff can operate as a Task Force or Group Commander with appropriate Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) responsibilities, as a component of a Joint Task Force (JTF), or as a component of a larger ATF. As such, the ESG directs tactical Amphibious Warfare operations within a joint, unified or allied environment.

Commanders exercise tactical command of the embarked Landing Force, MEB sized or smaller Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) from embarkation until such time as the Commander Landing Force (CLF) transfers forces and operations ashore

The most demanding operating environment anticipated for Expeditionary Strike Group Commanders is operations from the sea in wartime in cooperation with designated joint or combined forces, while exercising control over all activities in an AOA. The ESG staff may also be tasked to operate in a split-staff configuration with an element of the staff afloat and other staff elements ashore in one or more locations conducting combat operations. The ashore locations

may range from a headquarters garrison to austere field conditions and the staff shall be trained and equipped to operate in any of these environments. Notionally, the deployed ESG Staff is the forward element (FE) and the non-deployed staff is the rear element (RE). Examples of most demanding environments include, but are not limited to:

a. Commander of an Amphibious Task Force/Marine Expeditionary Brigade (ATF/MEB) executing a combat operation into hostile territory.

b. Commander of a Task Force/Group conducting a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO).

c. Commander of a Task Force/Group conducting an overseas Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operation.¹²

This is an important opening statement in the draft instruction because it demonstrates the wide range of operational responsibilities that will be required of the ESG staff and the prospective role for the group within the joint force construct including the ability to conduct operations in a split staff configuration. In addition to the traditional amphibious roles and responsibilities, this mission statement also requires the commander to be capable of acting as the Composite Warfare Commander within the ATF or JTF which will encompass a significantly broader range of naval disciplines that will be required within the staff. Potential ramifications include additional training, specialized skill sets, and the ability to operate with surface combatants that are no longer resident in the ARG-MEU. Since there will be limited opportunity for growth, these requirements highlight the importance of the ESG Command Element being able to leverage the capability resident in the other shore based and afloat staffs on short notice. Moreover, in order to integrate effectively and command a larger element of both organic

¹² Ibid., Enclosure 1, 1.

and non-organic personnel which may include Reserve Corps (RC) and Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) personnel, there will have to be a unique set of joint mission essential tasks to guide the training and certification process.

While subsequent challenges will include training costs and additional amphibious and surface combatant ship availability, the most significant aspect of building the new ESG team will involve identifying all of the necessary personnel and carving out time within the Inter Deployment Training Cycle (IDTC) to bring everyone together to train and form a cohesive unit. Creating the appropriate unity of command and unity of effort will be an extraordinarily difficult task considering the current and projected deployment cycles for both navy and Marine Corps personnel.

Command and Control (C2)

In order for the ESG staffs to conduct the wide variety of missions outlined on the ROC-POE, there must be a clearly defined command and control structure and supporting set of formal command relationships in place to help avoid any confusion and manage the risk that is inherent in a multi-faceted organization that relies so heavily on two separate services and supporting commands to provide the necessary capability to operate seamlessly as a cohesive fighting force. To address the Navy-specific C2 among the three ESGs, the draft ROC-POE provides the following language and summary table:

Each ESG must be equally capable in their war fighting capability. However, each ESG operates in its own unique peacetime environment based on geographic location, assigned forces, additional duties, and command relationships; therefore, each ESG requires a unique manning profile.

a. ESG-2 and ESG-3 serve as force providers of combat ready amphibious forces to forward-deployed Numbered Fleet Commanders.

b. ESG-7 is the Navy's only permanently forward-deployed ESG Commander and has OPCON of all amphibious forces assigned to the US Seventh Fleet. In addition, ESG-7 can serve as a force provider to Commander, Fifth Fleet.¹³

Summary Table

<i>UNITS</i>	<i>ESG-2</i>	<i>ESG-3</i>	<i>ESG-7</i>
<i>SHIPS</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>PHIBRON</i>	<i>TWO, FOUR, SIX, EIGHT</i>	<i>ONE, THREE, SEVEN</i>	<i>ELEVEN</i>
<i>BEACHGRU</i>	<i>TWO</i>	<i>ONE</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>ACU</i>	<i>TWO, FOUR</i>	<i>ONE, FIVE</i>	<i>1 AND 5 DET WESTPAC</i>
<i>TACGRU</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>ONE</i>	<i>--</i>
<i>TACRON</i>	<i>TWENTY-ONE, TWENTY-TWO</i>	<i>ELEVEN, TWELVE</i>	<i>DET WESTPAC</i>
<i>BMU</i>	<i>TWO</i>	<i>ONE</i>	<i>DET WESTPAC</i>

Please see the associated footnote for definitions of terms cited in the summary table.¹⁴

It is important to note that the aforementioned language and table only addresses the distribution of amphibious ships currently in the inventory and U.S. Navy commands that are considered subordinate to the ESGs. It does not incorporate the higher level command structure and relationships that are required to manage shipboard readiness and provide overarching linkages above the echelon-four level. As it is not within the scope of the current discussion to include every aspect of the operational interdependencies among the ESGs, the draft ROC-POE instruction can be referenced for a more detailed perspective on the overall proposed construct.

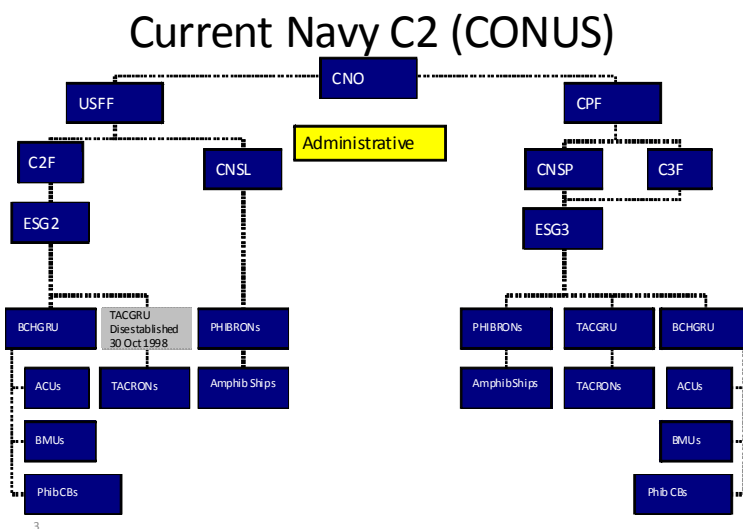
Command Relationships

Command relationships have been a point of contention during the process of developing the future ESG organization, especially with regard to what specific role and

¹³ Ibid., Enclosure 1, 2.

¹⁴ PHIBRON-Amphibious Squadron, BEACHGRU-Beach Group, ACU-Assault Craft Unit, TACGRU-Tactical Air Control Group, TACRON-Tactical Air Control Squadron, BMU-Beach Master Unit.

responsibility the groups should have concerning oversight of shipboard readiness. To complicate matters, the three ESGs have unique relationships with their higher echelon ISIC and other supporting Title X organizations that have not been conducive to forming a standardized operational and administrative structure. In other words, the three ESGs are currently aligned (OPCON and ADCON) differently and therefore, have separate lines of authority and responsibility that tend to be unclear and might cause some confusion to the Joint Force Commander when determining how best to employ the groups from one geographic region to the next.



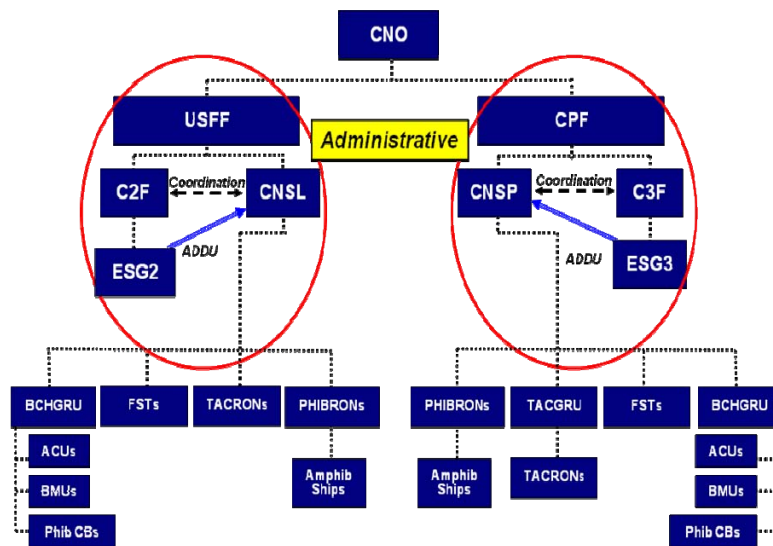
The following charts represent the current and proposed administrative command relationships and are worth comparing and contrasting in order to get a better understanding of the

problem and to make a case for having a singular-standardized alignment for both East and West coast strike groups.¹⁵ Operationally, both the East and West coast strike groups are aligned to their respective numbered Fleet Commanders; however, as depicted in the first chart, the West coast group is administratively aligned to their Type Commander while the East coast group is aligned both operationally (OPCON) and administratively (ADCON) exclusively to their Fleet Commander. This structure can create difficulty

¹⁵ Expeditionary Strike Group Staff: *Missions, Functions, and Tasks* pre-decisional brief, 10.

when trying to coordinate administrative issues between the groups and does not lend itself to a unified construct.

In an effort to standardize the relationships and improve unity of command, the proposed administrative alignment depicted in the second chart enables the respective Fleet Commanders to retain both administrative and operational control while allowing the Type Commanders to provide direct support to the Strike Groups by creating an



additional-duty (ADDU) relationship that will leverage the robust capabilities and subject matter expertise resident in the TYCOM staff.¹⁶ This model should enhance unity of effort and help fill

the gaps that were created when critical billets were divested during the transition from Amphibious Groups to expeditionary Strike Groups. The construct should also help facilitate a more streamlined approach to managing both operational and administrative requirements among all of the associated commands. The abbreviations listed in the charts that were not discussed earlier in the section will be covered in the subsequent footnote.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ CNO-Chief of Naval Operations, USFF-U.S. Commander, Fleet Forces Command, CPF-Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, C2F-Commander, SECOND Fleet, C3F-Commander THIRD Fleet, CNSL-Commander, Surface Forces Atlantic, CNSP-Commander Surface Forces (Lead TYCOM), FST-Fleet Surgical Team, AMPHIB Ships-Amphibious ships.

In the end, a well-structured and properly manned Expeditionary Strike Group can be a force multiplier for both operational and administrative requirements within the naval amphibious community. In addition, the ESG provides the Joint Force Commander with highly flexible and competent warfighting organization that can function as both a maritime or land based component commander capable of conducting a wide variety of operations in support of today's complex joint operations.

CONCLUSION

Combatant Commanders will likely continue to view the world's oceans as a means to conduct joint operations with relative impunity. The unfettered access and virtually unlimited maneuver space within the maritime domain provides the flexibility necessary for military planners to prepare for a full range of joint operations from direct action-forcible entry from the sea, to Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) including Non Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR).

Throughout history, it is abundantly clear that amphibious operations have been a key element in achieving victory in the majority of conflicts that have occurred over time. During the Greco-Roman and Peloponnesian Wars, the ancients were able to achieve maritime supremacy, defeat aggressors, and conquer territories by building superior ships that could fight at sea and deliver vast numbers of soldiers across the open ocean. In the American Civil War, the steam powered-iron clad ships ushered in a new era of expeditionary warfare that would shape the future of shipbuilding and amphibious operations for decades to come. Moreover, during World War II and the Korean War, amphibious operations became the cornerstone to conducting effective joint operations and achieving victory in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters.

Although our joint forces are embroiled in a bitter and challenging counter insurgency conflict ashore, the amphibious forces have been vital to supporting other national interests throughout the world with forward deployed units conducting counter-piracy, theater security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations on a routine basis. Additionally, the agility, flexibility, and exceptional capability that the

expeditionary amphibious forces provide, allow the combatant commanders to project power and deter, dissuade, and if necessary, defeat aggressors in any geographic region. The question that remains, however, is whether or not this is a capability the nation needs when planning for future wars in the 21st century and beyond. As Operation Iraqi Freedom comes to an end and Enduring Freedom continues to progress and evolve, policymakers must consider the future and ask what kind of war America may fight a decade from now and what kinds of capabilities will dominate. As Clausewitz aptly stated centuries ago, "...but in war more than in any other subject we must begin by looking at the nature of the whole; for here more than elsewhere the part and the whole must always be thought of together."¹

As U.S. military forces prepare for future wars in accordance with the national policy established by the nation's civilian leaders, the vision and leadership of the service chiefs and regional and functional combatant commanders will have to consider the full spectrum of operational and tactical requirements. The President's 2006 National Security Strategy, informed by the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) published in February, 2006, provided broad guidance for the transformation of military forces by directing that the future force be capable of tailored deterrence of both state and non-state threats including employment of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), terrorist attacks in the physical and information domains, and opportunistic aggression while assuring allies and dissuading potential competitors. The National Security Strategy (NSS) directed the forces to be prepared to respond to four different types of threats: traditional challenges posed by states militaries, irregular challenges from state and non-state actors employing

¹ Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *Carl Von Clausewitz: On War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 83.

methods such as terrorism and insurgency, catastrophic challenges such as natural disasters and pandemics as well as the use of WMDs by state and non-state actors; and disruptive challenges from nations who employ bio and cyber technology to counter military advantages.²

In addition to the current irregular conflicts in the Middle East, conventional warfare between state actors remains a distinct possibility for the future force as the National Defense Strategy specifically mentions Iran, North Korea, China, and Russia as nations of interest.³

The U.S. Army, much like the Marine Corps, has acknowledged that its core conventional warfare competencies have lagged in many respects and is attempting to return to a balanced approach to improving their conventional warfighting capabilities. General Casey, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, acknowledges the Army's growing competency to fight in a counter-insurgency war, when he stated, "Right now we're focused on counterinsurgency training. We need to get back to full spectrum training as soon as we can," he stated to an audience at the National Press Club. "We can't get the future exactly right, so our forces must be able to adapt for full spectrum operations."⁴

Moreover, the most recent QDR, published in February, 2010 reaffirms the diverse and complex nature of our nation's challenges and outlines two clear objectives for the future. "First, to further rebalance the capabilities of America's armed forces to prevail in today's wars, while building the capabilities needed to deal with future threats.

² U.S., *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: White House, 2006), 44.

³ Ibid., 2-4.

⁴ Gina Caravello, "Casey urges more conventional training." *Army Times*, August 17, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2007/08/army_casey_070814w/ (accessed September 21, 2009).

Second, to further reform the Department's institutions and processes to better support the urgent needs of the warfighter; buy weapons that are useable, affordable, and truly needed; and ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and responsibly.”⁵

Recommendations

So what does this mean for the Expeditionary Strike Group and amphibious forces? The current focus of U.S. policymakers and, by extension, the U.S. joint forces has been in preparing for asymmetrical conflict with non-state actors. As our political policies drive training, procurement of weapons systems and ultimately, readiness, the nation must ensure that it remains adequately prepared to fight the full range of potential wars, including conventional conflicts. Based on the discussion summarised here, the exceptionally diverse range of capabilities that amphibious forces bring to the warfighting table clearly have a role in supporting national interests and the defense of this nation. An Amphibious Task Force that is properly manned, trained, equipped, and led by a capable Expeditionary Strike Group, can form the backbone of a joint expeditionary force that can gain access and defend against both traditional and irregular threats in every geographic area of responsibility.

For the Expeditionary Strike Group, this means increasing capacity to ensure that both the operational requirements and shared Title X responsibilities outlined in the draft ROC/POE are supported with the right mix of Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

Administratively, the staff will need to grow the maintenance support team in the N4 (Supply and Maintenance directorate) which should include senior steam and diesel

⁵ U.S., *The Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington: Department Of Defense, 2010), iii.

engineers with previous tours as inspectors, personnel with a background in 3M maintenance, and at least one of two senior enlisted personnel that have had considerable experience in the deck departments on various types of amphibious ships.

In terms of operational capability, the staff will need to incorporate both fixed and rotary wing aviation expertise to regain the capacity that was lost when the former aviation billets were divested. This will be a key enabler to helping integrate new requirements like the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) and providing general support to the air capable ships that don't have a designated aviator as part of Ships Company. In addition to the aviation requirements, there should be enough personnel with the appropriate operational expertise to man a 24-hour Task Force level battle watch and enable the staff to execute Combined Warfare Commander (CWC) responsibilities.

Although no specific number has been identified at the present time, a good estimate would be in the neighborhood of an additional 15-20 personnel. This would more than likely provide enough personnel to support these administrative and other staff requirements and would put the ESG at approximately 75-80 total personnel which is on par with the current Carrier Strike Group construct.⁶

The other significant, and admittedly very difficult part of the equation, involves striking an appropriate balance in the Navy's thirty-year shipbuilding program. Currently, the navy plans on building capacity to maintain a fleet of approximately 29-31 amphibious class ships to support the wide range of requirements discussed earlier to include the ability to meet the Marine Corps requirement to lift and deliver two Marine

⁶ OPNAVINST 3501.XXX "Draft Required Operational Capabilities (ROC) and Projected Operating Environment (POE) for Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) Staffs" (10 November 2009), 1-4.

Expeditionary Brigades with over 28,000 Marines, their vehicles, assault craft, aircraft, and various weapons systems.⁷ In addition, the newly published Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) outlines the requirement for 30-33 Combat Logistics Force (CLF) ships, 17-25 command and support vessels, and 51 roll on/roll off strategic sealift vessels which will play a major role in the support and sustainment of Naval forces around the world.⁸

It is not the intent herein to describe an overly simplistic depiction of the challenges involved in building and sustaining a robust amphibious capability with a supporting administrative and operational naval staff. Nor is it the intent or within the scope of this paper to purport an easy solution and attempt to resolve the complex problems that have been identified throughout the discussion. There are in fact, many other variables, potential solutions, and competing priorities within the Navy, Marine Corps and other services to consider when addressing the issue.

In the strategic realm, the issue comes down to a prioritization of ends-ways-means and the associated risk involved with allocating funds to any particular capability or program. At the end of the day, the real question that must be addressed, is whether or not this nation's civil and military leadership view the Navy and Marine Corps enterprise as having a high enough return on investment for a coveted place within the joint force architecture. Are the halcyon days of amphibious operations only a passage in history, or are they yet to come? Future events and political solutions will ultimately dictate the strategy the United States will use to meet its mandates as a global power.

⁷ Eric J. Labs, CBO Testimony: *Resource Implications of the Navy's Interim Report on Shipbuilding* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2008), 4, 5.

⁸ *Quadrennial Defense Review* (2010), 46.

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VITA

Captain Birklund, a native of Chicago, Illinois, is a 1982 graduate of Southwest Missouri State University. He received his commission through the Aviation Officer Candidate Program and was designated a Naval Aviator in May, 1984.

Seagoing assignments included tours onboard Helicopter Combat Support Squadron SIX (HC-6) in Norfolk, Va. where he flew the H-46 Sea Knight; Air Officer onboard the Third Fleet Flagship, USS CORONADO (AGF-11) home ported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Helicopter Combat Support Squadron ELEVEN (HC-11) where he deployed aboard USS SACRAMENTO (AOE- 1) in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH; Air Officer in USS KEARSARGE (LHD-3) in direct support of Operation IRAQI Freedom, and as Commanding Officer of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron TWO (HC-2), in Norfolk, Va.

Shore assignments include two tours as a flight instructor onboard HT-18 in Pensacola, Fl. and HC-3 in San Diego, Ca. Additional assignments include tours in Naval Air Forces, Pacific, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, NATO's North American strategic Command where he supported NTM-IRAQ as Commander, NATO Training and Equipment Coordination Group, Brussels, BE; Commanding officer, Naval Support Facility, Diego Garcia, facilitating joint combat operations in direct support of operations IRAQI and ENDURING Freedom; Director of Strategy and Policy in U.S. Fleet Forces, and Chief of Staff, Expeditionary Strike Group TWO in Norfolk, Va. Captain Birklund has compiled over 4,300 flight hours in seven naval aircraft and has over 2,000 mishap-free shipboard landings.

