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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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***Airborne Assault Forces: The Most Expedient And Practical Forcible Entry Response  
Available In Today's Contemporary Operating Environment***

by

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

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## **Paper Abstract**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century operating environment is shaped by many symmetric and asymmetric threats, factors and actors. Today's military force needs to remain agile, rapidly deployable and capable of accomplishing the Nation's objectives anywhere in the world. Given the reality of the United States (U.S.) fiscal constraints, political and military leaders will continue to reduce the Nation's global footprint with the intent of not losing global influence. The U.S. must maintain the ability to rapidly deploy to address future global challenges. Faced with a reduced number of forward deployed bases and an uncertain security environment, a joint force commander is left with two options when required to gain entry into a contested foreign territory - airborne assault or amphibious assault insertion. This paper evaluates the two traditional means of forcible entry operations available to a joint force commander based on the operational factors of time, space and force. A comparative analysis of both forcible entry capabilities is used to determine the advantages and disadvantages that both options present to the joint force commander when forced to respond with a swift U.S. military intervention. In addition, select cases from OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, OPERATION JUST CAUSE, and OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY are discussed in order to further illustrate the unique capabilities and advantages that airborne forces can provide to the joint force commander. In today's uncertain environment, the airborne assault force provides the joint force commander the most expedient and practical forcible entry response available.

## Introduction

If the United States (U.S.) is denied access to a foreign country, which capability is better suited to gain entry when conducting a wide range of contingency operations - airborne assault or amphibious assault forces? Faced with a reduced number of forward deployed bases and an uncertain security environment, a joint force commander is left with two options when required to gain entry into a contested foreign territory - airborne assault or amphibious assault. In analyzing Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO) in terms of operational factors and potential missions, airborne assault forces provide the joint force commander a better forcible entry option than amphibious assault forces in respect to factor time, space, and force.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century operating environment is shaped by many symmetric and asymmetric threats, factors and actors. Today's military force needs to remain agile, rapidly deployable and capable of accomplishing the Nation's objectives anywhere in the world. Given the reality of the U.S. fiscal constraints, political and military leaders will continue to reduce the Nation's global footprint with the intent of not losing its global influence. The next quarter century will challenge U.S. joint forces with threats and opportunities ranging from regular and irregular wars in remote lands, to relief in crisis zones, to a combination of security, engagement, and stability operations in support of failing or failed states.<sup>1</sup> In all cases, the U.S. must continue to demonstrate steadfast engagement and the ability to rapidly deploy to address these worldwide challenges.

However, since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the cold war, the U.S. has conducted a global repositioning effort, reducing the number of forward operating bases and opting to garrison a majority of its military forces stateside.<sup>2</sup> According to the 2008 National

Defense Strategy, the “U.S. will continue to transform overseas U.S. military presence through global defense posture realignment, leveraging a more agile continental U.S. (CONUS)- based expeditionary total force and further developing a more relevant and flexible forward network of capabilities and arrangements with allies and partners to ensure strategic access.”<sup>3</sup> In consequence, with the reduced overseas footprint, the type and timeliness of response present the joint force commander with a complex set of issues that require him to weigh all three operational factors. This complex problem is further complicated when the U.S. is denied access to that foreign territory.

This paper focuses on the two traditional means of forcible entry operations available to a joint force commander - airborne and amphibious assault operations. In 2008, a third forcible entry option was introduced in *Joint Publication 3-18, “Forcible Entry Operations,”* known as air assault by rotary or fixed wing assets. However, a joint planner could argue that air assault as a means to conduct forcible entry in a contested environment is not a viable forcible entry option. *JP 3-18, appendix B (Airborne and Air Assault Operations)* does not adequately describe the application of air assault assets or the planning considerations required to air land the assault force in a contested environment. Other than mentioning that air assault assets can be used for both offensive and defensive purposes, *JP 3-18* does not mention the requirements, characteristics, or considerations that need to be applied by a joint staff when choosing a landing zone (LZ). Consequently, the only mention of a landing zone in *appendix B, JP 3-18*, contradicts the original purpose of forcible entry operations. As illustrated, “units can be air landed on terrain under the control of friendly forces near the line of contact or on secured locations in the enemy’s rear; however, it takes time to land a sizeable force and a secured LZ is necessary.”<sup>4</sup> This would indicate that air assault operations are a viable option only after an LZ is secured. In

other words, in a contested environment, the LZ would have to be secured by either an airborne or amphibious assault force prior to conducting the air assault. Therefore, if the requirement is to have a secured LZ, than air assault assets are not a viable forcible entry option.

### **Traditional Forcible Entry Operations**

In today's globalized world, the joint force must be capable of rapidly and effectively deploying forces from "multiple dispersed locations, and if necessary, fight our way into a denied theater."<sup>5</sup> *Joint Publication 3-18, "Forcible Entry Operations"*, defines forcible entry operations as, "a joint military operation conducted against armed opposition to gain entry into the territory of an adversary by seizing a lodgment as rapidly as possible in order to enable the conduct of follow-on operations or conduct a singular operation."<sup>6</sup> The U.S. is capable of conducting two primary forcible entry operations –airborne assault and amphibious assault.

Airborne assault operations "provide the commander with the unique ability to quickly respond on short notice and mass rapidly on critical targets by parachute insertion."<sup>7</sup> Whereas amphibious assault operations "are a military operation launched from the sea by an amphibious force, embarked in ships or craft with the primary purpose of introducing a landing force ashore to accomplish the assigned mission."<sup>8</sup> There are advantages and disadvantages of each operation. Based on the threats outlined in the 2010 Joint Operating Environment, there are three missions that a commander may face that could require forcible entry to protect U.S. National interests: (1) Collapse of a functioning State (Security Force Assistance to ensure regional stability), (2) Response to a humanitarian disaster (deny terrorist access/safe haven, bolster security, secure lodgment for the flow of humanitarian assistance), (3) Failed Nuclear State (secure WMD facilities and critical documents/material). In that context, if the U.S. cannot gain access to a

foreign country to respond to one of these missions, timeliness, selection of the right force, and decisiveness will be the key to opening the door.

### **Operational Factor Time**

According to military theorist Milan Vego, “mastering the factor of time in combat essentially means acting faster than the opponent. The key to success is to shorten the time for estimating the situation, making a decision, and deploying and maneuvering one’s combat force.”<sup>9</sup> The ability to react in a timely and decisive manner is critical to the joint force commander’s ability to seize the initiative at the outset of contingency operations. When considering factor time, a joint force commander must understand that in order “to be credible both as a deterrent and as a viable military option for policy enforcement, the joint forces must be capable of rapidly deploying and fighting to gain access to geographical areas controlled by forces hostile to U.S. interests.”<sup>10</sup> In a situation where an adversary denies access to foreign controlled territory, the joint force commander will have to decide which forcible entry capability is a better option in terms of factor time. When it comes to rapid deployment of forces, airborne assault is a more timely response in terms of notification (N-hour) to deployment. “The unique capabilities of the airborne make it a prime player in contingency operations. Its highly lethal, no-notice, fast deploying forced entry capability has numerous utility in any contingency operation of the past thirty years in both low-and-mid intensity operations.”<sup>11</sup>

U.S Army airborne forces are comprised of six airborne infantry brigade combat teams (ABCT) geographically dispersed in bases located in North Carolina (82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division-Global Response Force), Italy (173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT - EUCOM), and Alaska (4/25<sup>th</sup> ABCT-PACOM),

capable of deploying anywhere in the world within 96-hours in support of all geographic Combatant Commanders. Additionally, the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, has three, organizationally identical, rapidly deployable light infantry special operations battalions with specialized skills that enable them to perform a variety of special operations missions.<sup>12</sup> The Army maintains the Regiment at a high level of readiness. Each of the three battalions are capable of deploying anywhere in the world with 18-hours' notice.<sup>13</sup> The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division's Global Response Force (GRF) consisting of one ABCT is America's premier strategic response force. In 2008, the Secretary of Defense established the GRF to enhance the nation's ability to respond quickly to a wide range of contingencies. The GRF rotates annually between all four ABCTs assigned to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and when deployed the GRF becomes OPCON to the Combatant Commander.<sup>14</sup>

Normally forces capable of conducting forcible entry operations will be introduced in either phase II (Seize the Initiative) or phase III (Dominate). In both phase II and III, rapid response, agility, and flexibility are essential factors. The 18-hour readiness timeline airborne forces maintain is more responsive than the steaming time at sea consumed to reposition amphibious assault forces within striking distance of the objective. As described in *JP-3-18 "Forcible Entry Operations"*, "Airborne forces offer the joint force commander an immediate forcible entry option since they can be launched directly from the continental United States without the delays associated with acquiring intermediate staging bases or repositioning of sea-based forces."<sup>15</sup> Airborne forces, in terms of responsiveness and speed to the objective, allow the joint force commander to execute operations within the enemy's 24-hour decision cycle.

In terms of operational mobility, air transport is far more responsive than surface transport. The only exception would be if the naval task force just happened to be prepositioned within immediate striking distance of the objective, which in most situations is not the case. The prime air transport for airborne assault operations is the C-17 Globemaster III. The C-17 has a global range with in-flight refueling and can travel at a speed of 450 knots at 28,000 feet.<sup>16</sup> There is nothing in the surface transport inventory that can match the speed and operational reach of the Air Force C-17 Globemaster III. To further illuminate the point, “Aerospace power projection is more responsive in that it is easier and faster to load planes with a tailored contingency force package than to load a ship or a train. It is always faster to fly than to drive or sail over large distances, thus, air power projection is inherently faster.”<sup>17</sup> The bottom line is that the airborne assault is more responsive and timely in terms of operational mobility when one does a comparative analysis of air transport vs. sea transport capabilities.

The final advantage in terms of factor time that airborne forces present to the joint force commander is operational surprise. One of the main considerations for operational surprise is speed to the objective. According to *JP-3-18 “Forcible Entry Operations,”* airborne operations are executed by specially trained forces and can be launched at a considerable distance from the target area with such speed as to cause tactical or operational surprise and prevent effective action by the enemy.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, airborne forces are capable of executing forcible entry operations at night, in moderate weather conditions, and at low altitudes. These additional factors increase the chance of defeating an adversary’s early warning radar capability, while increasing the likelihood of achieving operational surprise. In contrast, amphibious assault forces must reposition sea-based forces, establish and maintain local sea and air control which significantly reduces response time and could increase the chance of detection.

At the end of the day, both capabilities are responsive; however, in terms of timeliness to the objective, air transport is inherently faster than sea transport. The time spent steaming at sea to reposition amphibious forces can be a disadvantage if swift U.S. military intervention is a requirement. In addition, amphibious operations have to address any mine or submarine threats present in the operating area, which is unavoidably slow and deliberate. Countermine and antisubmarine operations are additional time considerations that airborne operations do not have to contend with in route to the objective area. Gaining local sea control is a time consideration that can significantly decelerate a commander's response time.

### **Operational Factor Space**

There are clear operational advantages airborne assault operations present the joint force commander in terms of factor space. Military theorist Milan Vego defines operational space as, “both a means and an objective. It is the means because sufficient space is needed to successfully conduct military operations. It is the objective because to conduct military operations it is necessary to control a given space.”<sup>19</sup> This paper evaluates factor space in terms of sufficient space and control of a given space.

Amphibious assault operations are constrained by a number of space factors that airborne operations are not encumbered by when executing a forcible entry. First, when setting the conditions for an amphibious assault, naval forces must establish temporary local sea control. In order to secure a sea echelon area to marshal the landing force,<sup>20</sup> the Navy must conduct mine sweeping / clearing operations and establish dominance over an adversary's submarine capability. Establishing local sea and air control is critical to the deployment of amphibious assault forces. Second, once the sea echelon area is secured and local sea control has been

established there has to be enough surface space in order to establish sea lanes for the movement and maneuver of the amphibious forces ashore. Finally, the third and most important space consideration comes down to choosing the assault force landing objective area, which traditionally is limited to beachhead landings. In terms of forcible entry, these factor space limitations present the joint force commander distinct disadvantages for a number of reasons.

First, if a crisis or limited contingency operation breaks out in a land locked country that requires the U.S. to respond with a forcible entry capability, amphibious assault forces are not capable of responding by traditional means. There are a total of forty-three land locked countries in the world;<sup>21</sup> a majority of which are in either the African continent or Eastern Europe. Consequently, both geographical areas have a history of crisis and conflict. Second, it takes time and space to establish local sea control. If an approach to the beach head is mined or threatened by an adversary's submarine capability, both will have to be neutralized, adding time considerations to the rapid response requirement. Finally, in order for an amphibious assault to be effective and lethal, traditionally one landing site is selected in order to mass critical amphibious assault fire and maneuver capabilities ashore to overwhelm the adversary on the objective. If more than one landing site is chosen, the ability to mass a ground force is sacrificed, lessening the lethality of the amphibious assault force. Additionally, multiple landing sites increase the unit's sea control requirements, thus increasing the total operational space and force required to establish local sea control.

When evaluating the airborne assault using the same criteria, it could be argued that airborne forces provide the joint force commander with greater freedom of action. First, setting the conditions for an airborne assault does not require preparation of a sea echelon area or

seaward sector.<sup>22</sup> The C-17 Globemaster III's global operational reach allows the airborne forces to travel from the aerial port of debarkation (APOD) to the objective. Taking factor time and space into consideration, once the C-17's are over the objective it takes airborne assault forces less than 50 seconds to land. However, airborne forces do require significant USAF support beyond airlift. Although the "USAF can conduct limited airdrops without air superiority, large operations require neutralization or suppression of enemy air defenses. This may require suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD), radar jamming, and fighter aircraft escort."<sup>23</sup> However, it is important to point out that this is not a new requirement or threat. The U.S. has been forced to deal with enemy anti-access / anti-denial (A2AD) capabilities over the last fifty years. Each time when required the airborne assault has prevailed.

Second, airborne assault is a better use of the exterior position. For example, airborne operations are capable of bypassing all land and sea obstacles that normally encumber traditional land and naval forces.<sup>24</sup> Airborne assault forces have the ability to be dropped deep behind enemy lines and strike enemy held territory with little or no warning.<sup>25</sup> A detailed analysis of the enemy's A2AD capability will identify any uncovered or lightly covered areas that the air force can exploit in order to punch a hole through to deliver the airborne forces to their target. The same staff analysis will be applied to amphibious operations; however, the dissimilarity between the two forcible entry options is that amphibious operations have the added burden of establishing and maintaining sea control, which is an additional space consideration.

Third, airborne assault presents the joint force commander with the ability to conduct sequential or concurrent operations by dropping tailored forces on individual or multiple targets keeping the enemy off balance, otherwise known as the "oil-spot method". This approach was

highly effective in both Operation Just Cause (Panama) and World War II. The “oil-spot method” was applied once again in contingency planning for operations in Haiti. During the planning for Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti), “XVIII Airborne Corps and 82d Airborne Division planners developed three courses of action to conduct an airborne assault, by seizing 40 assault objectives for the flow of follow on forces.”<sup>26</sup> This example illustrates the flexibility in the number of targets an airborne force is capable of influencing. However, a political agreement was reached while the airborne assault force was in flight to Haiti. It is believed that the agreement was reached so quickly because the U.S. delegation was able to point to the massed airborne assault forces in route to enter their country.<sup>27</sup>

In the end, when evaluating factor space in regards to forcible entry operations as “both a means and an objective,”<sup>28</sup> it would appear that airborne assault is a more advantageous option. As a means, airborne forces require less secured operating space in route to the objective (Air Avenue of approach vs. Sea Control). In terms of an objective, airborne forces are capable of bypassing all land and sea obstacles that normally slow down sea forces to complete its mission. Additionally, as of 2011, with only thirty one amphibious sea lift ships, amphibious forces are not capable of influencing as many objectives as their forcible entry counterpart if the mission required the seizure of multiple assault objectives.<sup>29</sup>

### **Operational Factor Force**

When evaluating forcible entry options in terms of factor force there are comparative advantages of both airborne and amphibious assault forces. The term force in its narrowest meaning pertains to military sources of power that include troops, naval forces, and air forces.<sup>30</sup> In terms of evaluating each forcible entry capability there are distinct advantages that airborne

operations present the joint force commander: (1) although both forces are flexible and adaptable, airborne operations have a less overall combined force requirement to deploy; (2) airborne forces require less shaping of the overall operational environment, and (3) airborne assault operations are inherently easier to command and control.

When it comes to contingency planning, in either a low-or-high intensity conflict, both airborne and amphibious assault forces can be tailored to meet the operational requirement. For example, airborne forces are capable of being task organized to conduct vertical envelopment to gain a lodgment with as few as 200 paratroopers or up to as many as 18,000. Current planning figures for airborne insertion are based off of an infantry brigade combat team (ABCT) of approximately 3,200 paratroopers. Some of the most well-known and studied airborne operations are the division size operations conducted by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in WWII.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the Army has only conducted six large scale airborne operations of 2,500 or more paratroopers in its history.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, the Army has conducted approximately eleven combat airborne operations with a battalion to brigade size task force (500-2,500 paratroopers), and approximately eight small scale forcible entry operations with as little as 100 to 500 paratroopers.<sup>33</sup> In terms of transportation requirements,<sup>33</sup> nineteen C-17s are required to conduct an airborne insertion of the alpha echelon (forcible entry force of 1,900 paratroopers) out of an ABCT, with an additional seven C-17's to heavy drop their equipment.<sup>34</sup> These planning factors do not include any additional USAF assets required based off of the enemy air defense threat. However, it is important to point out that amphibious operations have to deal with not only the enemy air defense threat; they also have to deal with threats associated with gaining and maintain sea control, such as countermine and antisubmarine warfare. These additional requirements will increase the overall combined force requirement.

For instance, amphibious operations require the support of both the Navy and Air Force to support a forcible entry mission. According to *JP 3-02 "Amphibious Operations,"* amphibious assault forces require either temporary or local sea control and air superiority.<sup>35</sup> Amphibious assault forces not only have to contend with ballistic missiles from the shore, they also have to contend with the threat of mines and submarine warfare.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the USAF requirements to support SEAD, amphibious operations have a requirement for Navy amphibious transport ships, countermine and antisubmarine capabilities (threat dependent), as well as combatant ships to protect the amphibious task force during the operation. The scale of the combined force required for both operations is dependent on the mission; however the fact that airborne forces do not have to contend with local or temporary sea control in addition to SEAD threats is a factor force advantage.

Another planning consideration is that the Marine Corps most responsive capability, the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU- 2,200 Marines) "does not regularly conduct opposed amphibious operations and can only conduct amphibious operations of limited duration and scope."<sup>37</sup> The Marine Corps prefers to conduct opposed amphibious operations with a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB – 8,000-18,000 Marines), which obviously increases the joint force requirement dramatically in terms of surface transport and sea control. This does not mean that the MEU is not capable of executing an amphibious operation, it just means that according to *JP-02, Amphibious Operations*, the Marine Corps prefers to execute with the larger MEB force, which equates to a larger combined force.

To further illustrate the factor force differences between the two forcible entry capabilities one only has to turn to the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom. In early

“October 2001, approximately 200 airborne forces from 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment on board 4 x MC-130’s conducted an airborne assault onto a desert landing strip southwest of Kandahar, code named Objective Rhino.”<sup>38</sup> “Having secured the landing zone, they assisted follow-on helicopter forces of [Special Operations Forces] SOF Soldiers that had additional raids to conduct in the area.”<sup>39</sup> “One month later, in November 2001, the 15<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) conducted the longest amphibious air assault in history with rotary wing assets in order to build up the base of operations on the desert landing strip, later called Camp Rhino.”<sup>40</sup> This narrative illustrates two important points: (1) airborne assault operations can establish a lodgment with a minimal combined force, and (2) “this particular event demonstrated how rotary wing assets can supplement the efforts of airborne forces in establishing a forward base of operations.”<sup>41</sup> A perfect example of gaining and maintaining access in today’s operating environment.

Additional considerations a joint force commander needs to consider prior to employment are command and control (C2), and operational shaping requirements. As previously discussed, airborne forces have a less combined force support requirement; however, they still need air space control in order to reach the target. With the proliferation of surface to air missile capabilities, the vast majority of nations have some type of A2AD capability that can threaten airborne forces in route to the objective. However, these threats can be minimized with additional USAF air assets to conduct if required “counter air, tactical reconnaissance, air interdiction, electronic warfare, and suppression of enemy air defense.”<sup>42</sup> Despite these additional USAF requirements, it could be argued that it takes less operational shaping to “punch a hole” through an adversary’s A2AD network than it does to gain local sea control, especially if the sea operating area is contested. Additionally, the airborne assault requires less preparation of

the battlefield because it is not constrained to a particular geographic landing sight like a beachhead, as discussed earlier. In fact, certain shaping operations could compromise the element of surprise, which is paramount to airborne forces' ability to achieve deep operational maneuver.

As for C2 considerations, airborne operations are easier to command and control than amphibious assault operations. For example, in airborne operations you only have one commander. The commander will jump with the Assault Command Post (APC) and exercise C2 of his forces from the APOD until mission completion. Unlike airborne forces who only have one Commander, amphibious forces have a "Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF)", which is always a Navy officer and a "Commander Landing Force (CLF)", which is always a Marine.<sup>43</sup> This relationship can be extremely tough to manage and could easily cause delays during the planning phase, rehearsals, and especially during the transfer of command in the execution phase of the amphibious operation. Having two commanders from different services executing a combined mission can be contentious and cause delays in the response especially if it is not regularly trained. Up until January 2012, the last time the Marine Corps conducted a large scale amphibious assault operation in training or in combat with its Navy counterpart was the Gulf War.<sup>44</sup> A lack in recent training and traditional C2 challenges normally associated with amphibious assault operations bring to question the Navy-Marine Corps teams' ability to execute a forcible entry operation if required in today's operating environment. In contrast, each airborne brigade combat team conducts at a minimum two Joint Operations Access Exercises (JOAX) with the USAF and coalition partners each year. In addition to JOAX exercises, each ABCT conducts night combat equipped proficiency jumps several times a month focusing on its core task, forcible entry.

When it comes to factor force, “airborne forces may be strategically, operationally, or tactically employed on short notice to drop zones anywhere in the world,”<sup>45</sup> with less force and less operational shaping required. In terms of overall factor force considerations, the airborne assault force appears to present the joint force commander a better forcible entry option.

Despite the outlined advantages that airborne forces present to the joint force commander in terms of factor time, space and force, they are not always the silver bullet. There are at least three distinct disadvantages associated with employing airborne assault forces that a joint force commander must consider: (1) amphibious assault forces are more lethal on the objective; (2) airborne forces are harder to sustain logistically, and finally (3) airborne assault forces, once on the objective are far less mobile than amphibious assault forces.

The Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is the Marine Corps preferred amphibious assault force.<sup>46</sup> By the nature of its size, the MEB provides the joint force commander a much more lethal and mobile assault force on the objective. A typical MEB ranges anywhere from 8,000 to 18,000 Marines based on the mission requirement.<sup>47</sup> The MEB is a versatile force consisting of a Ground Combat Element (GCE), an Aviation Combat Element (ACE), and a Logistics Combat Element (LCE), which is capable of providing up to 30 days of supply. A reinforced infantry regiment, the GCE has an armor capability, indirect fire capabilities with a full complement of 155MM Howitzers, 81MM and 120MM mortar systems. In contrast, in an attempt to be more expeditionary, airborne forces phased out their light armor capability (Sheridan Tanks) in 1997, with no planned replacement. Also, the ABCT employs the 105MM Howitzer vice the more lethal 155MM Howitzer organic to the MEB. Finally, unlike the MEB, airborne assault forces have to rely on the USAF for all fixed wing air capabilities.

The ability to conduct sustained offensive operations is an additional advantage in favor of amphibious assault forces. When a MEB is ordered to conduct an amphibious assault, it is capable of sustaining itself over a 30 day period.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, an airborne assault force jumps into the objective with only 72 hours' worth of supplies. If the airborne assault force is not able to secure a lodgment for the flow of follow on forces in 72 hours, then they will have to be resupplied by aerial resupply. Consequently, this will increase USAF lift requirements, it will require assault forces to be pulled away from the objective in order to conduct aerial resupply operations, and it will increase the risk to subsequent USAF lift assets attempting to re-enter unsecured airspace. The ability to secure a lodgment for the flow of follow on air land forces is absolutely critical to sustaining airborne forces.

However, when timeliness and the presence of ground forces are paramount, airborne operations are the quickest and most flexible method to deploy forces from a military perspective.<sup>49</sup> In terms of delivery platforms and responsiveness, the advantage goes to the USAF. Additionally, in 2006 the Army went through force modularization. As a result, the 82d Airborne Division added a fourth airborne infantry brigade combat team and added organic indirect fire capabilities, engineer support (repair runways and breach obstacles), reconnaissance support, and a robust brigade support battalion (BSB) to each ABCT. Logistically, this added four additional days of supply (DOS) up from 17 DOS to 21 DOS in the Bravo Echelon (first air land force). Additionally, in an attempt to increase lethality, the assault force, will jump in with up to 16 Anti-Armor TOW High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV); and each infantry battalion (two in each ABCT) can jump up to 18 Javelins.<sup>50</sup>

The airborne assault force will never be as lethal or as organically sustainable as the MEB. However, the airborne force more than makes up this shortcoming in speed and agility, which historically has proven to be critical to seizing the initiative in forcible entry operations. The airborne assault force was created to be an agile, adaptable, and rapidly deployable force capable of conducting forcible entry operations anywhere in the world. The future operating environment may warrant a much larger and more lethal force, in which case amphibious assault forces may present a better option to the joint force commander. However, in terms of speed to the objective, airborne assault forces “provide the strategic mobility to be ready to go anywhere in the world in less than 18 hours.”<sup>51</sup> There is no other force in the United States Armed Forces that is capable of matching the combined effort of the USAF and airborne assault forces with regard to speed to the operational objective.

Nonetheless, with only two forcible entry options available to the joint force commander, the U.S. cannot afford to eliminate either option. In fact, overcoming future challenges will require a comprehensive joint force solution.<sup>52</sup> Historically, the complementary employment of airborne and amphibious assault forces when feasible has proved to be the most effective form of deep power projection and operational access. The U.S. should resist the efforts to find the one size fits all solution<sup>53</sup> and look to expand joint forcible entry interoperability, focusing on the ability to conduct simultaneous force projection operations. The days of a one dimensional response to contingency operations are gone, a combination of both forcible entry options must be considered. In order to defeat anti-access defenses, the joint force must be able to conduct simultaneous interoperable forcible entry operations from both the air and maritime domain.

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- <sup>1</sup> Joint Forces Group (J59), U.S. Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment 2010*, (Suffolk, VA, 18 February 2010), 4.
- <sup>2</sup> Joint Forces Group (J59), U.S. Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment 2010*, (Suffolk, VA, 18 February 2010), 60.
- <sup>3</sup> Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, (Washington, DC: DOD, 8 June 2008), 16.
- <sup>4</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, (Washington, DC: CJCS, 16 June 2008), B-2.
- <sup>5</sup> William D. Wunderle, “Forced In, Left Out: The Airborne Division In Future Forcible Entry Operations” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies 97-98), 7.
- <sup>6</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, (Washington, DC: CJCS, 16 June 2008), I-1.
- <sup>7</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, (Washington, DC: CJCS, 16 June 2008), 1-7.
- <sup>8</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, (Washington, DC: CJCS, 8 November 2008) 20.
- <sup>9</sup> Milan N. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2007), III-19.
- <sup>10</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, (Washington, DC: CJCS, 16 June 2008), I-2.
- <sup>11</sup> Edward J. Sinclair, “The Air Attack Division: Air Land Battle Future’s Operational Contingency Force?” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1991), 8.
- <sup>12</sup> The United States Army Special Operations Command, official Website, accessed 3 April 2012, [http://United\\_States\\_Army\\_Special\\_Operations\\_Command](http://United_States_Army_Special_Operations_Command).
- <sup>13</sup> The United States Army Special Operations Command, official Website, accessed 3 April 2012, [http://United\\_States\\_Army\\_Special\\_Operations\\_Command](http://United_States_Army_Special_Operations_Command).
- <sup>14</sup> 82d Airborne Division Readiness Standard Operating Procedure (RSOP), Fort Bragg, NC, 2011, 1-2.

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<sup>15</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, (Washington, DC: CJCS, 16 June 2008), I-7.

<sup>16</sup> The U.S. Air force, official Website, “USAF facts,” accessed 3 April 2012, <http://www.af.mil/information/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=86>.

<sup>17</sup> John W. Nicholson, “America's Middleweight Force: Enhancing the Versatility of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1994), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, (Washington, DC: CJCS, 16 June 2008), B-1.

<sup>19</sup> Milan N. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2007), III-7.

<sup>20</sup> Frank R. Boynton, “Force Projection Operations: Lessons From Amphibious Warfare Doctrine” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 95-96), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Amanda Briney, “The World's Largest Landlocked Countries List of the Ten Largest Landlocked Countries in the World,” accessed 7 April 2012, <http://geography.about.com/od/politicalgeography/a/landlocked.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> Frank R. Boynton, “Force Projection Operations: Lessons From Amphibious Warfare Doctrine” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 95-96), 4.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Army, Field Manual 90-26, *Airborne Operations*, (Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 18 December 1990), 1-6, section 1-10b.

<sup>24</sup> Gary E. Luck, JR “Inducing Operational Shock To Achieve Quick Decisive Victory: How Does The Airborne Division Contribute?”(monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies 98-99), 36.

<sup>25</sup> Gary E. Luck, JR “Inducing Operational Shock To Achieve Quick Decisive Victory: How Does The Airborne Division Contribute?” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies 98-99), 34.

<sup>26</sup> William D. Wunderle, “Forced In, Left Out: The Airborne Division In Future Forcible Entry Operations” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 97-98) 27.

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<sup>27</sup> Global Security, official Website, “History of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division,” accessed 6 April 2012, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/82abn-history.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Milan N. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2007), III-7.

<sup>29</sup> Congressional Budget Office, The Congress of the United States, *Analysis of the Navy’s Fiscal Year 2012 Shipbuilding Plan* (Washington, DC: CBO, June 2011), 21.

<sup>30</sup> Milan N. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2007), III-33.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew J. Konz, “Operational Employment of the Airborne Brigade Combat Team: The 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment as a Case Study” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 1.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew J. Konz, “Operational Employment of the Airborne Brigade Combat Team: The 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment as a case Study” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew J. Konz, “Operational Employment of the Airborne Brigade Combat Team: The 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment as a case Study” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 1.

<sup>34</sup> 82d Airborne Division Readiness Standard Operating Procedure (RSOP), Fort Bragg, NC, 2011, 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Amphibious Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 August 2009), I-3.

<sup>36</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Amphibious Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 August 2009), II-7.

<sup>37</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Amphibious Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 August 2009), II-8.

<sup>38</sup> The United States Army in Afghanistan “Operation ENDURING FREEDOM October 2001-March 2003”, official Website, accessed 7 April 2012, <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Afghanistan/Operation%20Enduring%20Freedom.htm#afghan>.

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<sup>39</sup> Shawn Shields, “Airborne Forces: A capability to overcome challenges during contingency operations in immature theaters” (research paper, Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, Newport, RI, 2011), 12.

<sup>40</sup> Shawn Shields, “Airborne Forces: A capability to overcome challenges during contingency operations in immature theaters” (research paper, Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, Newport, RI, 2011), 12

<sup>41</sup> Shawn Shields, “Airborne Forces: A capability to overcome challenges during contingency operations in immature theaters” (research paper, Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, Newport, RI, 2011), 13

<sup>42</sup> Gary E. Luck, JR “Inducing Operational Shock To Achieve Quick Decisive Victory: How Does The Airborne Division Contribute?” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies 98-99), 36.

<sup>43</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Amphibious Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 August 2009), II-2

<sup>44</sup> Tye R. Wallace, “Marine Expeditionary Brigade: Centerpiece of the Future” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 04-05), 25.

<sup>45</sup> Gary E. Luck, JR “Inducing Operational Shock To Achieve Quick Decisive Victory: How Does The Airborne Division Contribute?” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies 98-99), 34.

<sup>46</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Amphibious Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 August 2009), II-8.

<sup>47</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Amphibious Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 August 2009), II-8.

<sup>48</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Amphibious Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 August 2009), II-8.

<sup>49</sup> Mark S. Childress, “Are Large Scale (Brigade Combat Team or Regimental Level and Above) United States Army Airborne Operations Effective In the Context of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Warfare?” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies 2008), 35.

<sup>50</sup> 82d Airborne Division Readiness Standard Operating Procedure (RSOP), Fort Bragg, NC, 2011, 1-2

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<sup>51</sup> Mark S. Childress, “Are Large Scale (Brigade Combat Team or Regimental Level and Above) United States Army Airborne Operations Effective In the Context of 21st Century Warfare?” (monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies 2008), 38.

<sup>52</sup> Keith C. Walker and Richard P. Mills, *Gaining and Maintaining Access: An Army-Marine Corps Concept*, (Washington DC: The Director, U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center and the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, March 2012), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Keith C. Walker and Richard P. Mills, *Gaining and Maintaining Access: An Army-Marine Corps Concept*, (Washington DC: The Director, U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center and the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, March 2012), 15.

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