

# **The U.S. Marine Corps The View from the Late 1980s**

*Edited by*

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Alexandria, Virginia

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## Preface

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I predict that large-scale amphibious operations will never occur again.

—General of the Army Omar Bradley, 1949

Less than a year after General Bradley made that prediction before a U.S. congressional committee, the 1st Marine Division made one of the most spectacular and daring amphibious assaults in history at Inchon, Korea. Since 1949, U.S. forces have made many more amphibious landings (if not assaults), including others in Korea, one in Lebanon in 1958, several in Vietnam, one in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and the Grenada assault in 1984. The British Falklands campaign also demonstrated, once again, the value of marines and amphibious capabilities. The British were in the process of reducing their amphibious forces when that lesson had to be relearned. Except for Inchon and the Falklands campaigns, most of these assaults were small, thus validating in part General Bradley's prediction. Nevertheless, all were politically and militarily significant and required the special forces, equipment, and techniques that can only be provided by a well-trained Navy-Marine Corps team.

Today, in this era of the Strategic Defense Initiative and Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), the *lack* of debate on amphibious warfare and the role of the Marine Corp is notable. Over a decade ago, the Brookings Institution issued a provocative book entitled *Where Does the Marine Corps Go from Here?*<sup>1</sup> which argued that "the need for its principal mission—amphibious warfare—is less apparent." But since then, there has been virtually no "anti-amphibious warfare" debate. Events such as those in Grenada and the Falklands have, of course, contradicted the Brookings assertion, and awareness of the need for a relatively, light, highly mobile force such as the Marine Corps has increased.

Important potential Marine Corps missions now range from protecting the European flanks in a World War III-scenario to what is now often called

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“low intensity” warfare. Moreover, Marine amphibious forces are now getting some new and exciting systems that could completely revolutionize amphibious warfare. The Navy-Marine Corps team is on the threshold of what might be called the fourth, and perhaps the final, stage of development. Historically, amphibious warfare has gone through three major stages: from the on-hand, to the specialized, to the vertical envelopment or limited over-the-horizon (OTH) stage.

*On-Hand Stage.* The first stage may best be called the on-hand stage, because the problem of getting troops ashore was done with equipment on hand. Warships and merchantmen were loaded up, the ships anchored off shore, and troops and equipment transported to the beach with whatever small boats the ships happened to have. Innovative commanders would often jury-rig small boats and develop some new techniques, but essentially the assault was accomplished with available equipment.

Amphibious warfare is often viewed historically as beginning, and almost ending, with the disastrous British Gallipoli campaign in World War I (where the problem was not actually the assault *per se*, but the leadership afterwards). However, as Merrill L. Bartlett illustrates in his book, *Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare*,<sup>2</sup> examples of amphibious warfare are found from the earliest times. In this early period, although innovations were made and lessons learned, they were usually forgotten, and the next time, the old, available on-hand equipment had to be used. Amphibious landings were a very risky operation with the ships within cannon range and the troops moving shorewards in small, slow, long boats. Yet there were many successes during these early times.

*Specialized Stage.* The second stage developed during the period between the world wars and came to fruition in World War II with the development of “specialized” amphibious ships and craft. LSTs, LSDs, small craft such as the LCM “mike” boats and LCVP personnel craft, and numerous tracked vehicles became standard equipment. These specialized craft made possible the many landings of World War II, especially the Marine landings in the Pacific. The problem of vulnerability carried through from stage one. Ships still had to operate relatively close to shore, and although a mike boat was faster than a long boat, troop movement continued to be relatively slow and dangerous.

*Vertical Envelopment or Limited OTH Stage.* In the 1950s, amphibious warfare was revolutionized with the introduction of the helicopter. For the first time, with the development of what was then called “vertical envelopment,” amphibious forces has a limited over-the-horizon capability. Ships no longer had to stay within sight of land to launch their assaults. Such ships as the LPD and especially the helicopter carrier, the LPH, and then the LHA were specifically designed for the helicopter assault.

Although the use of the helicopter was a true revolution, the OTH capability was still limited because helicopters have a limited capability for

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carrying heavy equipment. "Vertical envelopment" was effective against low-intensity targets or for landing initial shock troops, but major landings with armor still had to be conducted by relatively slow, small amphibious craft.

*Complete OTH Stage.* With the introduction of the new, large, fast, air-cushion landing craft (LCAC), the Marine Corps is on the threshold of the fourth stage for amphibious warfare: a complete OTH capability for both major troop and equipment landings. The LCAC not only has the range—200 miles—but equally important, it has the speed—about 50 knots—to quickly approach the beach before defending forces can mobilize. Within 30 minutes, an assault force can move from over the horizon to the beach. Another important benefit of the LCAC is that it will significantly increase the percentage of the world's beaches susceptible to amphibious assault. This gives the force even more flexibility.

Three other new weapons systems contribute to this fourth stage. A new generation of the V/STOL Harrier, the AV-8B, is just now coming into the inventory in quantity. The AV-8B provides good, close ground support and, in an emergency, even air superiority. A new multipurpose transport airplane, the MV-22, is also planned. This "tilt-rotor" aircraft can take off like a helicopter, then "tilt" its rotor forward to fly like a fixed-wing craft, which allows greater speed. A third important weapon system now being integrated into Marine Corps forces is the family of light armored vehicles (LAVs) that includes antitank, mortar, recovery, command and control, and logistics variants. Plans also include an assault gun and air defense variants. The approximately 15-ton LAV will be transportable by helicopter. Although a LAV force alone might not be sufficient against major armored forces, it would be most effective in the majority of low-intensity, Third World operations now envisioned.

Thus, these new systems—the LCAC, the advanced V/STOL Harrier, the MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft, and the family of light armored vehicles—now joining or about to join the Marine Corps inventory could truly revolutionize amphibious warfare in the 1990s.

These new and enhanced capabilities, the development, in conjunction with the Navy's maritime strategy, of the Marine Corps' amphibious strategy, and many other issues were the subject of the Third Annual Sea Power Forum sponsored by the Center for Naval Analyses. Four panels of speakers evaluated four broad topics: the Navy-Marine Corps team today, the uses of Marine Corps in major and in minor conflicts, and, finally, the Marine Corps of tomorrow. The authors of these papers are a good mix of active-duty Marine Corps and Navy officers and civilian experts from various research and educational institutions. To the best of my knowledge, except for histories, this volume is the first book on the Marine Corps in well over a decade. The views expressed here are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Center for Naval Analyses, the Department of the Navy, or any of the organizations with which the authors are affiliated.

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## A Note on Terminology

Since these papers were written, the designation for Marine amphibious unit (MAU), Marine amphibious brigade (MAB), and Marine amphibious force (MAF) have been changed to Marine *expeditionary* unit, Marine *expeditionary* brigade, and Marine *expeditionary* force. The original designations have been retained throughout the book.

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—James L. George

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## Notes

1. Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1976).
2. Lt. Col. Merrill L. Bartlett, USMC (Ret.), ed. *Assault From the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1983).

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## **The U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Navy Today**

## Introduction

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*Col. John G. Miller, USMC (Ret.)*

A shopworn canard within military circles is that military planners and strategists devote inordinate amounts of time and energy preparing for the most recently fought war and that the Marine Corps is particularly adept at backing into the future with its eyes fixed confidently on the past. The experience of the Marine Corps through the midpoint of this decade would seem to demolish such a view. Dramatic enhancements in firepower and in air, sea, and land mobility are being wedded in theory and in practice to emerging doctrine and operational concepts that promise to bring about the most far-reaching changes in amphibious warfare since the emergence of the vertical assault capability in the late 1940s. The introduction of air-cushion landing craft (LCACs) breaks the shackles of an 8- to 10-knot ship-to-shore movement that has been a hallmark of amphibious forces for nearly a half century, bringing the promise of a true over-the-horizon assault capability closer to operational reality. Aviation developments, in terms of both tactical mobility and close air support, are keeping pace with these changes, if not leading the way. And a series of enhancements to strategic mobility, embodied in land and maritime prepositioning programs, offers the best assurance in years that marines will be able to move to threatened areas in sufficient time and in adequate strength to dampen crises, deter major conflict, or fight if deterrence fails. Small wonder, then, that some exuberant commentators have referred to the 1980s as another "golden age" of amphibious warfare.

But where is all this leading? And what else, besides amphibious warfare, must be considered in evaluating the current status of the U.S. Marine Corps and in making valid projections for its future? Considering the accelerating rate of change in international developments, the crystal balls of military prognosticators are understandably murky. Predictions (e.g., that amphibious lift will be able to keep up with requirements by the mid-1990s) based on assumptions that are likely to be invalidated over the next five or ten years are

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naturally suspect, especially when they come from proponents of particular systems or doctrines. A more prudent course in reaching out to the limit of the military's vision is one akin to dead reckoning—tracing developments up to the current situation, then proceeding incrementally along the lines suggested by past experience.

Complex issues are best approached from a variety of perspectives. Major General Carl Mundy and his Navy counterpart, Rear Admiral W. Lewis Chatham, offer the operator's view of why Navy and Marine Corps forces are organized, equipped, trained, and deployed as they are. The operational credentials of both commentators are formidable. Admiral Chatham is the director of the Strike and Amphibious Warfare Division of Naval Operations. General Mundy is an infantry officer, a Marine amphibious brigade commander, and the Marine Corps' director of operations. It is with the insights of the "man on the ground" that Mundy describes the close working relationship between the Navy and Marine Corps, a relationship that is little understood by those who have never experienced it firsthand. He also explains why the Marine Corps integrates air and ground maneuver and fire support at the operational level, vice the theater or regional level, which is a unique characteristic of Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs). Such interdependent forces historically have met the test of combat readiness all over the world. This success gives the Navy and Marine Corps ample reason to resist attempts to reshape the Corps for regional specialization or scenario-dependent use—whether this takes the form of mechanized firepower for employment in the NATO regions of Europe, mobilization of light armored corps for desert warfare, or light infantry for skimobile operations along NATO's northern flank. The Marine Corps has modernized to meet each of those contingencies and has done so without abandoning its reliance on those integrated task forces or its relationship with the Navy. Mundy argues for a more widespread appreciation of the flexible strike capability that amphibious forces offer to a multidimensional fleet, as opposed to the older notion of merely delivering marines to distant shores to serve as reinforcements. Although he sees the Navy and Marine Corps today "making the most of the recognition of the need for amphibious forces," Mundy also foresees a transition to times of leaner funding, which demands close attention.

Dr. George Akst enters the discussion from a perspective that reflects his extensive experience as an analyst and project director of Navy and Marine Corps studies and his recent two-year field assignment with the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. Reaffirming Mundy's characterization of the rebirth of the amphibious fleet, which was nearly in extremis by the end of the 1970s, Dr. Akst credits the new vitality of the Marine Corps to the expanded deployment options it has developed over the past decade. No longer restricted to amphibious shipping, deployment means now "encompass the entire spectrum of

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military and civilian airlift and sealift, as well as prepositioned troops and equipment.”

In developing such options, Dr. Akst notes, the Marine Corps has made a virtue of necessity—the necessity to accept a lower-than-desirable level of amphibious lift over both the short and the long term. After a ten-year drought, in which no new amphibious ships were funded, the LSD-41 and LHD-1 classes are under construction, and attainment of an agreed on lift level of 1.5 MAF(AE)—or the assault echelons of one Marine amphibious unit and one Marine amphibious brigade—is forecast for the mid-1990s. Despite this brightening picture, lift for no more than a MAB each is available to the Fleet Marine Forces, Atlantic and Pacific, and even if amphibious shipping could be consolidated in a timely manner, a true MAF(AE) lift capability does not exist today. A partial solution to the problem of strategic mobility for the Marines is offered in the maritime prepositioning ships (MPS) program, which promises a buildup of manpower and materiel so extraordinary that the initial location of the MPS shipping is virtually irrelevant. Such a development is indeed encouraging, so long as planners remember that MPS serves as a complement to amphibious capability and not as a substitute for the only self-sustaining means of forcible entry, a point that Ron O’Rourke makes in his essay. A final deployment option that has been refined over the past decade is the air contingency battalion (ACB), which maintains task organizations the size of battalion landing teams (less tracked vehicles) for near-immediate deployment by means of strategic airlift.

Dr. Akst argues that the price paid for inadequate amphibious lift and the new deployment options is “an ever-increasing demand for common-user airlift and sealift—national assets that are already overcommitted.” He quickly points out that the problem stems from inadequate amphibious lift, not the cost of the new options, since the prepositioning of equipment is in fact *slowing* the increase in demand for nonorganic airlift. Whatever the cause of the problem, the fact remains that the only MAGTF capable of deploying without common-user lift is the Marine amphibious unit (MAU). And such dependence on non-Navy support means that the new deployment options will work only when they enjoy enough priority with the National Command Authorities in a time of growing demands from all armed services.

Mr. O’Rourke is another experienced analyst of naval matters who presents still another point of view—that of Capitol Hill. His employer, the Congressional Research Service, is tasked with answering the questions of members of Congress and their staffs. In outlining the questions the Marine Corps must answer to gain support in Congress (though not necessarily within the Department of the Navy or the Department of Defense, where its initial battles must be fought), he identifies a number of *middle-level* (“below strategy and doctrine, but above nuts and bolts”) issues of prime concern. Not

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surprisingly, the issue of amphibious lift leads the list, and Mr. O'Rourke notes with some concern that meeting the amphibious lift objective has slipped two years (from FY 1994 to FY 1996) because of program extensions. He sees two dangers here. First, further slippage could mark the amphibious lift objective as a shipbuilding goal of relatively low priority—something too easy to defer again and again. Second, further slippage could cause the amphibious lift objective to be overtaken by other pressing shipbuilding needs—for cruisers and destroyers, attack submarines, and possibly for aircraft carriers. He counsels the Marine Corps to make a strong attempt to secure adequate amphibious shipbuilding funds, even in the face of approaching strict defense budgeting. This move would capitalize on intentions already expressed in Congress to finance a multiyear procurement of three ships for the LHD program. It would also take advantage of the fact that the cargo variant of the LSD-41 class is no longer identified as a separate (LSD-49) program and thus is likely to escape the opposition that a major new start would generate in austere times.

Mr. O'Rourke shares Dr. Akst's concern about the success or failure of the Corps' other deployment options, which are powerless over the frailties of the common-user sealift and airlift situations. Another of his concerns is the assault follow-on echelon (AFOE), which falls short of the personnel, vehicles, supplies, and fuel necessary to support any landing. Because the ability of the Corps to lift the AFOE is tied to a merchant marine riddled with troubles, the question of having enough grey-hull amphibious ships to lift the assault echelon might become academic. No one could leave port if the ability to sustain an amphibious operation were lacking.

O'Rourke warns that a number of related issues could be the targets of intense scrutiny by congressional committees. The advent of the LCAC and the MV-22 Osprey will create a curious mixture of landing craft and aircraft with diverse speed and range characteristics, generating new difficulties in coordinating "conventional" ship-to-shore movements, to say nothing of over-the-horizon assaults. Another result of modernization is the increase in logistic support (especially fuel and ammunition) demanded by new and heavier equipment. (The M198 155-mm howitzer is one example; the Marine Corps is contemplating a helicopter as the primary mover of this piece of artillery.) Other concerns fall more on the Navy's side of the fence than the Marine Corps', but still have a substantial impact on amphibious operations. These include the Navy's shallow-water mine-clearing and antisubmarine warfare capabilities and naval surface fire support—a matter of long and vocal concern to the Marines, even in its earlier incarnation as naval gunfire support.

O'Rourke discusses three concerns about the sufficiency of air defense: point-defense antiaircraft weapons on amphibious ships; adequate airborne escort for the MV-22, which is unarmed at present; and adequate protection for

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ground troops, especially against low-level attacks. Evidence that this third concern is real is provided by the recent Marine Corps decision to double its procurement of the air-defense variant of the light armored vehicle (LAV). Whether this solves the problem will not be known until sometime after 1992, when the air-defense variant begins to arrive in the field. Because the Marine Corps has a ceiling on its total LAV buy, some other variant had to fall by the wayside to allow for the additional air-defense procurement. In this case, the cost of an assault-gun variant was relatively high. But this cancellation in turn raised the question of adequate large-caliber direct-fire capability—especially antitank capability—for Marine ground forces. In such twists and turns of the overall firepower issue, the Corps usually finds itself in a no-win position when confronted by critics.

A common dilemma, O'Rourke reminds us, is posed by the inevitable tradeoffs between firepower and mobility. Responding to mounting evidence that its direct-support artillery had become inadequate, the Corps procured the M198 howitzer, which unfortunately brought with it a rash of logistical problems in tactical mobility and ammunition resupply. From a distance, the logical approach to such a dilemma would be to take a close look at the makeup of anticipated adversaries and tailor U.S. forces accordingly. But, as Mundy and others point out, the Marine Corps has consciously avoided such specialization on any large scale in order to maintain the capability of responding to contingencies ranging from low-intensity intervention to high-intensity warfare in any potential operating environment, while keeping the refitting and retraining of forces at a minimum. So there are three continuously competing needs: firepower, mobility, and flexibility in deployment. And, as O'Rourke points out, a Marine Corps that cannot possibly cover all its bets has little choice other than to cover as many as possible and to try to manage an uneasy, ever-shifting balance among the three needs.

At first glance, this might appear to be a gloomy outlook for the Corps. But the multiplicity of options developed by the Marines actually are an exquisite dilemma of their own creation, which is far preferable to the more limited range of options that existed at the beginning of this decade. All three papers are quite positive on this point. General Mundy refers to a "high point" of awareness and "good times" in which the Navy and the Marines have become better shipmates than ever, eagerly seeking new ways to develop their amphibious skills together. Dr. Akst sees the proliferation of deployment "packages" as an increasingly attractive menu by which to successfully match a deploying force with an appropriate means of getting to an objective area. From Mr. O'Rourke's view on Capitol Hill, the Marine Corps is a much-improved force from five years ago. Some of the shortages the Corps is trying to reduce began in the 1970s and will not disappear for years. Nevertheless, in the meantime, the Corps has much more to work with.

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## Note

1. [Since these papers were written, the designations for Marine amphibious unit (MAU), Marine amphibious brigade (MAB), and Marine amphibious force (MAF) have been changed to Marine *expeditionary* unit (MEU), Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB), and Marine expeditionary force (MEF). The original designations have been retained throughout this book.—Ed.]

# Amphibious Warfare

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*Lt. Gen. Carl E. Mundy, Jr., USMC*

## The Navy-Marine Corps Team

The relationship between the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps is an unusually close and interdependent one, as it has been since the first two battalions of marines were formed in 1775. Although this relationship is established in law and practiced daily around the globe, few people outside naval circles understand it well, and it sometimes eludes a few within naval circles. The way amphibious forces are employed and, more specifically, how and why marines organize to fight the way they do may be particularly elusive to those who have not studied these subjects closely. To prepare readers for the detailed discussions ahead, this paper describes the intricate Navy-Marine Corps team in simple terms.

Marines are naval forces. The Marine Corps and the Navy form the naval service of the United States. Both services are within the Department of the Navy and take their direction from the secretary of the Navy. Marines serve in key billets on Navy staffs and in ships' companies; help in the design and development of amphibious ships, landing craft, and aircraft; and participate in the formulation of naval strategy. Navy ships are designed to handle Marine Corps equipment, and equipment is designed to fit and operate in Navy ships. Marine pilots are naval aviators, fly naval aircraft equipped with tailhooks and folding wings or rotors, and are trained to operate from either aircraft carriers or airfields. Navy officers and sailors serve on Marine staffs, not in a liaison capacity, but as permanently assigned members; and Navy chaplains, doctors, and medics are permanently assigned to every Marine Corps tactical organization. The Navy-Marine Corps relationship is deep and well established; it is not simply a temporary joining of two organizations assigned to operate together.

The laws of the United States direct the Marine Corps to provide "fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for

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service with the fleet in . . . the prosecution of a naval campaign” or for “such additional duties as the president may direct.” To provide these combined arms forces, the Marine Corps organizes for operations into Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs). The parts of these operational task forces are taken from the four ground combat organizations, or divisions; from the four aviation combat organizations, or air wings; and from the four combat service support organizations, or force service support groups. These elements are joined together in varying sizes and combinations, according to the requirements of an assigned or anticipated mission, and united under a standing, integrated air-ground command element.

In structuring and equipping the divisions, aircraft wings, and service support groups from which MAGTFs are formed, the Marine Corps buys only the numbers and types of equipment that enable the combat elements to be blended into mutually dependent and mutually supporting organizations that have enough maneuver capability, firepower, and sustainability to be effective in combat. These combat elements must also be rapidly deployable and readily transportable in amphibious ships. This means that Marine divisions are structured to be lighter in artillery, armor, armored personnel-carriers, air-defense systems, and antitank systems than comparable U.S. Army or allied formations, because many of our artillery, antitank, and battlefield maneuver vehicles fly. The Marine Corps does not integrate aviation elements with ground elements simply because it has them or wants to secure ownership of them. Our ground elements are structured to rely on the firepower and assault support provided by our aviation elements, and, in turn, the aviation elements are structured and equipped to provide the close air support required by the ground elements. Some of our aircraft are capable of an air defense role, but all aircraft are equipped, and their crews trained for, the offensive air support mission, with special emphasis on close air support.

By structuring air-ground Marine task forces thus, they remain light enough in those things that must be carried in the specially designed Navy amphibious ships to enable our nation to maintain a balanced capability to project maritime power. Moreover, this carefully intertwined structure enables the Marine Corps to meet the nation’s requirement for “forces of combined arms.”

Like our sister naval service, the Navy, the Marine Corps is a global force. Historically it has maintained a readiness to be “first to fight” in “every clime and place.” To do so the Corps has resisted regional specialization and scenario-dependent reorganization of our basic structure. To have succumbed in recent years to various pressures to reshape the Corps in accordance with the reformist movement in vogue would likely have emasculated the Corps’ naval and utilitarian character. Examples of suggested changes are the following:

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- In the mid-1970s, when the national focus turned from Southeast Asia to the regions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Marine Corps was pressed to “heavy up” for employment alongside the mechanized and armored divisions on the central front.
  - A five-year defense program period later, Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran, and Marines were pressed to “mobile up” a light armored corps for desert warfare.
  - At the same time, the utility of amphibious forces on NATO’s northern flank was acknowledged and the Corps was directed to “lighten up” for skimobile operations in northern Norway.

During all these shifts, the Corps pressed ahead with modernizations to keep its forces well trained, well equipped, and capable of meeting each of those commitments, but it also stopped short of specializing its forces for use only in specific, restricted scenarios.

### **The Marine Air-Ground Task Force**

The foregoing is a look at the fundamentals of why we have the Marine air-ground task force and why there is a need for a balanced, utilitarian fleet marine force. Let’s now focus on how the MAGTF works. Herein lies the anomaly that confuses those who think only in tri-service terms or who separate functions along service lines.

The command element of a MAGTF controls air and ground reconnaissance elements, two functional maneuver elements (one air and one ground), general fire-support elements, and a service support element.

Maneuver is accomplished through mission-type orders to both a ground and an aviation combat element to destroy, neutralize, or disrupt enemy forces or to seize or defend objectives. The MAGTF commander provides general fire support to the ground combat element or to other joint or combined formations according to the priorities the commander establishes for allocating combat aircraft. For example, the commander may order an offensive maneuver by the ground combat element while simultaneously assigning a mission requiring aviation maneuver against enemy offensive aircraft and rear formations. Concurrently, the commander will allocate aviation sorties to give direct fire support to the ground combat element, and when in a joint or combined operation, he will allocate as many sorties as can be made available in support of higher command requirements.

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Because the MAGTF is designed to be flexible, the commander is able on short notice to shift his main effort from ground maneuver to aviation maneuver to massed close-in or long-range fire support. This combining of air and ground maneuver and fire support at the tactical level, vice only at the operational or theater level, is a unique characteristic of MAGTFs. In effect, the MAGTF commander is an operational, uniservice, joint functions commander supported by a carefully integrated air-ground-logistics staff and a highly sophisticated command, control, communications, and intelligence (C<sup>3</sup>I) system. The commander integrates all of these staff and automated systems into a naval command structure for amphibious operations, which in turn can be integrated into a joint or combined structure for operations ashore or can operate simply as an independent task force. The commander can assume operational control of additional ground forces, as is called for and exercised in both U.S. and allied plans, and he can direct and control additional aviation elements.

The lesson from all of this is that a brigade-size MAGTF might be thought of as roughly equivalent to a divisional formation of two brigade-equivalent maneuver elements (one air, one ground), a division service support command equivalent, and as having many of the command and control capabilities of a joint task force. Similarly, a Marine amphibious force can be equated to a corps-size formation.

## **Amphibious Operations Since the 1970s**

I want to move now from the “Marine green” perspective on MAGTFs to a “bluer” spectrum, first giving a quick refresher on amphibious operations and then looking at recent plans for employment of U.S. Marine Corps forces.

Amphibious operations are naval operations that have been developed and perfected over several decades by the Navy and Marine Corps to give the United States the ability to exert influence, deter conflict, or project combat power ashore without relying on fixed bases, assembly areas, prepositioned stocks, or friendly receptions. Amphibious operations are not, as often perceived, simply the movement of troops and material by ships instead of airplanes. Although the landing force of the task force can be put ashore as reinforcement before hostilities, this is an unimaginative and expensive use of the maneuver and power-projection capabilities of a naval force.

An amphibious task force of twenty specially designed ships carrying V/STOL jet aircraft, helicopters, and ten thousand marines and their warfighting equipment, steaming offshore under the umbrella of a carrier battle group, under the watchful eyes and ears of frigates, destroyers, cruisers, and submarines, and the bullying threat of a battleship battle group is cause for one considering aggression to rethink his attack scheme; for should he launch an

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attack, he will need heavy security in his flank and rear areas, because a naval task force can be a long way up or down the coastline by tomorrow.

In spite of the logic of this argument, many commanders—particularly those among our allies—reason that early reinforcement before hostilities break out is a necessary deterrent to war or, if deterrence fails, U.S. troops would already be in place, prepared for action. This is a reasonable premise. However, reinforcement or early commitment can be viewed in several ways. To a continental commander, reinforcement means that aircraft sit on host-nation airfields and troops dig in for defensive positions. An alternative view is that reinforcement begins as soon as a naval task force operates in support of the continental commander. Tactical aircraft on aircraft carriers and troops and equipment assembled tactically in attack positions in the well-decks and on the flight-decks of amphibious ships are also a form of reinforcement because the time and place of their potential commitment places an aggressor in a position of considerable uncertainty.

The amphibious task force can maneuver, disperse, defend itself, and attack. Amphibious ships, to be sure, are an inviting target and, if unescorted, are extremely vulnerable. However, our view of the force must be elevated from that of a few lightly armed “troop ships” bobbing around ripe for plucking to that of a multidimensional naval task force rigged for defense or offense in any direction—below, on, or above the surface of the sea.

This latter capability—offense—best characterizes the naval task force. The naval force can deter or defend, but it does so through offensive employment—by being forward, visible, and capable of projecting decisive combat power. The landing forces, a major element in naval power projection, have an offensive orientation in their organization, doctrine, and training. One of our more distinguished World War II generals summed up Marine Corps philosophy when he said, “We’re not accustomed to occupying defensive positions. It’s destructive to morale.”<sup>1</sup> In spite of this inbred spirit and orientation toward offense, joint planning in recent years has tended to thrust the Marine Corps toward defense. The following is a brief recap of such plans.

In the 1970s, when the United States turned its focus from the Pacific almost exclusively to the central region of NATO Europe, globally oriented marines found themselves on the defensive philosophically and sometimes practically. U.S. and NATO defense analysts pressed for piecemeal commitment of the “force of combined arms” to plug gaps in NATO’s defensive structure. They recognized the Marine Corps’ comparatively light ground structure without understanding the combined-arms concept, including its organization of supporting air components. Many argued for a heavier, army-like ground structure, the adoption of which would have sounded the death knell of this nation’s flexible amphibious capability. At the same time, the Navy was caught in the throes of an identity crisis of small ships versus

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# Deployment Concepts

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*George Akst*

## Introduction

### *History*

The United States Marine Corps has been synonymous with amphibious assaults since its first one on 3 March 1776. In that historic event, 250 marines and sailors assaulted the island of Nassau in the Bahamas to support the birth of the United States.<sup>1</sup> The amphibious assault continued to be refined throughout the next two centuries and played a crucial role in the battle of the Pacific in World War II. At that time, the United States had about 2,800 amphibious ships and ocean-going landing craft.<sup>2</sup> A decade later, during the Korean War, there was only one significant amphibious assault: the landing at Inchon. However, the art of amphibious warfare was substantially advanced during that war by the development of the helicopter as a means to move troops and equipment into and around the battlefield. From that time, amphibious assault was no longer limited to surface craft but could be performed by air or, more likely, some combination of air and surface craft.

After World War II, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. amphibious capability declined drastically. The Navy's fleet of amphibious ships dwindled to 157 by 1968 and to significantly less than half of that by the mid-1970s.<sup>3</sup> The ships on hand were getting old, and the United States was threatened with the loss of its amphibious capability altogether. Traditionally, the Marine Corps has been thought of as this nation's rapid deployment force, and its means of deployment had always been the Navy's amphibious ships. The decline of these ships raised some genuine questions about the need for the service of the Marine Corps.

Fortunately, much has changed in the last ten years. Part of that change was the rebirth of the Navy's amphibious fleet, but the real change has been the deployment options the Marine Corps has developed. The Marines are still

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very much the rapid deployment force for this nation, but the means of deployment is no longer restricted to amphibious shipping. Rather, the means now encompass the entire spectrum of military and civilian airlift and sealift as well as prepositioned equipment. In this paper we will look at the current deployment options of the Marine Corps. To better understand them, some background on the mission and organization of the U.S. Marine Corps is needed.

### *Mission*

By nature, the Marine Corps is an expeditionary organization, known for its amphibious warfare capabilities. The Corps' unique amphibious capability provides this nation with a substantial means of forcible entry into a hostile environment. The organization and mission of the Marine Corps were set forth in the National Security Act of 1947. In that document, Congress described the Marine Corps as follows:

The Marine Corps, within the Department of the Navy, shall be so organized as to include not less than three combat divisions and three air wings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein. The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.

The Marine Corps shall develop, in coordination with the Army and the Air Force, those phases of amphibious operations that pertain to the tactics, technique, and equipment used by landing forces.

Marines also can be used quite effectively in nonamphibious roles. For example, they can work with a joint or combined task force in a land campaign or provide a combined-arms force for crises. In fact, one of the key attributes of the Marine Corps is its tremendous flexibility, and much of this flexibility is due to its organization.

### *Organization*

The Marine Corps organizes for administration and small-unit training quite differently than it organizes for exercises and war. Administratively, the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) is organized into divisions, wings, and force service support groups (FSSGs). The divisions provide the ground troops, including

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the infantry, artillery, tanks, and amphibious vehicles. The wings provide the aircraft, including fixed-wing fighter and attack aircraft, and attack and transport helicopters. Finally, the FSSGs provide the bulk of the combat service support functions, including maintenance, supply, motor transport, and medical aid. Naval support elements also provide some of the support functions.

Tactically, the Marines organize into Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs) that are formed to meet different mission requirements. Each MAGTF consists of a headquarters element, a ground combat element, an aviation combat element, and a combat service support element. The smallest MAGTF is a Marine amphibious unit (MAU), which is designed around an infantry battalion and a composite helicopter squadron. The next larger task force is a Marine amphibious brigade (MAB), which has an infantry regiment as its ground combat element and an aircraft group as its aviation combat element. The largest MAGTF is a Marine amphibious force (MAF), consisting notionally of a division, wing, and FSSG. Because the Marines “task organize” (organize according to tasks required) for each mission, the MAGTFs may not be exactly as described above; for example, a MAF could be put together with only two infantry regiments rather than with a division of three regiments. In this paper, however, unless specifically noted, all of the MAGTFs discussed are the notional organizations described above.

One of the disadvantages of organizing differently for peacetime than for wartime is that the units do not train together as a team on a regular basis. To alleviate this shortcoming, the Marine Corps has created a total of fourteen permanent MAGTF headquarters to train and operate together full-time. There are three MAF headquarters: I MAF is located at Camp Pendleton, California; II MAF at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; and III MAF in Okinawa, Japan. Each MAF controls two MAB headquarters; one MAB has a primary amphibious mission, and the other focuses on a maritime prepositioning force mission.<sup>4</sup> Finally, I MAF and II MAF are responsible for providing an afloat MAU to the western Pacific and to the Mediterranean, respectively. To do this, each MAF has created two or three MAU headquarters so that when one MAU is afloat, the other(s) can prepare for deployment. Each MAU deployment lasts about six months.

## **Methods of Deployment**

### ***Background***

The primary means of deployment for the Marine Corps is amphibious shipping. The main support for this deployment method, the amphibious navy, has been declining since World War II and is only now beginning to see some substantial gains. Currently the Navy has about sixty amphibious ships spread

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over the Atlantic and Pacific fleets, but there are not enough to lift a single MAF. An entire MAF is not required in the initial stages of an amphibious assault, however, but is needed shortly afterward to sustain the force. Hence, the concepts of the assault echelon (AE) and the assault follow-on echelon (AFOE) come into focus. The assault echelon is the set of troops, vehicles, aircraft, equipment, and supplies needed to successfully execute the initial amphibious assault. The assault follow-on echelon is the remainder, or "that echelon of assault troops, vehicles, aircraft, equipment, and supplies which, although not needed to initiate the assault, is required to support and sustain the assault. In order to accomplish its purpose, it is normally needed in the objective area no later than 5 days after the commencement of the assault landing."<sup>5</sup>

Now that the Marine Corps has refined the requirement for amphibious ships so that the Navy must transport only the assault echelon of a landing force, enough amphibious shipping is available to conduct a MAF assault—barely! An assault of that magnitude would probably require every amphibious ship in the Navy that was not undergoing overhaul at a given time—over fifty ships. The Navy could, however, comfortably support the assault echelon of a MAB from each of the two fleets. The ultimate goal of the amphibious shipbuilding program for this century is the capability to lift the assault echelons of a MAF plus a MAB—up from the goal of 1.15 MAFs during the Carter administration.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the assault echelon, the fly-in echelon (FIE) and the assault follow-on echelon (AFOE) must be considered to complete the picture. The FIE consists of most of the fixed-wing aircraft and some of the people and equipment to support them. Although the aircraft are self-deploying, the support element must be airlifted to the amphibious objective area. Finally, the AFOE is a substantial part of any MAGTF, constituting about 65 percent of the total lift for a MAF. It is estimated that a MAF AFOE would require thirty-two commercial ships and a MAB AFOE would take ten. The lift requirements of a MAB and a MAF in 1990 are summarized in table 1.

Thus, supporting any amphibious operation of a reasonable size would require not only most of the amphibious fleet, but also a substantial amount of nonorganic (not supplied by Marine Corps or Navy) airlift and sealift as well. This reality has forced the Marine Corps to investigate alternative means of deploying forces. A recent addition to the nation's power-projection capabilities is the Maritime Prepositioning Program. Under this program, three squadrons of maritime prepositioning ships (MPS) were procured, along with nearly a MAB's worth of equipment on each squadron. These ships are stationed in key areas around the globe, where they can react to any crisis in a relatively short time. When called on, they can sail into a secure port or beach area and unload their equipment. There, the ships are joined with the personnel

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**Table 1.** Lift requirements for 1990 forces

MAGTF	Troops	Square feet (thousands)	Cubic feet (thousands)	Helicopter spots <sup>a</sup>	Landing craft (LCAC/LCU/LCM-8)
MAF <sup>b</sup>					
AE	35,000	746	1,647	438	65/9/38
AFOE	15,200	827	7,143	-	-
FIE <sup>c</sup>	2,100	23	112	-	-
MAB <sup>d</sup>					
AE	11,000	268	624	153	25/4/16
AFOE	4,200	165	1,516	-	-
FIE <sup>c</sup>	500	8	39	-	-

Source: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 8 Nov 1984.

<sup>a</sup> Number of landing spaces required on the decks of amphibious ships; each spot is equivalent to the space needed to land a CH-46 helicopter.

<sup>b</sup> Total of sixty days of supply for the MAF; does not include the naval support element.

<sup>c</sup> Assumes all intermediate maintenance support for an aircraft is transported by air; i.e., the intermediate maintenance support available in the amphibious objective area is limited.

<sup>d</sup> Total of thirty days of supply for the MAB; does not include the naval support element.

and additional equipment of the MAB that are flown into a nearby airfield. Within ten days, the people and equipment can be "married up" into a sizable, combat-ready MAB. A similar program is also underway in Norway, where supplies and equipment are being positioned for a MAB that will support the Norwegians against a Soviet attack. This land-based prepositioning program is similar to the MPS program in that a MAB's worth of troops will fly into an area to join their equipment and supplies. In addition to these prepositioning programs, each MAF also has an air contingency battalion (ACB), which is ready to deploy totally on transport aircraft with very short notice.

The Marine Corps has increased its deployment options tremendously over the past decade. In the remainder of this section, I will examine each of these options in more detail and discuss the implications of this enhanced deployment posture.

### *Amphibious Forces*

Amphibious forces are the traditional means of power projection of naval forces. In an amphibious operation, the MAGTF will be deployed as a landing force aboard an amphibious task force. The smallest MAGTF that routinely deploys is the MAU, which embarks in three to five ships that compose an amphibious ready group. A typical MAU is commanded by a colonel, consists of about two thousand troops, and carries with it fifteen days'

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worth of supplies and ammunition. When employed, the command element will normally remain embarked on the amphibious command ship for the duration of the operation because the MAU does not have a sufficient command-and-control structure to support itself. Because of the limited sustainment and command-and-control capability, its missions are somewhat restricted. The main role of the MAU is to react immediately to crises. In this age of terrorist activity, the MAUs are enhancing their special-operations training and equipment to deal more effectively with the current threat. If the requirement for a larger force exists, the MAU could still provide a rapid-response capability, being used in the role of the forward element of a larger MAGTF.

Both I MAF and II MAF have two or three permanent MAU headquarters each, one of which is continuously deployed. The I MAF MAU operates in the western Pacific and Indian oceans, where it falls under the operational control of the Navy's Seventh Fleet. The II MAF MAU generally operates in the Mediterranean, where it comes under the operational control of the Sixth Fleet. The MAU is the most responsive MAGTF and the only type that is continuously deployed. This responsiveness was recently demonstrated in the operation in Grenada, in which the MAU sailing to the Mediterranean was diverted to the Caribbean at the last minute. This operation demonstrated the MAU's quick reaction time and also its flexibility. A MAU was also used in the operations in Lebanon several years ago.

The next-larger MAGTF is the MAB, which is commanded by a brigadier general, consists of almost sixteen thousand troops, and notionally carries with it thirty days of supplies and ammunition. It takes about twenty amphibious ships to embark the assault echelon of a MAB and another ten or more commercial ships to carry the assault follow-on echelon. Furthermore, if the aircraft intermediate maintenance activity (IMA) is not already supported in the amphibious objective area and has to be flown in, it would take an additional 170 C-141-equivalent sorties for the fly-in echelon.<sup>7</sup> Thus, even with an amphibious MAB, there is a substantial reliance on common-user airlift and sealift.

A MAB is a much more capable, self-sustaining, and flexible organization than a MAU. Unlike a MAU, a MAB has the capability to make the transition ashore and operate independently from the ships of the amphibious task force. Although MABs are not deployed for extended periods, as MAUs are, an exception could be made during potential crises. Such deployment would be a positive show of force, which might be enough to cool a potentially threatening situation without ever having to land a single marine. If not, the deployed MAB could provide an immediate-response force and eventually be augmented to form a MAF.

Each of the three MAFs maintains two permanent MAB headquarters. (The second MAB in the Pacific, 1st MAB, does not come under the operational

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control of III MAF; rather, it reports directly to the commanding general, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.) All six MAB headquarters are fully trained and capable of performing amphibious missions. Three of these headquarters are also associated with the MPS program, which will be described shortly. Except for the 1st MAB in Hawaii, the MABs normally exist only as a MAB headquarters and would draw their troops from the divisions, wings, and FSSGs for exercises or actual operations.

The largest MAGTF is a MAF, which is commanded by a major general or lieutenant general, contains over fifty thousand troops, and requires over fifty amphibious ships just to carry the assault echelon. The MAF, along with its associated follow-on and fly-in echelons, can sustain itself for sixty days.<sup>8</sup> It is extremely unlikely that a MAF would embark as a single amphibious task force and sail to an objective area as a unit. More likely, it would be "composited" from several smaller MAGTFs that have deployed independently. The ultimate goal in any large, sustained operation is to employ a MAF. Because it is nearly impossible to deploy all the elements of a MAF simultaneously, the Marines have been developing ways to deploy forces so that they could be employed as a MAF as early as possible.

### *Maritime Prepositioning Force*

Maritime prepositioning is a program that developed in part because of the limited amphibious lift capability in the U.S. Navy. Its origin dates back at least to the Carter administration, which saw the need for an improved, non-NATO, military capability.<sup>9</sup> In response to this requirement, the secretary of the Navy directed the Navy Department to initiate a program of enhanced mobility for marine forces.<sup>10</sup> This was the beginning of the sea-based prepositioning program. At about the same time, the JCS began identifying the rapid deployment force (RDF) and discussing the composition of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). Both of these new concepts, prepositioning and the RDF, were formulated in response to the overall requirement for rapid deployment and both were focused toward Southwest Asia. Hence, many people at the time inappropriately linked the two programs. The sea-based prepositioning program led to today's MPS program; the RDJTF eventually became a new unified command, the U.S. Central Command.

Detailed planning for the MPS program began in early 1980. Although a fully capable force would not be deployed until four years later, the Navy did implement a temporary, quick solution within six months known as the Near-Term Prepositioning Ships (NTPS) program. The 7th MAB headquarters was formed to serve as the command element of this new force, and by the summer of 1980 six ships loaded with a MAB's equipment and fifteen days' supply were steaming toward the Indian Ocean. The NTPS grew to a total of eighteen

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ships by 1982, and they supported not only a MAB, now with thirty days of supply, but also carried war materiel for Army and Air Force units as well. Thus, NTPS was a multiservice program that, like the RDJTF, was focused on Southwest Asia.<sup>11</sup>

During that time, the Navy and Marine Corps were developing the Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) program, the successor to the NTPS. The MPS consists of three squadrons of commercial ships that have been converted or constructed to suit the special needs of the Marine Corps. A squadron consists of four or five roll-on/roll-off (RO/RO) ships within which a MAB's worth of equipment and thirty days' supply are distributed; enough lighters are available to load or unload in stream. The ships each have limited equipment maintenance spaces, integrated command-and-control capabilities, humidity and temperature controls for the equipment, and limited troop berthing spaces.<sup>12</sup>

All three MPS squadrons are loaded and in place in their operating areas. The first squadron deployed to the eastern Atlantic in July 1984. The second squadron replaced the Marine Corps portion of the NTPS in Diego Garcia in December 1985. The last squadron to be put into service sailed into Guam and Tinian in October 1986. Thus, the three squadrons are spread around the globe, ready for any worldwide commitments.

The concept of operations for an MPS brigade requires troops and equipment to "marry up" in a secure operating area. These ships would sail to a port or anchorage near the shore, where they would unload their equipment and supplies. The troops, along with their individual equipment and certain items not on the ships, would be flown into a nearby airfield. Then the troops and equipment would join to form a combat-ready brigade. All of this is projected to take place within ten days and to require 249 aircraft sorties of various types (289 C-141 equivalents). In contrast, the same force transported solely by air would occupy about 4,500 C-141 sorties.<sup>13</sup> To illustrate the immensity of this number, if one sortie were flown every fifteen minutes, day and night, it would take over forty-five days just to transport the MAB by air.

There are two noticeable deficiencies in this concept. The first is that there is no substantial intermediate-maintenance support for the aviation combat element of this force. The aviation spare parts and ground support equipment are expensive and were left off the "shopping list" of equipment for the ships. To remedy this shortfall, the Navy is converting two ships to become aviation logistics support ships (TAVBs). During an MPS employment, these ships could be loaded with the intermediate-maintenance equipment from one of the marine aircraft wings and deployed to the objective area. The other shortfall is in medical support, and the Navy is building two hospital ships (TAHs) to meet this need. The TAVBs and TAHs are not being built strictly to support MPS; they could also be used to support an amphibious assault.

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An MPS MAB is substantially larger and heavier than an amphibious MAB. For example, it has over sixteen thousand troops and almost three times the number of tanks and amphibious assault vehicles.<sup>14</sup> It provides the fleet commanders with another deployment option and greatly increases the nation's capability to respond rapidly to crises. A maritime prepositioning force could perform many of the same missions as an amphibious force, such as occupying or reinforcing an advanced naval base or defending key choke points along strategic sea lines of communication. It could also be used to reinforce an amphibious assault. In addition, by simply changing the strategic position of the MPS squadron, a major new mission of deterrence of hostile actions could be accomplished. Such an action would send a strong signal to a potential adversary without moving a single troop. One must bear in mind, however, that although MPS operations greatly improve deployment, they are not a substitute for the traditional amphibious assault. They require a secure environment and a capable airfield near the MPS unloading site. If these conditions are not met, a maritime prepositioned force cannot be employed successfully.

### *Land-Based Prepositioning*

The land-based prepositioning program in Norway is another program designed to enhance this nation's deployment options. The Navy views the defense of northern Norway as strategically critical in a war with the Soviets in Europe.<sup>15</sup> A number of airfields in northern Norway would be appealing forward bases for Soviet aircraft, should the Soviets be able to capture them. Furthermore, these airfields are strategically important to the allies for monitoring the Soviet navy in the Norwegian and Barents seas. Although several allied forces are earmarked for the defense of Norway, a Marine Corps prepositioned force is a key force for this mission.

The idea of prepositioning equipment in Norway originated in several studies done in the 1970s and was first directed in July 1978 by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown.<sup>16</sup> Equipment and supplies stored in Norway would signal U.S. commitment to the defense of Norway and decrease the time needed to respond to a Soviet threat. Positioning the equipment in central Norway, rather than closer to the threat in northern Norway, provides better security for the gear, is less provocative to the Soviets, and keeps employment options flexible.

In January 1981, the United States and Norway signed an agreement stating that the U.S. "may provide, consistent with SACEUR [supreme allied commander, Europe] requirements and implementing arrangements, a U.S. MAB for Alliance reinforcement of Norway within the NATO chain of command."<sup>17</sup> This agreement was refined over the next four years in additional agreements between Norway, the United States, and the other members of

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NATO. Basically, the agreements call for storing enough equipment and supplies in central Norway to support a brigade of thirteen thousand troops with thirty days of supply. This force will have few heavy pieces of equipment and no tracked vehicles at all. In fact, the only major weapon system that would be prepositioned is the artillery. The storage facilities will be in carved granite caves that have controlled temperature and humidity and blast-proof doors for the ultimate in protection.

The U.S. government is responsible for procuring and shipping the equipment and supplies to Norway. The other members of NATO and Norway would be responsible for constructing storage and maintenance facilities and roads and improving nearby airfields. Like the MPS brigade, the troops for the Norway brigade, along with their personal equipment and certain items not in storage, would be airlifted into a nearby airfield, where they would join their equipment to form a combat-ready MAB. The time line for the entire process, from leaving the United States to forming the MAB in the employment area, would be about ten days. Unlike the MPS brigade, the Norway brigade depends on host-nation support; the Norwegians are responsible for unloading the caves and supporting the airfields. In fact, much of the equipment the brigade would use, such as marginal-terrain vehicles, trucks, and airbase support equipment, would be supplied by the Norwegians at the time of employment. Furthermore, the Norwegians would be responsible for transporting the brigade from central Norway to the area of operations. Another difference from the MPS brigade is that, rather than taking on a global responsibility, the Norway brigade focuses on a specific region, where the threat, climate, and other conditions are well known.

Equipment and supplies began to be shipped to Norway in 1982 and have been placed in temporary storage facilities while the caves are being constructed.<sup>18</sup> In 1987, the Norwegians will begin to move the equipment into the caves, and all of the equipment will be in place by 1989.<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, the 4th MAB, from Norfolk, Virginia, has been training for this mission. It has sent small units to the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California, for training and has conducted large-unit training in other areas of the north-central and northeastern United States. In addition, it has deployed to Norway in each of the past several years to train under the same conditions and with the actual prepositioned equipment that it would have in a real operation.

Land-basing of equipment and supplies is not unique to the Marine Corps. In the U.S. Army's POMCUS (preposition of material configured in unit sets) program, combat supplies and equipment for six divisions are stored in warehouses and depots in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands.<sup>20</sup> Its program is supported predominantly by U.S. forces, in contrast to the tremendous host-nation support provided to the Marines in Norway.

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### *Air Contingency Battalion*

The air contingency battalion (ACB) is a specially designated infantry battalion within the MAF that is kept at a high state of readiness and on a very short tether. In other words, the ACB must be ready to deploy by strategic airlift within a period of a few days, and a specially designated, reinforced rifle company within the battalion has to be ready within a much shorter period. Because upholding this state of readiness is very demanding, the duties of the ACB rotate among the infantry battalions in each MAF. A battalion can expect to retain this responsibility for one to five months, after which it is relieved by another battalion. With the exception of the forward-deployed MAU, the ACB is the Marine Corps' most responsive unit. In fact, depending on the geography, the ACB may be able to respond even faster than a MAU.

The term *air contingency battalion* is somewhat misleading, because the unit actually contains substantially more than an infantry battalion. A notional force list for an ACB includes an infantry battalion, an artillery battery, a combat engineer platoon, an antitank weapons (TOW missiles) section, a section of a forward area air defense battery (Stinger missiles), a section of a truck platoon, a small combat service support detachment, and a host of other small detachments. Thus, its makeup is much like that of the battalion landing team in a MAU.

The ACB is a light unit, of limited combat capability. It can be deployed on approximately thirty-five C-141 aircraft, taking only five days of supply.<sup>21</sup> It can deploy amphibiously, however, should the mission require it. Amphibious deployment would enable the ACB to build up to a heavier and more sustainable force, but it would, of course, need more time to reach any area of operations.

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the deployed or deployable units discussed thus far.

### *Unit Deployment Program*

One other Marine Corps program deserves mention here: the Unit Deployment Program (UDP). The program was actually designed as a means of stabilizing the units stationed in the western Pacific. Although this program may not normally be associated with the deployment options previously discussed, it is, in fact, a way of forward-deploying marines for contingencies that may arise in the western Pacific.

In the mid-1970s, 14.5 percent of the U.S. Marines were assigned to Japan on a one-year, dependents-restricted tour.<sup>22</sup> The Marine Corps paid a high price in permanent change-of-station (PCS) budget dollars, personnel turnover rates, low morale, lost manpower, and low readiness for these units.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of deployable units in the Marine Corps

Characteristic	ACB	MAU	Amphibious MAB	MPS MAB	Norway MAB	MAF
Personnel	1,200	2,000	15,700	16,500	13,000	52,300
Equipment						
Tanks	0	5	17	53	0	70
Amphibious assault vehicles	0	12	47	109	0	208
Artillery	8	8	36	36	24	120
Mortars	8	17	51	51	49	153
TOWs	8	8	48	96	72	144
Dragons	24	32	96	96	96	288
Light armored vehicles	0	0	36	28	0	147
HAWK launchers	0	0	6	6	12	24
Fixed-wing aircraft	0	0 <sup>a</sup>	79	79	77	157
Helicopters	0	22	100	68	78	156
Lift requirements						
Amphibious ships	0	3-5	20	0	0	52
Commercial ships	0	0	8	4-5 <sup>b</sup>	0	32
Aircraft <sup>c</sup>	35	0	35/170	289/449	- <sup>d</sup>	105/540
Sustainability (days of supply)	5	15	30	30	30	60

Source: U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs)*, PCN 100-01339800, 28 May 1985; other sources available from author.

<sup>a</sup> A MAU will often sail with a detachment of four or six AV-8 aircraft.

<sup>b</sup> This does not include the TAVB and/or TAH, which could sail in conjunction with the MPS.

<sup>c</sup> In terms of C-141 equivalent sorties. If there are two numbers, the first number represents the number of sorties required if a TAVB were available to carry the aircraft IMA; the second number assumes all IMA will be carried by air.

<sup>d</sup> Not yet determined.

This situation conflicted with Commandant Louis Wilson's stated objectives<sup>23</sup> of uniformly high readiness throughout the Corps and the highest possible quality of personnel. On Christmas Eve, 1975, William K. Brehm, then assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs, issued a memo ("Reduction of Personnel Turbulence")<sup>24</sup> outlining guidelines and constraints for personnel moves that would have restricted the Marine Corps' policy of

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personnel assignments in Japan. The commandant's objectives and Mr. Brehm's guidelines drove the Marine Corps to reexamine its methods of personnel assignment in the western Pacific.

In response to this problem, Headquarters, Marine Corps, convened a study group that proposed, in October 1976, the creation of temporary unit deployments, that is, assigning entire units (infantry battalions, aircraft squadrons) from the continental United States to Japan on a temporary additional duty status for six-month periods. This would reduce personnel turbulence and PCS funding and enhance unit integrity, morale, and readiness. The program began in October 1977 and was fully implemented by January 1983, when all battalions and squadrons in Japan were participating. The system's first full year cost \$25 million more than the previous program in per diem and transportation but saved \$35 million in PCS moving expenses and \$15 million in fewer transient work-years lost.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the Unit Deployment Program does reduce expenditures and has successfully met its other goals as well.

The responsibility for providing units to the program is shared between East Coast and West Coast forces and rotates among the units in those forces. Typically, a marine would serve two six-month overseas tours in a three-year assignment to a battalion or squadron. During the period immediately before a deployment, much time and effort goes into preparing the unit. The troops are carefully screened for "deployability." Marines with certain medical or behavioral problems, those with insufficient time left in their tour, and female marines assigned to certain noncombat billets are not assigned to a deploying unit.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the Marine Corps has developed a computerized personnel system for those units involved in the UDP.<sup>27</sup> As a result, marines rarely detach from their unit during the actual deployment. In preparing for deployment, units go through a fairly intensive training cycle, with better access to facilities, equipment, and supplies than nondeploying units. Thus, deployed units are typically at an all-time high state of combat readiness.

### *Impact on Nonorganic Lift*

All of the deployment options I have discussed show the Marine Corps to be a highly mobile, extremely flexible service prepared to take on many different missions for the National Command Authorities. For each of these missions, the Marines can get to their destinations quickly and stay for an extended time without significant external support. However, there is a price to pay. This price is an ever-increasing demand for common-user (shared among the armed services) airlift and sealift—national assets that are already overcommitted. The United States is paying this price because of the lack of amphibious shipping and not because of the expansion of deployment options. In fact,

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the prepositioning of equipment is helping to slow the growing demand for nonorganic lift.

The armed services have two major sources of intertheater airlift: the Military Airlift Command (MAC) and the Civilian Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF). A congressionally mandated mobility study concluded in 1981 that the U.S. Air Force should provide enough airlift to carry 66 million ton-miles per day (MTM/D), of which 40 percent requires an "outsized" capability—that is, it is cargo that will not fit in C-141A aircraft. That study showed that requirements might exceed 100 MTM/D; however, 66 MTM/D was considered a reasonable goal.<sup>28</sup> At the time of the study, the capacity of the Air Force was 29 MTM/D.<sup>29</sup> Four years later, that capacity had grown to only 32 MTM/D, and the projected capacity for 1989, including fifty new C-5Bs and thirty additional KC-10s, is only 50 MTM/D—far short of the stated requirement. The CRAF is a consortium of twenty-seven U.S. airlines that have voluntarily agreed to provide emergency airlift within forty-eight hours. It currently provides about 30 percent of the total cargo-carrying capacity for strategic airlift.<sup>30</sup> In addition to these major sources, the United States will probably have to rely on certain NATO and Korean aircraft to provide additional airlift for any major operation.

Although the Marine Corps relies heavily on airlift to move troops and equipment rapidly into the theater of operations, about 90 percent of the materiel required to maintain combat forces overseas will be moved by sea.<sup>31</sup> In the United States, civilian merchant shipping has been declining since World War II. This country's fleet of merchant ships now ranks twelfth in the world in size and eighth in gross tonnage capacity.<sup>32</sup> Managing this shipping during wartime is the major concern of the Navy's Military Sealift Command (MSC). A familiar term is the *U.S. controlled fleet*, which consists of the following: the MSC nucleus fleet, the U.S. flag fleet, the Ready Reserve Force (RRF), the National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF), and the Effective U.S. Control Fleet. The MSC nucleus fleet consists of about sixty ships that are available for strategic sealift on a daily basis; most are owned by civilians. The government-owned RRF, part of the NDRF, contains an additional seventy-five ships that can be made available within five to ten days. The remainder of the NDRF consists of almost two hundred ships of World War II vintage, spread over three sites, which can take up to six months to activate. Finally, the Effective U.S. Control Fleet consists of about 350 ships flying the flags of Panama, Liberia, Honduras, and the Bahamas, and owned by U.S. citizens or corporations.<sup>33</sup> Although these ships could be pressed into service, most of them are not considered militarily useful. In addition to these nationally controlled assets, a pool of European ships guarantees the United States four hundred out of six hundred ships for use in a NATO conflict.<sup>34</sup>

The common-user lift requirements of the Marine Corps can strain limited airlift and sealift capabilities. Although the MPS force reduces the

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reliance on amphibious shipping, it requires 249 air sorties (289 C-141 equivalents) to transport the troops and additional equipment into the objective area. The Norway Prepositioning Brigade also requires a substantial amount of airlift. Even the requirements of the fly-in echelons of amphibious MABs and MAFs are growing substantial. Then, of course, there is always a heavy reliance on sealift to bring in the assault follow-on echelon. In fact, the only Marine Corps unit capable of deploying without common-user lift support is the MAU. Thus, the Marine Corps obviously is becoming dependent on the support of non-naval forces. Should this support not be available, the deployment options the Marine Corps is developing may not work.

## Employment

Deployment should not be discussed without at least mentioning employment. After all, the reason marine forces are deployed is in preparation to employ them. I have discussed how a number of different programs have affected the way the Marine Corps deploys. In this section, I discuss how the new deployment techniques have affected the way the Marine Corps employs its forces in peacetime; in other words, we will examine the training and tempo of operations (OPTEMPO) of today's Marine Corps. The other factor greatly affecting employment is the modernization of Marine Corps weapons systems that will be taking place throughout the 1980s.

### *Training and OPTEMPO*

Along with the expansion of deployment options for the Marine Corps has come a large increase in the types and level of training required to support it. In fiscal year 1985, there were almost two hundred major Marine Corps field training exercises—up from about eighty in FY 1980. Much Marine Corps training is conducted in units rather than on an individual basis. The Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, California, conducts ten live-fire, combined-arms exercises each year. Each exercise trains a reinforced battalion<sup>35</sup> supported by an aviation combat element<sup>36</sup> in the areas of integrated fire and air support and maneuver warfare. To gain experience in cold-weather warfare, the Marines send ten battalion-sized units a year through the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California. On the air side, the Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) trains about 140 aircrews yearly in its semiannual Weapons and Tactics Instructor courses.<sup>37</sup> In addition to unit training, the Marines regularly participate in a large number of joint or combined exercises such as Team Spirit, Freedom Banner, Teamwork, Northern Wedding/Bold Guard, and Bright Star.

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All of this training supports the Marines Corps' worldwide operational commitments. Two MAUs are continuously deployed, one in the Mediterranean and one in the western Pacific or Indian Ocean. This year, two F/A-18 squadrons and two A-6E squadrons are deployed on the Navy's aircraft carriers. The A-6 commitment will grow to four squadrons by 1988. Under the Unit Deployment Program, five infantry battalions, ten aircraft squadrons, and other smaller units are deployed to Japan at any given time. Just counting infantry battalions, this adds up to seven battalions deployed at any one time. If the battalions preparing to deploy with the MAUs or as part of the UDP are included, the total increases to fourteen battalions. Finally, if the air contingency battalions, which are prepared to deploy with very short notice, are included, the total comes to sixteen battalions.<sup>38</sup> The fact that there are only twenty-seven infantry battalions in the entire active-duty Marine Corps clearly shows the high OPTEMPO and dedication to the deployment philosophy that the Marine Corps maintains.

### *Modernization*

Within the past decade, the Defense Department has taken a number of steps to improve the nation's amphibious capabilities. It is now involved in the largest amphibious ship modernization program in forty years. DOD has procured the AV-8A Harrier aircraft and is now procuring the AV-8B, which can operate directly on the helicopter carriers of an amphibious task force to provide an organic strike capability. The Marine Corps is now beginning to receive the first air-cushion landing craft (LCAC) vehicles, which will change the way amphibious assaults are conducted. These craft can carry troops and equipment from ship to shore at speeds in excess of 50 knots. The LCAC will enable marines to make assaults from over the horizon, where the task force is out of range of enemy direct-fire weapons, and will open up most of the world's littorals to amphibious assaults. The MV-22A Osprey (capable of speeds to 300 knots, vastly increased ranges, and worldwide self-deployment) will become the Marine Corps' troop assault aircraft, replacing the CH-46E. All of these things will greatly improve U.S. amphibious capabilities in the 1990s.

### **A Case Comparison**

Having seen what the Marine Corps has done over the past decade and what it is planning for the next decade, a logical question to ask is, How does this work differ from the Army's work? After all, the Army is also prepositioning equipment in Europe and developing a number of rapidly deployable units.

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A case comparison is useful for understanding the unique characteristics of Marine Corps units. One of the Army's forces most often compared to the Marines is the light infantry division (LID). Under development over the past five years, the LID is designed to provide a greater "tooth-to-tail ratio" (more fighters, fewer administrators) than any other Army division and to be capable of deploying much faster than the standard infantry division. This section compares the capabilities and deployment characteristics of a LID to a marine unit. A notional MAB was chosen for this comparison because it is the MAGTF closest in size to a LID.

A 1984 white paper by General John A. Wickham, Jr., chief of staff, U.S. Army, described the role of LIDs in the following way:

Their rapid deployability will enable them to arrive in a crisis area before a conflict begins. By demonstrating U.S. resolve and capability, they may well prevent the outbreak of war. This is particularly so where low- to mid-intensity conflict threatens, when their presence could decisively affect the outcome. And because of their strategic mobility, these light infantry divisions will help reassure our friends and allies—and deter our adversaries—even as they go about their normal training activities in the United States or in overseas locations.<sup>39</sup>

A LID is a lightly equipped infantry division designed to deploy using only strategic airlift. The division has about 10,700 troops and can be transported on about five hundred C-141B aircraft sorties. Because the U.S. Air Force has less than half of the required C-141B aircraft, a distant deployment could take a relatively long time to complete. The division has no forcible-entry capability and requires either host-nation support in the theater of operations or an area secured by other forces. It contains no tracked vehicles and only a limited number of major weapons systems. Because it is so light, it focuses primarily on the low-intensity conflict mentioned in General Wickham's quote. A MAB is a substantially heavier unit than a LID, even though a MAB's ground combat element is only the size of a regiment (table 3). The LID, however, has more small-arms weapons than the MAB.

The most important difference between a MAB and a LID is in sustainability. A LID deploys with enough supplies to support itself for two days, compared with thirty days for a MAB. Once in the area of operations, the LID relies heavily on an Army corps, which augments the LID typically with the following units: a personnel company; light truck company; medical helicopter battalion; corps artillery battalion; military police company; tank battalion; support group; and a nuclear, biological, and chemical company. The MAB, on the other hand, can sustain itself throughout the initial stages of combat.

**Table 3.** Major combat systems of a LID and a notional amphibious MAB

System	Number	
	LID	MAB
Tanks	0	17
Amphibious assault vehicles	0	47
Light armored vehicles	0	36
TOW	44	48
Dragon	162	96
Artillery		
105-mm	54	0
155-mm	0	30 <sup>a</sup>
8-inches	0	6
Mortars	90	51

*Source:* U.S. Army 25th Infantry Division.

<sup>a</sup> Includes six self-propelled guns.

Thus, the differences in force capabilities and sustainability between a LID and a MAB are substantial. In fact, perhaps a more comparable Marine Corps unit, not in terms of size but rather in terms of mission and capabilities, is the ACB. Both the LID and the ACB are totally airlifted units; both are available for quick movement (LID, six days; ACB, two days), both have leading elements available for deployment even more quickly; and both are light. Furthermore, both are limited in the types of missions they can perform and the length of time they can operate without being reinforced and resupplied. Bearing these limitations in mind, both units can play a substantial role in the defense of the United States.

## Conclusion

Amphibious forces provide much flexibility for dealing with a wide spectrum of threats. They can be made available on short notice, they can shift theaters relatively easily, and they provide some degree of tactical surprise concerning the precise location and timing of a landing. They are one of the premier elements of this nation's power-projection capability, but they can also be used simply to provide presence and deter conflict. They also provide an unparalleled capability for withdrawal and redeployment compared with any other force. This was graphically demonstrated in the recent invasion of Grenada. Unfortunately, U.S. amphibious capability has been declining almost

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continuously since the end of World War II. The major problem is the lack of amphibious shipping. Moreover, many amphibious ships are getting old, exacerbating the problem. The United States can learn a valuable lesson from the British, who conducted an amphibious assault in the Falklands just three years ago. They also had a shortfall in amphibious shipping and were forced to requisition about fifty merchant ships, including the passenger liner *Queen Elizabeth II*, to support the assault. Even though the assault was eventually successful, it was made much more difficult by the lack of amphibious shipping.<sup>40</sup> The British had a number of problems unloading the commercial ships in the hostile environment.

The Defense Department has been taking steps to upgrade the amphibious fleet and modernize the associated weapons and transportation systems to improve amphibious capabilities. These steps will result in a quantum improvement by the 1990s, but they are not enough. The Marine Corps can no longer depend on the amphibious assault as the only means of force projection. It needs a much more flexible program of deployment options.

In response to these changing requirements, the Marine Corps has been developing additional deployment options to support national defense. These options can be placed in three major categories. First and foremost is the amphibious landing—still the primary means of forcible entry into a hostile environment. The second deployment option is by strategic airlift, predominantly in connection with the air contingency battalions. Airlift is often the quickest means of responding to a crisis. The third option is to preposition a majority of the required equipment and supplies into the theater of operations before fighting begins. The sea-based prepositioning program uses the maritime prepositioning ships to store the equipment and supplies. This option gives the nation a great deal of flexibility for responding to global crises. The land-based prepositioning program is based in central Norway and focuses primarily on a single threat.

The main feature of all of these deployment options is flexibility, which serves both the Marine Corps and the nation. But there is a price to pay. The armed services are relying much more heavily on common-user airlift and sealift than they have in the past. Demands from all of the services are growing appreciably; unfortunately, lift capabilities are not growing to match. Therefore, if large numbers of forces need to be deployed from the United States to some theater of operations, there may well be a lift shortfall. This shortfall will cause the National Command Authorities and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to make some difficult decisions concerning priorities.

The deployment options, or “packages,” that the Marine Corps has recently developed should not be thought of in rigid ways. Rather, they should be thought of as a large menu from which one can pick the appropriate force

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and choose the appropriate means of deployment to satisfy the mission. The fact that this menu has grown so much recently serves only to facilitate this selection process and provide a much greater chance for success. Other services, as well, have been expanding their deployment capabilities; one example is the U.S. Army's light infantry division. If a quickly deployable, highly capable, self-sustaining force with a forcible-entry capability is required, however, the only place to find it is in the U.S. Marine Corps.

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## Notes

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3. General Accounting Office, *Marine Amphibious Forces: A Look at Their Readiness, Role, and Mission*, GAO-79-5, 6 February 1979, 16, 19.
4. III MAF directly controls only one MAB, the 9th MAB in Okinawa. The 1st MAB in Hawaii is under the operational control of the commanding general, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.
5. Department of the Navy, *Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps, LFM-01, November 1986.
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13. Col. James J. Stewart, Col. John C. Scharfen, Lt. Col. John S. Lowery, "Maritime Prepositioning Enhances Marine Capabilities," *Amphibious Warfare Review* (November 1984): 20.
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15. Col. Joseph H. Alexander, "The Role of U.S. Marines in Defense of North Norway," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (May 1984): 186.

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16. *Ibid.*, 183.
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  19. Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, *Norway Airlanded MAB*, Point Paper PON-22B35, 1 November 1986.
  20. Industrial College of the Armed Forces, *Sealift/Aircraft*, 1985, section 12.
  21. Discussions with Lt. Col. Bill Healy, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.
  22. Col. Anthony Latorre, unpublished paper on the Unit Deployment Program, 1984.
  23. *Ibid.*
  24. *Ibid.*
  25. *Ibid.*
  26. U.S. Marine Corps, *Manpower Unit Deployment Program Standing Operating Procedures*, MCO P3000.15, 1-3.
  27. *Ibid.*
  28. *Congressionally Mandated Mobility Study*, 1981.
  29. Industrial College of the Armed Forces, *Sealift/Airlift*, 1985, section 12.
  30. *Ibid.*
  31. *Ibid.*
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. *Ibid.*
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. In both 1984 and 1985, two of these battalion exercises were combined into regimental-sized exercises.
  36. The combat service support assets are routinely provided by I MAF.
  37. Gen. P. X. Kelley, "Statement on Posture, Plans, and Programs for Fiscal Years 1987 through 1991," *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 1986): 38.
  38. Although there are three air contingency battalions, one of them is already participating in the Unit Deployment Program and was not included to avoid double-counting.
  39. Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, White Paper 1984: *Light Infantry Divisions*, 16 April 1984.
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## **The Marine Corps and the Navy Today: An Outsider's View**

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*Ronald O'Rourke*

In contrast to many of the other papers presented here, this paper presents the view of an “outsider”—of someone who works with the Navy and the Marine Corps regularly but attempts to understand the Navy and Marine Corps at some remove, from the outside. It is the view of an outsider who works on Capitol Hill. But remember—there is no such thing as *the* “Capitol Hill perspective.” Congress is, by design, a collection of many and diverse perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

After taking inventory of my own thoughts about the Marine Corps and reading a large volume of material and speaking with several people about it, I selected three general areas on which I thought I could contribute something useful about the Marine Corps and the Navy today: (1) the Marine Corps and the “budgetary game” on Capitol Hill, particularly in the current, more austere climate of defense funding; (2) the Marine Corps as a tool of foreign policy, particularly in situations short of major war; and (3) the issues, concerns, potential problems, or challenges facing today's Marine Corps that I, as an outsider, have encountered in my research.

### **The Marine Corps and the Budgetary Game on Capitol Hill**

Two years ago, the CNA Sea Power Forum was subtitled “the view from the mid-1980s.” This year it is “the view from the late 1980s.” Although late 1986 does not seem exactly to be part of the “late 1980s,” the shift in wording may nevertheless be justified because, in at least one important respect, the atmosphere of 1986 differs markedly from that of 1984.

The big change, of course, is in the attitude toward defense funding. Looking back, 1984 can now be seen as the year marking the high point of public support for the Reagan administration's defense buildup. The pendulum

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of public opinion and congressional mood, which years earlier had begun to swing in favor of increased defense spending, had just about reached the endpoint of its arc in 1984, and the atmosphere of the forum that year was optimistic, if not heady.

Now, two years later, the pendulum has begun to swing back. The federal budget deficit and Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law have contributed to the austere attitude toward defense spending. Optimism and headiness are giving way to apprehension and anxiety. Whatever the reasons for the shift in public mood—the receding memory of the invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage affair, endless stories in the media about \$600 toilet seats, or, ironically, a sense that U.S. defenses have recovered (that America is “standing tall” once again)—it has shifted, and without some jarring event overseas, the pendulum probably will not swing back toward increased defense spending for some time.

The change in mood is probably surprising to no one. Even at the 1984 forum, there seemed to be a sense that trends could not be bullish forever. It is difficult to tell how far the pendulum will swing on its new course—it may not go as far as it did in the early to mid-1970s—but leaner times are clearly ahead. The question for this forum thus becomes, How well will the Marine Corps do in the new, more austere defense-budget setting?

I cannot speak on how the Corps will do within the Office of the Secretary of Defense or the Department of the Navy, where difficult choices will no doubt have to be made. I can speak only on how the Corps will do on the Hill—how well it will do, in other words, relative to the other services in getting its budget request funded without major congressional reductions or alterations.

### *Disadvantages*

In proposing its budget to Congress, the Marine Corps has two major disadvantages. Neither of them is new; in fact, the Corps has had to deal with these two problems for many years.

The first is the belief among some that large-scale amphibious landings are a thing of the past and that consequently there is no need to maintain a capability for carrying out such operations or, at least, that the likelihood of using such a capability is so low that maintaining one is not worth the cost. To combat this belief, the Corps and its supporters will have to make a clear and convincing argument that new technology (in the form of LCACs, MV-22s, and other equipment) and new ideas (such as the maritime prepositioning program) are radically changing the nature of amphibious warfare and that these changes will maintain, if not increase, the viability of amphibious warfare into the twenty-first century. The Corps realizes that it must make this case, but it has only begun to do so. The task will require a good deal of work since many

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people carry World War II images of amphibious warfare, and the job will never be finished. On Capitol Hill, there are always new members of Congress and new staffers.

The second long-standing problem is that others do not understand or accept the Navy-Marine Corps view of the unique capabilities and roles of the Corps, particularly in relation to certain Army units. A number of people see the Marine Corps as redundant and therefore unnecessary, rather than as a complementary force with unique, and therefore vital, capabilities. This perception of redundancy could increase in the years ahead as the Army implements the light infantry division (LID) concept and the Marine Corps diversifies its own deployment options through the maritime prepositioning program and the air contingency battalions (ACBs). The ACBs in particular could lead to considerable confusion because, to some, they could superficially resemble other air-deployed U.S. ground force units, such as those in the Army.

The Corps and its supporters have begun to address this problem by pointing out the structural differences between Marine Corps and Army units (as in, for example, the comparison of the LID and the MAB in Dr. Akst's paper).<sup>2</sup> These differences are particularly relevant to sustainability. The Corps and its supporters also may wish to emphasize, however, the different purposes for which Marine and Army units are intended and why one unit is ill-suited for the mission of the other. Without such a discussion, the structural differences may have little significance to those who do not accept the Navy-Marine Corps view on the Corps' unique capabilities and roles, and the Corps will not have made its case.

In light of the austere attitude toward defense funding, the belief among some that amphibious landings are a thing of the past, and the divergent views on the Marine Corps' uniqueness, Congress may impose funding constraints that could force the Corps to choose between its capability for forcible entry (i.e., programs supporting amphibious assault) and its capability for rapid response (i.e., the maritime prepositioning program). The MPS program, which was designed as a *complement* to the Corps' currently programmed amphibious assault capability, could come to be perceived by some as a partial *substitute* for it (just as a few years ago, in spite of the Navy's arguments, some perceived diesel submarines and smaller aircraft carriers not as complements to the programmed numbers of nuclear-powered submarines and large-deck carriers, but as substitutes for them). This is the radical scenario. It may be unlikely, but it is possible.<sup>3</sup>

### *Advantages*

Against these two long-standing disadvantages are at least four major advantages, three of which are also long-standing. The first, and perhaps the

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strongest, is that the Marine Corps has a low profile in Congress' consideration of the defense budget. For many on the Hill who deal with defense spending, the Corps' budget doesn't even show up on the radar scope, so to speak.

An illustration of my point: Each year, the secretary of the Navy, the chief of naval operations (CNO), and the commandant of the Marine Corps present the Navy and Marine Corps posture statements to Congress. The three men summarize their written statements, and a question-and-answer period follows. Typically, this exchange involves the secretary and the CNO in lengthy discussions while the commandant sits quietly to the side. After thirty minutes or so of this, as the participants begin to wither, one of the members looks over, notices the commandant, and the following exchange ensues:

Member: *Oh, hello, Commandant. How are you doing?*  
Commandant: *Just fine, sir.*  
Member: *Do you have everything you need, Commandant?*  
Commandant: *Yessir.*  
Member: *That's great. Glad to hear it.*  
(Hearing adjourned.)

Now, that is an exaggeration, but not much of one. Sometimes the commandant gets into lengthy discussions, but this script captures the spirit of many of these hearings.

Another illustration of the Marine Corps' low profile: The job of the Congressional Research Service, where I work, is to answer questions from Congress. Some questions are requests for quick information; others are for lengthy analyses of complicated issues. Each year, we receive hundreds of requests concerning the Army, Air Force, and Navy. We even get a fair number about the Coast Guard and the specialized agencies within the Department of Defense. But we get few on the Marine Corps.

What explains this low profile? Several factors are involved. Compared with the other armed services, the Marine Corps is relatively small. It is organizationally subsumed within the Department of the Navy, and it lacks its own dedicated service secretary. It has a relatively small budget, and many of its big-ticket procurement items (amphibious ships and aircraft, for example) are included in the Navy's appropriation accounts. In short, it generally exists in the shadow of the Navy, which at times acts as a lightning rod and consumes the energies of many of those who examine the maritime services. The Corps, moreover, has no real involvement in strategic nuclear forces or arms-control issues—the two general areas that are the high-profile targets of the defense “radar scope” for many members of Congress. And since many of the weapons and other systems used by the Marine Corps are developed by the Army or procured off the shelf, the Corps has few controversial research and development programs, although the recent MV-22 program is an exception.<sup>4</sup>

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This low profile is an important advantage, because the number of serious congressional alterations and reductions that a request sustains is roughly proportional to the amount of attention it receives. Sometimes having a low profile can hurt: a program can be cut because nobody is familiar with it and therefore nobody sees importance in it. But in a general sense, a modest issue profile is better than a high one. Congressional oversight generally focuses on finding either problems or potential savings, so the less examination a request receives, the less "hits" it will probably take.

I do not want to suggest that the Marine Corps receives no attention from Congress. The Marine Corps request is examined in detail, along with the requests of the other services, and the Marine Corps has to answer many oral and written questions from committees. Last year, for example, the unit-level circuit switch, among other items, was scrutinized. But this examination appears to be lesser in scope, intensity, and duration than that given the other services. Perhaps sensing this low-profile status, the commandant's FY 1987 posture statement departed from the bland, typed format usually used for these documents: It was a fairly flashy magazine, printed on high-quality, glossy paper with a typeset text, many photographs, and professionally produced graphics. Perhaps a little flash now and then is needed to remind people that the Marine Corps exists and that marines are proud of their recent accomplishments. But when I first saw this impressive publication, I had to ask myself, half seriously, why the Corps had produced a high-visibility document when they had such a good thing going.

The Corps' second advantage is the group of "Congressional Marines," also known as the "Marine Breakfast Caucus," which holds plenary breakfast meetings about four times a year. This organizationally informal but highly effective lobby of members of Congress and staffers regularly enables the Corps to approach Congress, within limits, as a court of appeals for certain items of particular interest to the Corps. The other services are fully aware of the breakfast caucus and have their own support organizations, but none is more effective than this tightly knit group. The Marines have "a few good men" on the Hill, and sometimes that is all they need.

The Corps' third advantage is its image as a people-oriented, readiness-oriented force of fighting men. To many, there is nothing fancy about the Marines—they are a bunch of guys with guns, and they mean business—and that image appeals to them.

These three advantages are fairly permanent. The fourth may be more transitory; it may apply only to the upcoming One-hundredth Congress. At some point over the next two years, Congress' debate on defense spending will probably focus on the future of strategic forces. Many members of Congress, either frustrated by the arms-control record of the Reagan administration or motivated by some other reason, are likely to seek to cut funding for strategic

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forces, particularly the strategic defense initiative (SDI). At the same time, however, some of these members will want to maintain an image of being strong on defense issues. To do so, many will support conventional forces, and what better force for this purpose than the U.S. Marine Corps, which Americans support? This dynamic will be only an indirect advantage for the Corps, and the Corps will not be the only beneficiary. But it is likely to materialize—there was an early hint of it in the FY 1987 defense authorization act, which transferred some funds from SDI into a “conventional defense initiative”—and it may help, at least in the near term.

When weighing the disadvantages against the advantages, the latter appear stronger, and the Marine Corps’ budget will probably do fairly well on the Hill despite the coming time of austerity, just as it has done fairly well in the recent past. It might be provocative to conclude the opposite and predict some kind of budgetary calamity for the Corps, but there is currently little evidence to support such a conclusion. The Corps may have to give up or stretch out a few items as a result of congressional action, but radical reductions or changes, while always possible, appear unlikely.

Again, the FY 1987 appropriation contains a hint that the Corps will do relatively well on the Hill. Separating the Marine Corps’ budget from that of the other services is difficult, because much of its request is contained in Navy appropriation accounts. But if the Corps’ dedicated accounts are compared with the same accounts for the rest of the Department of Defense (DOD), it can be seen that the Corps was funded at more than 96 percent of its requested level, whereas the rest of DOD was funded, on average, at less than 92 percent of the requested level (see table 1). This comparison is imperfect methodologically, but it suffices to illustrate the point.

There are two caveats to this assessment. The first concerns readiness. The conferees on the FY 1987 authorization bill expressed considerable concern about how the cuts they felt forced to make in the operation and maintenance (O&M) accounts for FY 1987 would affect readiness:

[Despite] efforts to protect readiness and quality of life programs, the conferees remain seriously concerned about the potential adverse impact of substantially lower funding levels and reductions to specific programs. . . . Unless quick action is taken to bring operation and maintenance resources in line with mission requirements, the conferees fear that the military services may be on the fast track to “unreadiness” and serious quality of life problems. . . . In many instances, the conferees believe these reductions to be excessive and fear that they may seriously degrade readiness and military capability.<sup>5</sup>

Congress in recent years has attempted to buck the conventional wisdom and place a high priority on readiness funding, and although this principle was not

**Table 1.** FY 1987 requests and appropriations, U.S. Marine Corps vs. all other military services

Account	Marine Corps			All other		
	Requests (\$ mil.)	Appropriations (\$ mil.)	%	Requests (\$ mil.)	Appropriations (\$ mil.)	%
Military personnel <sup>a</sup>	5,648.2	5,570.0	98.6	68,554.7	67,167.4	98.0
O&M <sup>b</sup>	1,929.4	1,807.6	93.7	83,843.6	76,242.7	90.9
Procurement	1,565.0	1,465.2	93.6	94,091.7	83,410.4	88.6
Revolving and mgmt. funds <sup>c</sup>	45.9	0.8	1.7	1,151.4	649.9	56.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,188.5</b>	<b>\$8,843.6</b>	<b>96.2</b>	<b>\$247,641.4</b>	<b>\$227,470.4</b>	<b>91.9</b>

Source: H. Rept. 99-1005 (Conference Report on H.J. Res. 738, *A Joint Resolution Making Continuing Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1987*).

Note: Some figures have been rounded.

<sup>a</sup> Includes reserve personnel.

<sup>b</sup> Includes reserve components.

<sup>c</sup> Stock funds.

mathematically violated in the FY 1987 appropriation—the so-called readiness accounts (military personnel and O&M) were funded at a higher percentage of the requested amount than were the so-called investment accounts (procurement, RDT&E, and military construction)—the conferees' remarks are worth noting. If pressures to reduce near-term outlays force even larger readiness cuts in the future, this could affect the Marine Corps disproportionately, since it is so readiness oriented.

The second caveat is that this assessment pertains only to the Marine Corps' ability to avoid radical reductions and alterations *in Congress*. The situation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense or the Department of the Navy, where difficult decisions will have to be made, could differ significantly.

### The Marine Corps as a Tool of Foreign Policy

Section 5013 of Title 10 of the *United States Code* contains a potential Faustian bargain for the Marine Corps. On one hand, it contains a unique clause establishing the Corps' minimum force structure ("not less than three combat divisions and three air wings") and a clause setting forth its role "in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign." On the other hand, another unique clause states that the Corps "shall perform such other

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duties as the President may direct. However, these additional duties may not detract from or interfere with the operations for which the Marine Corps is primarily organized.” This last clause, if misused, can be a source of great difficulty for the Corps, particularly in situations short of general war, because it can lead to occasions in which elements of the Corps are misused or wasted.

In this connection, certain fundamentals are worth bearing in mind: First, the Marine Corps is a foreign policy *tool*; nothing less, nothing more. Second, deploying a foreign policy tool cannot in itself constitute a foreign *policy*. Third, if the government lacks a coherent foreign policy or a clear strategy of intervention and then deploys the Marine Corps, a price may have to be paid.

Much is made of how such deployments send signals to others, but if there is no coherent foreign policy or clear strategy behind the deployment, then what exactly is the signal being sent? The signal may *appear* clear at first—for example, it may be seen to send an amorphous message of “resolve”—but in time, the vacuum of policy and strategy will become evident, and the signal will be open to interpretations, including undesirable ones. In the case of the Marine Corps, the medium is definitely *not* the message. It is only the medium; nothing less, nothing more. The message must originate elsewhere.

It has been remarked that the deployment of the Marine Corps can give policymakers time to come up with a policy or strategy—perhaps as much as six months. In rapidly emerging situations, such “breathing space” can be invaluable. But not all situations emerge rapidly. Many, if not most, crises grow out of long-standing disputes that offer plenty of time to prepare policy or strategy. There is a danger that the ever-present option of deploying the Corps will foster a pattern of behavior in which opportunities to develop strategies are frittered away until a situation becomes acute. If no coherent policy or strategy of intervention is prepared in the months or years before a slowly festering situation becomes a crisis, then is there any reason to believe that one would emerge in the six months after the Marines were deployed? If anything, the Marine presence on the scene may be used as a crutch to further avoid serious policy making; the Corps may be sent somewhere with a vague purpose of “stabilizing” a situation until it “blows over.” Worse still, with marines’ lives in danger and public pressures mounting, any policy or strategy devised in those six months may well be motivated more by emotions than by reasoning, and the results may be incoherent, unclear, unworkable, or imbued with a skewed sense of priorities. In short, the Corps is in danger of becoming either an instrument of policy-making wish-fulfillment or an excessive focus of the policy itself.

Some observers argue that the Marine Corps is no less qualified than other U.S. ground units to be shot at in a fixed location. This contention seems open to debate: A retired officer I spoke with who had advised the Marine

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Corps on the defense of one of its land facilities argued strongly (and without my prompting) that the Corps lacks the right organization, people, doctrine, training, or equipment to carry out static defense operations. The truth may be somewhere between these two points of view. Marines need to know how to carry out the static defense of their beachheads, if nothing else, but the Corps is not best prepared for this kind of operation.

But all this begs a question: If the Corps is used improperly, if it is sent to do something it is ill-equipped to do, who gets the blame? I posed this question to some of the people I interviewed, and a two-part answer emerged: Part of the blame, I was told, must rest with the National Command Authorities (NCA) and those who support them for not having a clear foreign policy or strategy of intervention in the first place. But part of the blame would rest with the secretary of defense or the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) for not pointing out strongly enough that the deployment contemplated would ill suit the Corps' capabilities or for not making clear before a crisis that the Marine Corps has a limited collection of capabilities and resources. Moreover, if the secretary of defense or the JCS will not point this out, then, I was told, the secretary of the Navy and the Navy and Marine Corps leaders are responsible for doing so. For, if none of these people makes this case to the NCA, I was told, then who will? This answer to the question may not be complete or even correct. But the question exists and needs to be addressed.<sup>6</sup>

## Issues and Challenges Facing the Marine Corps

Capitol Hill is a good place to put your ear to the ground; you can hear a lot of things from many directions. The problem is that you cannot always be sure that what you hear is true. A lot of information is out of date or comes from people who are uninformed or who have an axe to grind and are distorting the situation. So it is sometimes difficult to determine if an "issue" or "potential problem" is (a) valid; (b) if valid, how serious it is; and (c) if serious, whether the proposed response will fully alleviate it. The following list of concerns is thus put forward for two purposes: to give those inside the Marine Corps an impression of what an outsider hears in Washington about the Corps; and to allow the Corps an opportunity to provide some feedback on whether these concerns are indeed valid, serious, and scheduled for redress.

The issues confronting the Marine Corps today fall into three groups. The "macro-level" issues concern Marine Corps tactics and doctrine. Within the Marine Corps, tactics are being debated, particularly about how best to use the new equipment available to the service. This debate appears healthy and vigorous. A second debate both inside and outside the Marine Corps is about the more general matter of amphibious doctrine—how to conduct amphibious

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assaults in today's and tomorrow's environments. This debate also appears vigorous, but my impression, from the outside, is that it has had its bitter moments and has created a few enemies. Friction may be unavoidable, but I am concerned that some views may be hardening into dogma and that some people may be talking past one another, rather than *with* one another. If this is the case, then the debate over doctrine may become in part corrosive and thus less helpful to the Corps. I do not want to concentrate further on these macro-level issues; they have been treated at length in many articles. I simply want to note that these debates on tactics and doctrine are in progress and that they should not be overlooked in favor of the issues discussed below.

At the other end of the spectrum are "micro-level" issues debated almost entirely within the Corps itself, such as whether the light armored vehicle (LAV) should have gun ports. There are so many of these issues, and their degree of usefulness to those outside the Corps is so uneven, that attempting to treat all of them here would be a taxing and not very helpful exercise. Accordingly, I will avoid most of these as well.

The issues I will concentrate on are mostly at the middle level—below tactics and doctrine, but above nuts and bolts. They have been mentioned separately in a variety of settings, but discussing them as a set can provide a larger impression. These issues have no one thing in common, but some relate to the task of making the over-the-horizon assault concept a reality. On with the list:

### *Lift*

The Marine Corps is in the midst of such a broad modernization effort that it is quite easy to confuse the concepts of the present and the future. This is particularly true in the area of lift assets. The goal of attaining amphibious lift for the assault echelon of 1.5 Marine amphibious forces, or 1.5 MAF(AE), is spoken of so often that one forgets that the Corps is still considerably short of this goal and that, under the current plan, it will not be attained until 1996—a full ten years from now.

Of the 19 new ships needed to achieve the 1.5 MAF(AE) goal (see table 2), only slightly more than half have been funded for construction through FY 1987. The most expensive program in the amphibious shipbuilding plan, the LHD program, is in its early stages. Under the FY 1986–FY 1990 five-year shipbuilding plan, the 1.5 MAF(AE) goal was to be attained by 1994. The less ambitious FY 1987–FY 1991 plan stretched the program over two additional years, setting the attainment date back to 1996. If future five-year shipbuilding plans stretch out the amphibious shipbuilding programs any further, the attainment date will slip accordingly, and the 1.5 MAF(AE) goal could be jeopardized in two ways. First, the goal could gain a reputation as a relatively

**Table 2.** Amphibious ships to be built to meet the 1.5 MAF(AE) goal

Class	Hulls required	Hulls funded through FY 1987	Hulls planned for FY 1988–FY 1991	Unit procurement cost (FY 1987 dollars, millions)
LSD-41	8	8	0	\$ 240
LHD-1	5 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3	1,100
LSD-41(CV)	6 <sup>a</sup>	0	4	270
Total	19	10	7	

*Sources:* Department of Defense, *Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1987*, by Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, 183; Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1986*, 99th Cong., 1st sess., pt. 8: 4637–38; Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1985*, 98th Cong., 2d sess., pt. 8: 3926–28; P-1 (Procurement) document and Navy five-year SCN plan for FY 1987–FY 1991.

<sup>a</sup> Two additional LHDs and three additional LSD-41s(CVs) are shown as needed by the late 1990s to replace, respectively, the first three LPH-2-class ships (out of a class total of seven) to reach retirement and the two LPD-1-class ships now operating as amphibious-force ships. See *Hearings for FY 1985*, 3927. As the final four LPHs retire at or soon after the turn of the century, another three or four LHDs may be required. The force-level requirements for the LHD and LSD-41(CV) classes could thus run to ten or eleven and nine hulls, respectively.

<sup>b</sup> The second hull, funded for FY 1986, is the first in a three-hull multiyear procurement plan. Long-lead funding for the next two hulls has been approved for FY 1987.

low shipbuilding priority and be repeatedly deferred. Second, the funding requests for the amphibious ships will begin to slip into the early mid-1990s, when other pressing shipbuilding needs—for cruisers, destroyers, attack submarines, and possibly aircraft carriers—may offer stiff competition for shipbuilding funds.

In light of the potentially extensive shipbuilding needs of the 1990s, the current period, despite a tightening defense budget, can be seen as an opportunity for the Corps to fulfill some of its amphibious-assault shipbuilding requirements. The time for the Corps to secure funding for these ships, in other words, is now. In seeking this funding, the Corps has two advantages. First, Congress has agreed to a three-ship multiyear procurement for hulls 2, 3, and 4 in the LHD program. The first of these hulls was funded for FY 1986, and long-lead items for the other two hulls were approved for FY 1987. Thus, the Corps will probably have at least four LHDs by the mid-1990s. Although that does not fully satisfy the Corps' plan, it adds significantly to the amphibious fleet. The Corps' second advantage is that the cargo variant of the LSD-41 class is no longer identified as a separate program (the LSD-49 program), as it was in the FY 1986–FY 1990 five-year shipbuilding plan. As a separate program, it would have qualified to some degree as a major new start, and Congress is likely to be more stringent in approving major new starts in the years ahead.

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Now that the LSD-41(CV) program is presented simply as a continuation of the LSD-41 program, it avoids this risk.

It must be remembered, however, that although the LHDs were designed and advertised as dual-purpose ships, the same ship cannot perform amphibious assault and sea control at the same time. Conversion from one configuration to the other takes fifteen to thirty days in port and requires a change in air wings. In a general war at sea with the Soviets, if there are not enough large-deck carriers for all sea-control requirements, there may be considerable pressure to convert one or more of the LHDs to the sea-control configuration. Once converted, opportunities for reconversion for amphibious assault might be difficult to find. This possibility and the fact that amphibious ships have been converted or used for other missions in the past have aroused concern that, in a pinch, one or more LHDs will be "stolen" from the Corps for use in sea control.<sup>7</sup> This could seriously compromise the Corps' ability to mount a large-scale assault.

Amphibious-assault lift is only one-third of the Corps' lift system; it takes care of only the assault echelon. If the assault is to be sustained, the AE must be followed, about five days after it lands, by the assault follow-on echelon (AFOE), which contains approximately 25 percent of the personnel, almost 50 percent of the vehicles, 80 percent of the dry cargo and supplies, and 90 percent of the fuel. AFOE lift, the second part of the lift system, is therefore just as critical to the success of the assault as is AE lift. The key point is that the AFOE will be carried by merchant ships controlled by the Military Sealift Command, which are either government-owned or requisitioned from the private sector. The ability of the Corps to lift the AFOE in a timely fashion is thus tied to the health of the so-called common-user sealift, which in turn is tied to the health of the languishing merchant marine. If common-user sealift is in short supply and if AFOE lift needs do not receive high enough priority, then the AFOE may be delayed or unavailable, and the assault echelon may not be authorized to proceed. In addition to the issue of the availability of common-user sealift for the AFOE, a concern has been expressed as to whether the AFOE receives enough attention in the planning process and whether the skills needed to load, ship, and unload the AFOE effectively are being sufficiently exercised.<sup>8</sup>

The third part of the Corps' lift system is airlift, which is needed for the ACBs, the fly-in echelons of the amphibious assault forces, and, most of all, the airlifted troops of the MABs in the MPS program. Airlift, like AFOE sealift, is to be conducted mostly with common-user craft, and the comments made above regarding common-user sealift and the AFOE apply in parallel here. As a result of the established AFOE concept and the newly implemented MPS concept, the Marine Corps is now substantially exposed to any frailties in the common-user sealift and airlift systems.<sup>9</sup>

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### *Coordination of Ship-to-Shore Movements*

The air-cushioned landing craft is designed to give the Corps the ability to carry out over-the-horizon assaults. For many years, however, LCACs will be operating in concert with slower, shorter-ranged, displacement-type landing craft (LCUs and LCMs), and the Corps' ability to coordinate employment of this mixed collection of landing craft, with its diverse speed and range characteristics, is a concern.<sup>10</sup> The airborne component of the ship-to-shore operation raises a parallel concern: Alongside the fixed-wing aircraft and conventional helicopters, the MV-22 represents a third kind of speed and range package. Is the Corps able to coordinate this collection of unique airborne platforms?<sup>11</sup>

### *Logistics*

Concern about the Corps' ability to provide an adequate logistics train, especially for some new equipment in the modernization plan, is growing. The example usually mentioned is the M1A1 tank, which consumes significant amounts of fuel.<sup>12</sup> Another concern is whether the demand for heavy-lift helicopters (CH-53Es) will outstrip the supply. The culprit sometimes fingered here is the M198 155-mm howitzer, which is too heavy to go over the beach and can be airlifted only by the CH-53Es.<sup>13</sup>

### *Naval Support Element*

The Marine Corps is evidently concerned about the adequacy of the Navy's shallow-water mine-clearing capabilities.<sup>14</sup> Similar concerns have been expressed about the Navy's shallow-water antisubmarine warfare capabilities.<sup>15</sup> If either proved inadequate, an assault could be jeopardized.

Naval surface fire support (NSFS) is a long-standing concern for the Marine Corps. The over-the-horizon assault concept puts a new twist on the issue. The Corps has testified that over-the-horizon assault, among other considerations, may create a need for certain NSFS systems with ranges of 100 to 110 kilometers.<sup>16</sup> This is a substantial increase over the range offered by current systems: With current munitions, battleship 16-inch guns are limited to about 42 kilometers; the standard 5-inch/54-caliber mounts are limited to about 24 kilometers. Even if systems are developed with longer ranges, there is the problem of whether the naval support element (NSE) can provide adequate preparatory NSFS without compromising the tactical surprise that the over-the-horizon assault concept is supposed to afford.<sup>17</sup>

Another lingering concern regarding NSFS is adequacy in volume—the “gun gap.” This problem has been greatly reduced by the reactivation of the

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battleships, and if the Corps can protect the Deadeye 5-inch semiactive laser-guided projectile, which has been under scrutiny in recent months,<sup>18</sup> the problem will be narrowed even more. But the question remains as to whether the gun gap has been completely closed. The battleships were sold to Congress on the grounds that in their modernized forms, equipped with thirty-two Tomahawk and sixteen Harpoon cruise missiles each, the ships could not only provide NSFS, but could perform other missions as well. The primary intent in bringing the battleships back may have been to close the gun gap, but in a major war at sea, the battleships may in fact be directed to perform some other function. There are only four battleships, and in a major war they may not be available when and where the Marine Corps needs them.

The supply of cruisers and destroyers, with their 5-inch guns, remains fairly tight,<sup>19</sup> and the proposal for the assault ballistic rocket system, which some evidently thought might have been useful for further improving NSFS, was not approved as a new start reportedly because of its effect on the Corps' overall budget ceiling.<sup>20</sup> In light of these considerations, the NSFS situation may warrant further attention.

The tight supply of cruisers and destroyers is related to a final NSE issue—escort for the relatively vulnerable amphibious ships in the amphibious task force (ATF). If the cruiser-destroyer force must first satisfy the needs of carrier battle groups, relatively few cruisers and destroyers may remain available for other formations, including ATFs, placing limits on the ATF's deployment flexibility. The cruiser-destroyer situation, however, is being reassessed,<sup>21</sup> and if this reassessment leads to a reduction in the required number of cruisers and destroyers per carrier—the main determinant of the cruiser-destroyer force-level objective—then additional cruisers and destroyers may become available for the ATFs.

### *Air Defense*

Three concerns related to air defense have been expressed. The first is the sufficiency of point-defense anti-air warfare assets on amphibious ships, and this has led to legislative language preventing the replacement of the LHA's basic point-defense missile systems by Phalanx close-in weapon-system guns.<sup>22</sup> A second relates to the ability of the Corps to provide adequate airborne escort for the currently unarmed MV-22.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the greatest area of concern in air defense, however, relates to the ground troops and whether, even with the protection provided by the air wing, they will be adequately defended against air attack, particularly by low-level targets.<sup>24</sup> Many Western ground forces, including the U.S. Army, are currently struggling with this requirement, so the Marine Corps' evident concern is not surprising. The Corps recently announced that it would double

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the planned procurement of the air-defense variant of the LAV (from 65 to 129 units).<sup>25</sup> This increase will improve the situation, but the air-defense variants will not begin to arrive until about 1992, and even after they have entered the force, the question remains as to whether they will completely solve the problem.

### *Firepower*

When the Corps doubled the planned buy of the air-defense variant of the LAV, it had to give up something in the LAV procurement plan (since it was restricted to a total of 758 LAVs). The item eliminated was the assault-gun variant of the LAV, which the Corps had been studying for some time. This variant was quite expensive, and purchasing it would have strained funding for other programs. But the cancellation of the assault-gun variant raised the question of whether the Marine Corps ground troops would have an adequate large-caliber direct-fire capability.<sup>26</sup> A related concern is whether Marine ground troops have adequate antitank weapons—another issue also troubling to many Western ground forces.<sup>27</sup>

These are but the latest incarnations of the firepower issue, and, to some degree, the Corps is in a no-win situation. Firepower and mobility are at odds with one another, and satisfying both the advocates of firepower and the advocates of mobility is difficult. For example, the Corps was criticized for being too lightly armed, but upon selecting the longer-ranged, heavy-caliber M198 as its new howitzer, it ran into criticism on the piece's mobility limitations. One way to resolve the dilemma of firepower versus mobility is to examine the characteristics of expected opposition forces and to tailor Marine Corps forces accordingly. But this is not an easy solution to apply because it cuts across yet another stated Marine Corps concern—namely, the need to avoid specialization and to maintain forces that can respond to a spectrum of contingencies (from crisis intervention to global war) in a wide range of potential operating environments. Given the competing needs for firepower, mobility, *and* scenario flexibility, the best solution may be an imperfect one in which the Corps hedges its bets and strikes an uneasy (and probably ever-shifting) balance among them.<sup>28</sup>

### *Command, Control, and Communication and Counterelectronic Warfare*

The amphibious assault is one of the most complex military operations that can be undertaken, and this fact is strongly reflected in the Corps' command, control, and communication (C<sup>3</sup>) requirements and the resulting

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potential vulnerability of Marine Corps operations to enemy electronic warfare. The Corps' C<sup>3</sup> and counterelectronic-warfare requirements have always been considerable, but they have been increased by the new demands of the over-the-horizon assault concept.<sup>29</sup> The question is whether the Corps' capabilities will keep pace with new assault equipment, tactics, and doctrine. C<sup>3</sup> problems exposed in past operations have been redressed, and this is heartening. But each operation is unique and has the potential to expose a unique set of shortcomings, so there will probably always be new and unexpected C<sup>3</sup> problems. Because of this, equipment, tactics, and doctrine should be designed to work fairly well even when command and control links are imperfect or even poor.

### *Manpower*

If the Corps is essentially a readiness-oriented force of fighting men—a bunch of guys with guns—then no list of challenges for the Corps would be complete without some mention of manpower. As a way of limiting military spending, Congress in recent years has limited the increases in authorized manpower endstrengths requested by the services. This is already leading to problems for the Navy, where the authorized rate of growth, if continued, would leave the Navy well short of the personnel it says it needs to staff the 600-ship navy of the early 1990s. The question is whether this issue will begin to pinch the Corps as well. For FY 1987, the Corps was authorized an endstrength increase of eight hundred people, a little more than half the requested increase of fifteen hundred. Although the seven hundred spots not authorized may not seem like many, the Corps is evidently fairly tight in manpower and its requirements in many cases are tied to new equipment programs already in progress.<sup>30</sup>

### **Summary**

The burden of the foregoing is not that the Marine Corps is going to hell in a hand basket. To the contrary, by virtually all accounts the Corps is a much-improved force compared to what it was five or ten years ago. It appears to be dealing with shortages in several areas. Some of these shortages began to develop in the 1970s, and some will take years to eliminate. But the Corps takes pride in its ability to make the best of what it has, and it certainly has much more to work with than it did in previous years.

It bears repeating that the concerns I have discussed are what I hear when I put my ear to the ground. Some of these issues may not be valid, and those that are may in time be redressed by current or proposed programs. And even if all of them are valid, they by no means amount to the decline and fall of

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the Corps. If many of them reflect misconceptions, the Corps may benefit from being alerted to them, and the rest of us will benefit from having them clarified. Those that are valid can contribute to an assessment of the state of the Marine Corps and the Navy today.

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## Notes

1. The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Congressional Research Service or the Library of Congress.
2. George Akst, "Deployment Concepts," in Part One of this volume.
3. Harlan K. Ullman, "The U.S. Marine Corps and the Demands of the 21st Century," *Amphibious Warfare: The Crucial Aspects* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Monch Publishing Group, 1986), 2.
4. The Corps also benefits from having received praise on its management of acquisitions. See Col. Galen [pseud.], "In Matching Mobility and Firepower, the Marines Moved Out, the Army Moved Paper," *Armed Forces Journal International* (May 1986): 32-33; Michael Ganley, "Are the Marines the New Masters of the Weapons Acquisition Process?" *Armed Forces Journal International* (October 1985): 98-101.
5. House Report 99-1001 on S. 2638, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1987*, 456-57.
6. For a short but lucid discussion of this issue, see Alvin H. Bernstein, "U.S. Has No Strategy for Intervention," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 November 1986, 22.
7. Joseph F. Jennings, "Comment & Discussion," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (February 1985): 1820; G. Pat Tierney, "AV-8B/LAMPS Mk-III LHD-Class Ships," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (November 1984): 140-145; "The LHD and Sea Control," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (October 1985): 147-150; and Robert H. Gormley, "Comment & Discussion," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (April 1986): 94.
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  29. For a discussion of C<sup>3</sup> requirements for amphibious operations, see James T. Westwood, "Marine Amphibious Warfare: The Crucial C<sup>3</sup>I Aspect," in *Amphibious Warfare: The Crucial Aspects*, 7-11. See also L. E. Obenhaus, "Marine Air Command and Control Modernization," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (December 1986): 98-101. In a report on the recent Northern Wedding exercise, which emphasized amphibious operations, one observer noted some difficulties in communications and mentioned the lack of the Naval Tactical Data System on the amphibious ships. See Desmond Wettern, "Northern Wedding: Plus—and Minus Aspects," *Navy International* (November 1986): 697.
  30. Mel Jones, "Marines Concerned Over Tight 1987 Manpower Funds," *Navy Times*, 24 November 1986, 2.

## Commentary

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*RAdm. W. Lewis Chatham, USN*

As director of the Strike and Amphibious Warfare Division of Naval Operations (OP-954), I am responsible not only for strike and amphibious warfare but also for antisurface, mine, chemical, special, and inshore undersea warfare and nonnuclear ordnance. Each of these areas has its own set of objectives, which are evaluated by OP-954 in an annual warfare-appraisal process.

The Navy and Marine Corps have recently procured an unprecedented number of amphibious vehicles. The air-cushioned landing craft (LCAC) and the dock landing ship LSD-41 will be prized assets; the LHD-1 *Wasp*-class amphibious assault ships, aviation logistics support ships, hospital ships, and the MV-22A Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft are under development.

The Marine Corps has made improvements in its task forces, both in terms of training and equipment. Marine amphibious units (MAUs) now have the support of the AV-8B Harrier aircraft and have been trained to perform special operations, which gives the fleet commander a better capability to respond to crises.

Aside from this progress, OP-954 and Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, are working together to resolve a number of problems. One of the top items is the effect of mine warfare on amphibious operations. Clearing mines from shallow water is a tremendous challenge, requiring the expertise of both the technical and military communities. Lasers, line charges, and helicopters are all potential solutions, but the experts must work together to determine the best and most affordable way to handle this delicate problem.

Navy close air support is another issue that requires attention. Few of the Navy's young aviators who fly strike and attack aircraft from carriers have experience executing close air support. Aviation training programs are correcting this deficiency. Marine squadrons now work with Navy air wings, and the Navy Strike Warfare Center has built a close relationship with Marine

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Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One. As a result of this joint effort to redirect aviation training, Navy aircrews can give better support to marines in the early days of an assault.

Operating forces have difficulty achieving the ideal of conducting exercises at regular intervals. The commanders in chief would like to increase the scope, complexity, and frequency of amphibious exercises, but they need the support of both Navy and Marine Corps planners. In my duties as the commander of Task Force 70/77 in the western Pacific, I was fortunate to be able to work with many fine marines stationed in Okinawa. Together, we were able to combine amphibious task forces and the carrier battle group to perform increasingly complex operations, which culminated in the Team Spirit exercise near Korea. Such operations are becoming more challenging for marines and naval officers in the fleet because of the increased demands on their time due to the higher tempo of operations. Navy and Marine Corps personnel, including those in the reserves, are ready to take on this challenge. However, some staff may need to be reorganized to ensure that sufficient personnel are available to execute operations properly.

Naval surface fire support (NSFS) is being enhanced as a result of improvements to the 16-inch projectile and the procurement of the 5-inch semiactive laser-guided projectile. Paying for these systems is the biggest challenge to NSFS, however, and the Navy and Marine Corps must work this problem out together.

Amphibious lift ships are in danger of becoming obsolete. The Navy-Marine Corps team must resolve this problem before the turn of the century when many amphibious ships reach the end of their planned service lines. The assault options the Marines are capable of and the various employment options the Navy can provide do in fact place the Navy-Marine team at the tip of the sword. Today, because of the modernization efforts of the past and the dedication of fine professionals throughout the naval service, the team is more ready and more capable than it has been within recent memory. Personnel are trained and ready to respond and fight as they have not been in a long time.

I have mentioned a few of my concerns. Many of these issues are already being addressed. Some can be solved, but some can only be improved. It is imperative that military planners make the right choices in the near future. The defense budget, of course, is a major factor in these decisions. The concept of a budget with a growth rate of zero has been put forth. Some planners would say that it is indeed optimistic to believe that a ready fighting force can be maintained on such a budget. If one follows the growth of the existing budget out to year 1990 and, instead of that growth, projects zero growth across the board, the shortage is \$15 billion for fiscal year 1990 alone, just for the Department of the Navy. The amphibious warfare area will have to share in

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that shortage, which means that existing Marine Corps programs will have to be stretched out or cut. There are some tough decisions ahead, and planners must remember that the goal for the future is to provide the National Command Authorities with a superior fighting force capable of responding worldwide and accomplishing the task at hand.

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## **The Uses of Marine Forces: Major Conflicts**

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## Introduction

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*Col. John E. Greenwood, USMC (Ret.)*

Strategists define major conflict as a war that pits the United States and its NATO and Pacific allies against the Soviet Union and the powers of the Warsaw Pact. In this section, we will discuss how the Navy-Marine Corps team—particularly the Marine portion of it—is apt to be employed in such a conflict.

Marines go to war, not as separate divisions, wings, and logistic units, but as Marine air-ground task forces. These combat formations have many distinguishing characteristics and capabilities, but there are five that I want to highlight. These are the characteristics that collectively distinguish the Marine Corps from the other armed forces. If the Marines are to be used wisely and to their greatest advantage, their naval orientation, strategic mobility, readiness, forcible-entry capability, and flexibility are the main characteristics that should be exploited.

***Naval orientation.*** By law, organization, equipment, doctrine, training, and preference, the Marines are maritime forces, “soldiers of the sea,” designed first and foremost for projecting combat power ashore and serving as part of a naval campaign. It is this ingrained characteristic that makes foolish any charge that the Marine Corps is only a second, and unnecessary, land army.

***Strategic mobility.*** Marines are part of, and benefit from, an intricate and flexible strategic mobility system, one that enables them to be committed worldwide in amphibious assaults or as maritime prepositioning forces or as airlifted units. This mobility system comprises air transport, sea transport, forward basing, prepositioning, and a highly refined logistics infrastructure. Sealift—the ships and the goods they carry—is the key to the Corps’ mobility. All Marine Corps equipment and structure are chosen and designed with this mobility system in mind. Strategic mobility is the Marine Corps’ greatest contribution to national security.

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**Readiness.** For nearly a century, a slogan and recruiting theme of the Marines has been "First to Fight." They have prided themselves on their ability to move immediately on order and perform effectively on arrival. Marines have been willing to pay the high price for readiness, and it has been invaluable to the nation on many occasions. Doubtless it will be so in the future as well.

**Forcible entry.** The ability to send ground forces from the sea into a hostile defended area enables the United States to conduct raids, to seize critical areas, to establish footholds for larger follow-on forces, to execute tactical turning movements to support feints or deception operations, and to force the enemy to defend all vulnerable coastal areas.

**Flexibility.** Operational or contingency plans developed in peacetime are notoriously inaccurate in foreseeing the actual events of war. They are valuable for training and preparation but hardly ever fit wartime circumstances. A vital characteristic, then, is the ability to plan for and meet the situation that actually occurs. Because of its emphasis on readiness and strategic mobility, because of its ability to organize tasks and tailor forces to suit the specific mission at hand, and because it prepares its soldiers for diverse types of warfare in diverse climates, the Marine Corps offers the nation unusual flexibility. A Marine air-ground task force can be designed for high- or low-intensity conflict, air operations, base defense, combined-arms combat in a mechanized environment, and for many other missions, each requiring a somewhat different mix of manpower, firepower, and vehicles.

Because of these distinctive characteristics, as well as the size and array of its weapons systems, the Marine Corps is an excellent source of immediately available combat power. In a major conflict, strategists would quickly find a proliferation of missions for which the Marines are particularly well suited. Marines would work with the Navy as it carried out its missions around the world, achieving sea control, protecting forward bases, controlling choke points, and depriving opponents of intelligence sources and access to maritime areas and resources. The Corps' ready and flexible forces could easily be committed to destructive raids; to base, port, or airfield security missions; to maritime patrols; or to a wide variety of other tasks. In a major conflict, Marine Corps units will be sought for a variety of purposes that have nothing to do with the mission of amphibious forcible entry. Aviation, engineering, communications, and other elements of the Marine air-ground task forces are certain to be in demand to support other forces.

The challenge facing strategists is to commit Marine forces in ways that maximize their capabilities and cause the greatest disruption to and adverse impact on the enemy. Any major conflict is certain to unfold differently than anticipated. Peacetime concentrations of strength, defensive preparations, and major exercises that suggest contingency planning or reveal mobility can deter opponents, but can also prompt them to devise alternative approaches. The

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need to improvise and react to the unexpected inevitably enhances the value of the Marine Corps and places a high premium on its readiness, flexibility, and diverse capabilities.

How can the Marine Corps best serve the national interest? To answer this strategists must use several methods of analysis and look not only at the characteristics of the Marine Corps that I have summarized, but also beyond them to the probable consequences of its use. To capitalize on one particular strength, the National Command Authorities must sacrifice others. What sacrifices can be made safely, while maintaining the power of the amphibious forces? One strategy is to hold amphibious forces in reserve, forcing the enemy to defend many widely scattered areas; this strategy can preserve the strategic initiative and force the enemy to confront strategic uncertainty. Once U.S. amphibious forces are committed or expended piecemeal in lesser missions, however, uncertainties vanish and the enemy is able to respond to emerging actions.

A bold, imaginative strategist may someday turn away from the Corps' tradition of being the first to fight and opt instead for holding these forces as a strategic reserve for use in a major conflict. Adhering to a reserve mission to guard against expending Marine Corps capabilities too early, too widely, and in pursuit of too many lesser goals would be difficult. Whether such a course of action could be adopted in the face of so many pressing requirements is open to question, but it is an alternative the strategist must weigh with care. This is the issue addressed in the following discussions.

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# The Amphibious Strategy

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*Col. Laurence R. Medlin, USMC*

## Background

The amphibious strategy is the determination by the Navy and the Marine Corps of the most effective use of amphibious forces in peacetime, crisis, and global conventional war. It is a component of the maritime strategy but articulated separately to focus on the contributions that amphibious forces make to the global maritime elements of our national military strategy. The amphibious strategy provides a conceptual framework for the deployment and employment of amphibious forces.

The strategy takes into full account current national and coalition guidance against the backdrop of the threat. Embedded within the strategy are the strategic concepts and plans of our unified commanders and their naval component commanders. It portrays the war-fighting campaigns as outlined by our war-fighting commanders in chief (CINCs).

Strategy is often defined as a design for applying means to ends. In the amphibious strategy, the means are current forces, so the strategy is executable today. The ends—our objectives—are deterrence and, if deterrence should fail, the termination of war on favorable terms. All operations envisioned in the strategy are combined operations.

The national military strategy has three essential elements: deterrence, forward defense, and allied solidarity. The two principal sources of our national strategy are National Security Decision Directives, or NSDDs, and our network of alliances and treaties. The United States is committed to seven formal alliances involving forty-three countries and to nineteen other significant bilateral agreements. These relationships form the skeletal framework of a global-coalition defense posture and a set of global commitments to which our national military strategy must be responsive. In defending our allies, we defend ourselves.

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In addition to these principal sources of national military strategy, various documents articulate the strategy and provide strategy guidance to the CINCs. The Defense Guidance is the strategic direction by the Secretary of Defense for the development of future forces; it provides guidance for force planning and operational goals. The Joint Strategic Planning Document, or JSPD, provides advice from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to the National Command Authorities (NCA) concerning national objectives, policies, and strategies. The Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) provides near-term planning guidance to operational commanders in chief of unified and specified commands. All of these documents emphasize a national commitment to maritime superiority in key ocean areas.

All of this maritime guidance can be summarized in two sets of broad strategic objectives under the headings of deterrence and war-fighting. For deterrence, the objectives are to operate in conjunction with allies and sister services, to provide a positive peacetime presence, to control crises, and to deter war. If deterrence fails, then the objectives for war-fighting are to help terminate the war favorably by destroying enemy maritime forces, to project power ashore, to protect sea lines of communication, and to support the land battle. The objectives of the amphibious strategy are derived from and fully supportive of this national and coalition guidance; they stress forward presence and global flexibility.

The strategy also recognizes that growing Soviet naval power is an important factor in the Soviet peacetime strategy of increased political influence and in the balance of forces in the less likely event of direct military confrontation between the superpowers. It is important to note that the strategy is not intended as a strict blueprint for transitioning from peacetime to conflict with the Soviet Union. Instead, it articulates the utility of amphibious forces in achieving national objectives in separate, distinct instances across the entire spectrum of possible conflict, from peacetime presence to crisis response to global war.

## **Peacetime Presence**

The mission of amphibious forces in peacetime is designed to support diplomatic initiatives, deter hostilities, and prepare for possible crises and war. Presence enables us to thwart the Soviet's peacetime strategy of encroachment and increased political influence and to deter state-supported terrorism. Amphibious forces contribute directly to these broad mission objectives by conducting continuous forward deployments that visibly support U.S. commitments abroad. These highly trained, credible forces provide a wide range of options to the National Command Authorities (figure 1).

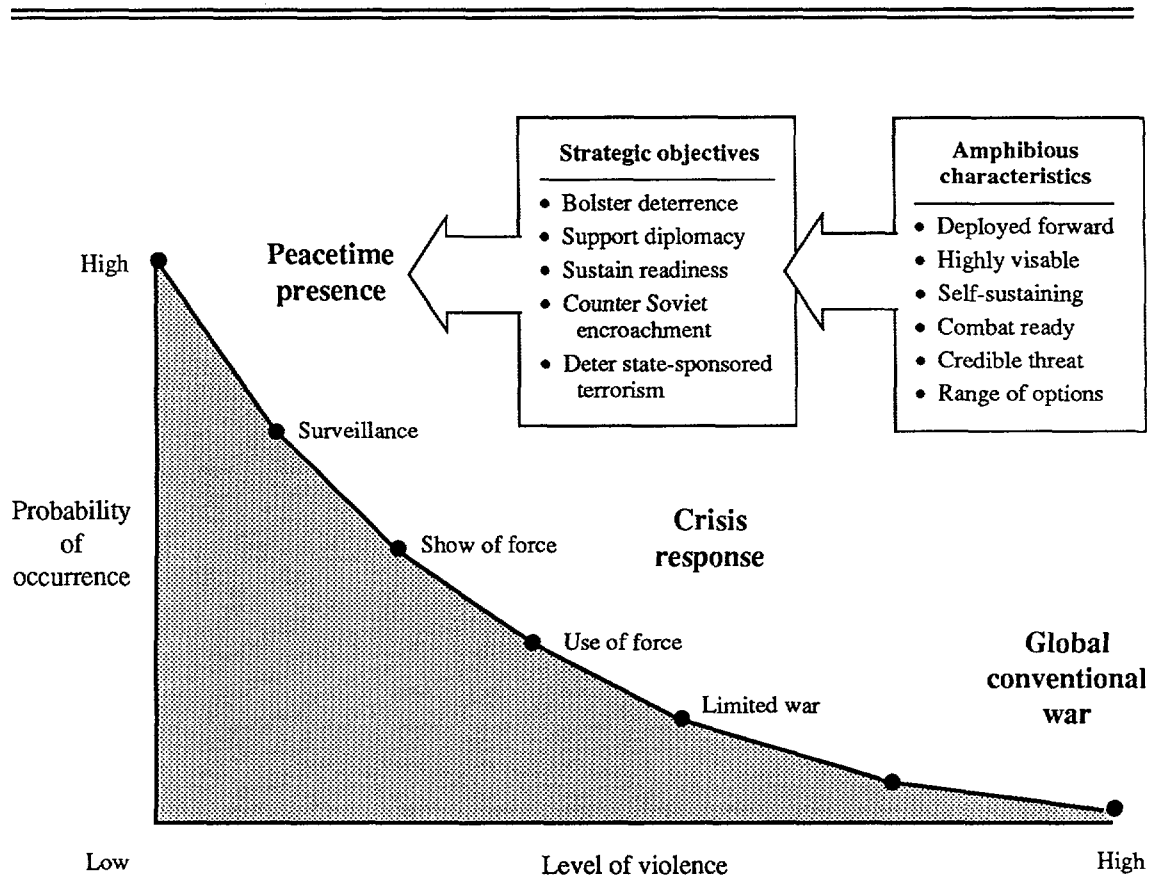


Figure 1: Amphibious forces in the application of maritime power: peacetime presence

The peacetime presence of our Navy and Marine Corps team is constant and worldwide. The general-purpose naval forces that normally support this mission include the forward-deployed operational units of the Sixth and Seventh Fleets. Marine amphibious units, or MAUs, embarked aboard Navy amphibious ships are an integral part of this forward presence. These forces demonstrate U.S. resolve, encourage allies and friends, influence neutrals, and deter or reduce the influence of adversaries.

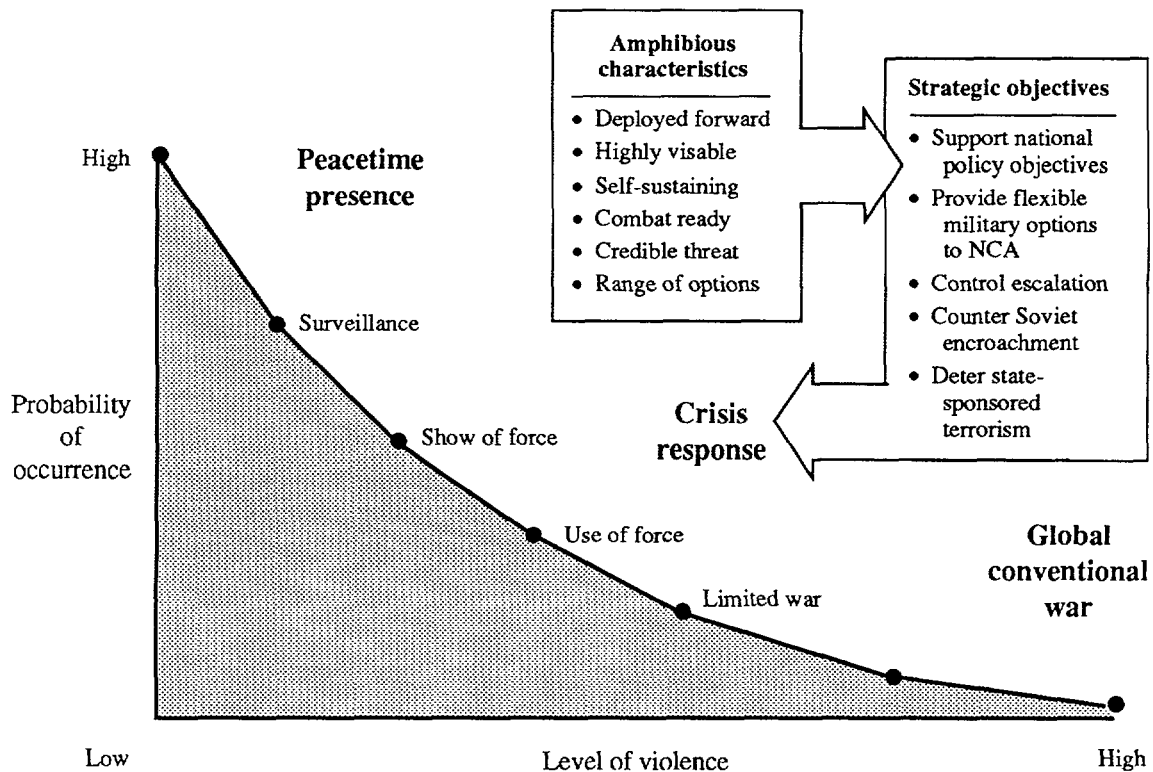
Amphibious forces also participate in a demanding series of worldwide exercises. These exercises strengthen the cohesion of alliances and enhance readiness and war-fighting capabilities. The demonstration of alliance war-fighting capability is probably the greatest deterrent to Soviet hegemony in peacetime and to crisis escalation.

### Crisis Response

Crisis response is a second major role for naval forces. Since World War II, naval forces have participated in 80 percent of the crises in which the United States has been involved, and the primary instruments of crisis response

have been carrier battle groups and amphibious task forces. Our strategic objectives in crisis response include the following: (1) to support national policy objectives, (2) to provide flexible military options to the National Command Authorities, (3) to control escalation, (4) to counter Soviet encroachment, and (5) to deter state-supported terrorism. Although forces are structured for the worst-case scenario—global confrontation with the Soviet Union—we must also be prepared to deal with the more likely situations on the lower-intensity end of the conflict spectrum, such as insurgency, terrorism, and regional crisis.

Amphibious forces have inherent characteristics that make them a particularly useful naval instrument in crisis resolution. These include forward deployment near areas of likely crisis, high visibility, and relative independence from foreign basing or overflight agreements. Amphibious forces are also logistically self-sustaining, have high levels of combat readiness, have acceptance as a credible threat with historical precedence in response to crises, and provide a wide range of combat and noncombat options for crisis response (figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Amphibious forces in the application of maritime power: crisis response

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A number of constraints, however, limit effective reaction to these most likely crisis scenarios. U.S. military presence in a country may be destabilizing to friendly governments or may undesirably escalate the crisis. Neighboring nations may be reluctant to allow U.S. access to airfields and support facilities. In addition, overflight rights may be denied, thus inhibiting U.S. ability to transport combat forces to a crisis area in a timely manner by any other means but from the sea. Such restrictions on presence and access dictate that we structure our forces for intervention based on seapower and a strong, credible capability for amphibious entry.

Because of their flexibility and mobility, amphibious forces are especially well suited to deal with crises and to overcome limits on access and presence. Amphibious forces can operate within very demanding operational and logistic constraints. These forces bring their logistics with them, and, independent of facilities ashore, they can remain over the horizon and out of sight until projection ashore is required. Once employed, Marine forces are especially capable of sustained operations in an expeditionary environment.

By virtue of these capabilities, amphibious forces can deal effectively with—and contain—crises, thereby controlling escalation. They are strong, yet easy and cheap signals for deterrence, as well as a credible war-fighting force if hostilities begin. Likewise, amphibious forces are particularly well suited for reprisal operations against state-supported terrorism.

## Confrontation with the Soviet Union

Although our efforts in peacetime and crisis are directed toward avoiding direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union, a credible military strategy must consider the possibility that deterrence could fail. The contribution of amphibious forces cannot be properly understood outside of the context of Soviet perceptions regarding such a confrontation. Current intelligence indicates that although the Soviets would certainly prefer a single-theater, conventional, *blitzkrieg* type of war, they nevertheless believe that warfare between the coalitions would be global in scope.

The primary naval tasks for the Soviets in a global conflict are the protection of their ballistic-missile nuclear submarines (their strategic reserve) and the defense of maritime approaches to the homeland to prevent attack by nuclear-capable enemy air and sea platforms. The Soviet concepts of sea control and sea denial determines their method of executing their primary naval war-fighting tasks. Close to their coastline, the Soviets will present a multidimensional threat of air, surface, and subsurface means. Farther out, the threat will be mostly from air and subsurface means. Beyond these areas, the threat will be largely from submarines. Furthermore, the Soviets consider control of adjacent land areas essential to their concept of sea control and sea

denial. Several allied countries and many of our forward naval forces are within or adjacent to these areas of sea control or denial.

Naval forces can defeat the Soviet strategy by precluding their successes, interrupting their timelines, attriting their forces, and exploiting their vulnerabilities. The Soviets are convinced that the planning and decision-making processes in a war with the West will be decisive. They have centralized and structured these processes to minimize risk and uncertainty and to maximize control. Amphibious forces are ideally suited to play on these sensitivities. One key way of doing this is to demonstrate a capability to control both the scope and duration of a potential conflict—which is a key element of the amphibious strategy (figure 3). The objective is to convince the Soviets that the risks of aggression are far greater than the benefits, thus causing the Soviets to stop their military actions, reevaluate their intentions, and desist from further aggression.

There are three phases in the amphibious strategy as it relates to global coalition conventional warfare. These phases are not timelines, but instead a broad outline of what must be accomplished in a conflict with the Soviet Union. Above all, naval forces want to deter war, but if that fails, they want to seize the initiative, and then take the fight to the enemy.

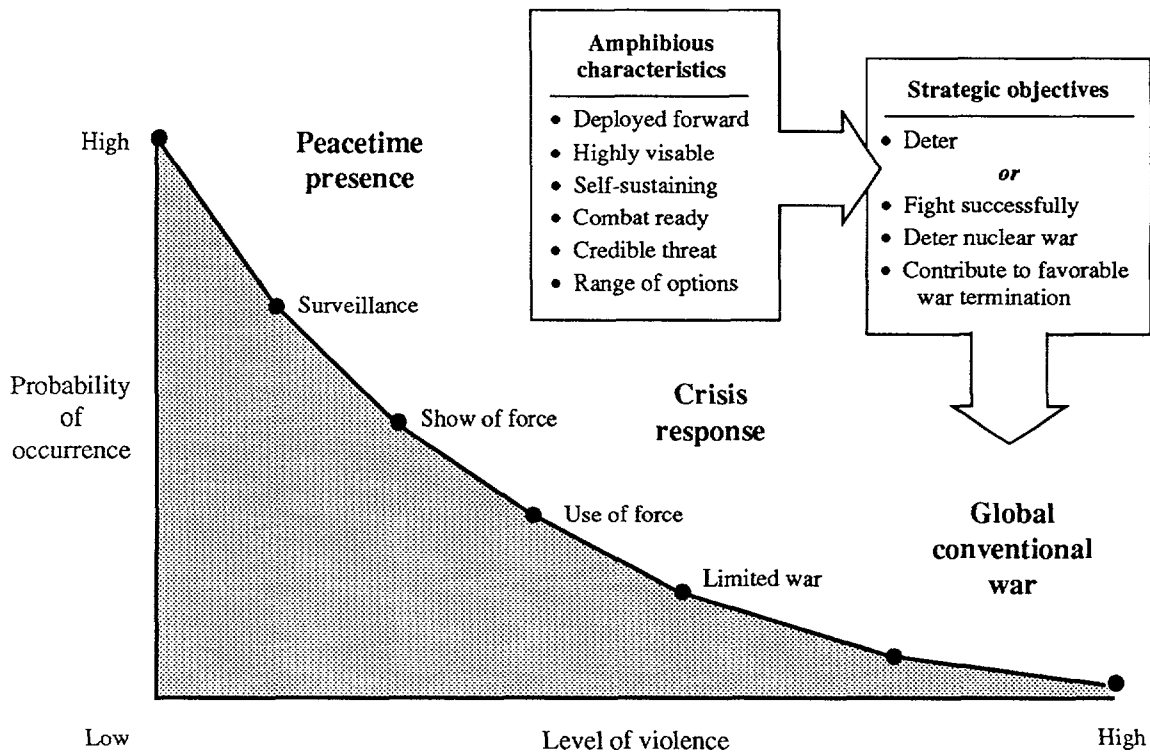


Figure 3: Amphibious forces in the application of maritime power: global conventional war

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### *Phase I: Deterrence or Transition*

Phase I is a period of rising tensions in a serious confrontation with the Soviets. The major effort in this phase is to move forward quickly, to take the high ground, so to speak, to cede no key area by default.

In phase I, the national military strategy has the following goals: (1) to deter the Soviets and their clients from escalating the conflict, (2) to prepare for global war, and (3) to bolster U.S. allies and friendly states. Amphibious forces are prepared to accomplish specific tasks to support these phase I goals: (1) to control strategic chokepoints, (2) to deny key areas and bases, (3) to establish advanced naval bases, (4) to integrate with allies, and (5) to enhance key allied defensive postures.

Timely political decisions are necessary, however, if these tasks are to be executed effectively. Because the repositioning of deployed forces takes time, early movement of naval forces provides much more latitude to strategic planners both initially and later on.

The major effect of naval forces in phase I is to rapidly establish forward presence. We want to demonstrate the U.S. capability to deal not only with the crisis but also to alter the boundaries of a potential conflict if the National Command Authorities so choose. The minimum disposition of amphibious forces might include airlifted elements of a Marine amphibious battalion (MAB) to Norway, MABs forward in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, assault follow-on echelons in trace of assault echelons, maritime-prepositioning-ship (MPS) squadrons to potential employment areas for subsequent marry-up with their designated MABs, and reserve forces activated as necessary. Initial employment options, when supported by carrier and battleship battle groups, could be to stabilize the crisis situation wherever it may be; to sail to critical forward positions such as the United Kingdom, Norway, or Japan; or to sail to critical chokepoints such as Jutland, Turkey, or the Straits of Hormuz. Again, these options provide strong, yet relatively inexpensive signals for deterrence, and lead to preparedness for war should deterrence fail.

Just as naval forces support land operations, land forces support naval operations. Other major force movements in phase I are designed to produce strong leverage for deterrence. The U.S. Army would focus on Central Europe, but also reinforce key islands and littoral areas. The U.S. Air Force would also deploy to Europe, as well as the flanks of NATO, the Far East, and elsewhere. Allied ground, air, and naval forces would also establish forward positions early on.

The result of phase I would be a series of mutually supporting air, land, and naval forces converging at strategic locations around the globe to produce strong leverage for deterrence and to prepare for war. Amphibious forces

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contribute significantly in this phase because of their inherent capability for flexible response. Amphibious forces can place pressure on those littoral areas considered valuable to the Soviets, presenting a broad strategic problem to convince them that massing for action in a single theater will not succeed. If naval forces can maintain forward pressure and strategic flexibility, then deterrence rather than war should result.

### *Phase II: Seize the Initiative*

With both Soviet and allied forces moving into place, a Soviet attack could occur at any time. If so, war would be likely to spread to a number of theaters, especially at sea. During this phase, U.S. and allied naval forces would operate globally to seize the initiative, while NATO ground and air forces would fight to maintain a cohesive defense in central Europe.

We cannot discuss war at sea without considering the character of the Soviet land campaign. Although the primary thrust would be against central Europe, smaller attacks to seize northern Norway, the Danish straits, and the Turkish straits would support overall strategic objectives. If their expected efforts at pressuring the Japanese to remain neutral fail, the Soviets are likely to attack them, initially by air.

If a Soviet attack did occur, our initial course of action would be to counter the attack, attrite enemy forces, and seize the initiative, with the overall objective of establishing forward maritime superiority in order to defend allied territory, thus widening the Soviets' strategic problem and putting them on the defensive. In this effort, the role of amphibious forces is to establish the advanced naval bases needed to support naval campaigns and to seize vital chokepoints to bottle up the Soviet fleet. Amphibious forces can also conduct assault operations, stabilize vital areas, defend key allied territory, and support maritime air defense.

While Soviet and Warsaw Pact attacks on the central front must be contained, amphibious forces can retaliate on the flanks in places of our choosing. In phase II, the arrival in theater of amphibious and maritime-prepositioning-force MABs, assault follow-on echelons, and Marine amphibious force (MAF) headquarters elements allow composite MAFs for subsequent operations to be formed. Areas on the Soviet periphery that are options for amphibious operations in support of naval campaigns include northern Norway, Jutland, Thrace, Hokkaido and the Kuril Islands, or Southeast Asia. Operations in these areas would secure U.S. naval flanks and provide favorable positions for follow-on, counteroffensive operations. This is another example of how amphibious forces can complicate the Soviet strategic equation by adversely affecting their calculated correlation of forces, increasing their perception of risk, and adversely affecting their perception of control.

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The significance of strategic lift and logistics in all three phases of the strategy must be noted here. In the initial phase, forward positioning cannot be sustained without considerable reinforcement and logistical support. In later phases, security of the SLOCs takes on added importance, as does sustaining combat logistics and oil lines of supply for our own and allied forces. In all phases, the protection of the littorals vital to our naval flanks by amphibious forces enhances SLOC security.

The desired result of phase II is to achieve forward sea control inside the Soviet sea control and denial areas. This favorable outcome would have several positive effects: it would reduce Soviet options and provide better positions for further naval operations and better positions for naval forces to project power ashore.

### ***Phase III: Carry the Fight to the Enemy***

Success in phase II allows maritime forces to carry the fight to the enemy in phase III. The strategic objective in phase III is to force the Soviets into termination of war on terms that are favorable to the United States and its allies. Primary tasks for maritime forces in this phase include supporting counteroffensive operations, restoring allied territory, and establishing a credible threat to Soviet and Warsaw Pact territory. As counteroffensives are mounted, strike and amphibious operations would accelerate in order to gain valuable leverage and to keep critical SLOCs open.

Again, the massing of maritime assets in support of land counter-offensives provides strong leverage for ending a war. In phase III, full global pressure would be applied. As a result of building MAFs in phase II, amphibious forces would be capable of initiating MAF operations in phase III. The options would be a MAB-size assault force in two oceans simultaneously or a MAF-size assault capability if forces and shipping are concentrated in a single theater. Strategic options include MAF operations in continued support of naval campaigns in areas most sensitive to the Soviets, such as the Kola Peninsula or the littorals of the Baltic Sea, Black Sea, or Sea of Japan or Okhotsk. Such operations would deny the Soviets the ability to put pressure on allied flanks and at the same time deny them a secure flank. In short, the Soviets' global reach would be rolled back, and, more importantly, allied forces would be in a position to threaten the Soviet homeland.

The desired result in phase III is to put enough pressure on the Soviets to convince them they have nothing to gain by continuing the war nor by escalating to weapons of mass destruction. Naval forces, particularly amphibious forces, make a significant strategic contribution by providing this pressure.

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At this point of the conflict, the Soviets would see their strategy defeated, their global reach amputated through the destruction of their navy, and their homeland threatened. The United States would see its strategy as successful, its coalitions intact, and its naval forces sustaining a forward global presence in support of our vital national interests.

## Conclusion

The national military strategy gives direction to our global maritime forces and is further articulated by the maritime and amphibious strategies. The amphibious strategy addresses the full spectrum of conflict from peacetime to crisis to global conventional war. The unique combat capability of the Marine Corps is as an amphibious force to be employed in a wide variety of contingencies and options demanded by ever-present challenges to national interests. The expeditionary characteristics of an amphibious force in readiness is precisely what is needed to demonstrate a credible, logistically feasible, and timely global conventional response to the full range of military contingencies. Because of the strategic contribution amphibious forces can make to naval campaigns, the utility of the Marine Corps in the future, as in the past, lies in its preparedness for “service with the fleet.”

## Marines in Europe

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*Mackubin T. Owens, Jr.*

Fifteen years ago, few military analysts favored the idea of employing marines in Europe in the event of a major conflict. The United States, after all, had army and air forces in place that were deemed capable of deterring or defeating a Soviet attack on western Europe; the United States also had the backing of NATO allies and a technological edge over the Soviets in nuclear weaponry. Maritime forces, particularly the Marine Corps, were seen as the means for dealing with contingencies outside Europe (with the exception of the Mediterranean theater). The aggressiveness of Communist China, the proliferation of “wars of national liberation,” the Vietnam War, and the Cuban missile crisis provided plenty for maritime forces to do without involving them in the European theater.

Perceptions began to change when U.S. forces withdrew from Vietnam. The defeat led U.S. policymakers to reevaluate the utility of U.S. intervention in the Third World. The so-called Vietnam syndrome, the view that U.S. intervention was both immoral and doomed to failure, resulted in smaller defense budgets, and justifying expenditures on any area of American interest outside Europe became difficult. Naval forces were reduced, and with them, the capability to project sea power ashore. The renewed emphasis on the NATO central front in Europe, combined with deteriorating power-projection capabilities, led some to question the value of retaining a Marine Corps oriented primarily toward amphibious warfare.

In their 1976 study *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?*, Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record suggested the Marine Corps should deemphasize its amphibious role:

[The Marine Corps] must shift its principal focus from seaborne assault to a more appropriate mission, such as garrisoning America's remaining outposts in Asia or defending Central Europe. The golden age of amphibious warfare is now the domain of historians, and the Marine Corps

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no longer needs a unique mission to justify its existence. . . .  
The future of the Marine Corps as an instrument of American  
power will depend on a successful resolution of [these]  
issues. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The authors acknowledged that the Marine Corps provides a unique and valuable service, but they believed this service could not be used in the crisis areas that were backed by U.S. policy. They summarized the political situation this way:

The United States Marine Corps . . . is well suited for amphibious operations in the Third World, where U.S. intervention now seems increasingly unlikely, and less well suited for combat in the key areas—Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Middle East—to whose security U.S. policy now assigns highest priority and against which technologically advanced opponents are likely to be deployed.<sup>2</sup>

Binkin and Record suggested four alternative postures for the Marine Corps. All four proposals entailed reductions in the size of the Marine Corps, including a two-thirds reduction in the number of active fighter and attack squadrons. Three of the four alternatives would have divorced the Marine Corps from the Navy and made it merely another land force, in essence an adjunct to the Army. Binkin and Record's alternatives were the following:

- Eliminate one and two-thirds Marine amphibious forces (MAFs) and employ the remaining one and one-third MAFs in a reduced amphibious role.
- Replace the Army with the Marine Corps in Asia.
- Use the Marine Corps as a quick-reaction force capable of performing the airborne mission.
- Team the Marine Corps with the Army to defend NATO's central front.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately for the health of the nation, the assumptions underlying these proposals were soon rendered obsolete by a series of major Third World events: the fall of the Shah of Iran, which led to the 1978 oil embargo; the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Teheran; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; and the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. These events helped policymakers recognize the fallacy of focusing on Europe to the point of excluding other areas of interest. Power projection outside Europe was not dead after all.

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During this turbulent period, attempts were made to sever the Marine Corps from the Navy and transform it into a second land army. The Marine Corps persevered, but its role has been the subject of a debate that continues to this day, both inside and outside the Corps. What should be the role of the Marine Corps in global warfare? Should marines be used in Europe, or should they concentrate on contingencies outside Europe? Would the equipment required to engage Soviet forces in a European scenario undermine the amphibious capability of the Marine Corps?

For participants in this debate, the choice has often appeared to be between a European commitment and the amphibious mission. Either the Marine Corps "heavied up" for the intensity of the "high threat" environment assumed to characterize warfare in the European theater by increasing the number of tanks, tracked vehicles, and heavier caliber artillery, or it continued to function as a light infantry amphibious force for use primarily outside Europe.<sup>5</sup> This is the way the debate proceeded within the Marine Corps in the 1970s, and this dichotomy continues to be expressed in at least some of the current debate, principally by advocates of the "continentalist" approach to the defense of Europe (e.g., Edward Luttwak, Robert Komer, and John Mearsheimer). Continentalists in general maintain that the central front of NATO would be the decisive theater in the event of a war with the Soviet Union and that sea power would have only a marginal impact on the land battle.

But, in fact, changes that have occurred since the debate began make it possible to envision the employment of marines in Europe within the context of amphibious warfare. The first new circumstance is *strategic*: An increasing number of thoughtful analysts believe that naval forces would be heavily involved in the defense of Europe in the event of a Soviet attack in Europe and that such involvement, particularly in a protracted conventional conflict, would need to be much more than passive sea control and could very well make the difference between victory and defeat. The second is *technological*: New equipment has enhanced ship-to-shore movement, which helps protect the amphibious shipping and landing forces. The third is *operational*: Amphibious doctrine is being revised to take advantage of new equipment and to deal more effectively with the Soviet threat.

### **The Strategic Rationale for Employing Marines in Europe**

The geography of Europe offers several opportunities for a naval campaign in which fleet marine forces would play an important role if the Soviets were to launch an attack on the central front. Europe is, after all, a peninsula jutting westward from the Eurasian heartland. The rationale for such naval campaigns is provided by the so-called maritime strategy. Consequently,

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whether or not one believes that the Marine Corps has a role in a major European conflict (and if so, how that role should be fulfilled) depends in large measure on one's view of the maritime strategy.

Much nonsense was written about the maritime strategy, particularly in the early years of its development and articulation. Fortunately for the health of national security policy, the quality of the debate has improved markedly over the last year or so as, in the words of Navy Captain P. M. Swartz, "public commentary gradually shifted from exegeses on the speeches and articles by Secretary Lehman and Ambassador Komer to discussions of the actual Maritime Strategy developed from national guidance by military officers and approved by their civilian leaders."<sup>6</sup> But, as suggested above, critics of the maritime strategy still maintain that resources for the defense of Europe would be better expended to improve forces on the central front than on maritime forces, which, they argue, could have only a peripheral effect on the decisive area of conflict. Thus, the critics reason, if marines were used in Europe at all, they would most likely reinforce army units on the central front. John Mearsheimer, who calls the maritime strategy "a strategic misstep," voices the typical criticism in the following passage:

NATO does not have and is not likely to develop such [an amphibious] capability, if for no other reason than because it would mean taking land forces away from the Central Front. . . . No rational NATO planner would pull forces away from [the] main engagement to attempt a highly risky amphibious operation in the Baltic or Black Sea. In fact, there would undoubtedly be great pressure to use Marine units on the Central Front, in much the same way that their predecessors were used on the Western Front in World War I.<sup>7</sup>

Mearsheimer goes on to say that Marine Corps forces are essentially light infantry, which would be at a disadvantage against the Soviets' heavy formations of motorized rifle and armored divisions. Like many of the critics of the maritime strategy, he does not take into account changes in Marine Corps doctrine, organization, and equipment that in fact enhance the capabilities of Marine units to fight in this environment.

The purpose of this paper is not to defend the maritime strategy *per se*. That has been done more than adequately elsewhere. My own view is that it represents an important advance in the development of a comprehensive approach to fighting a protracted conventional war with the Soviets. But in order to understand the strategic rationale for the employment of marines in Europe, one needs to understand how Europe fits into the maritime strategy.

In 1943 Sir Halford Mackinder, the British geographer and politician, advised that if the Soviet Union conquered the heartland, it would hold the key to world dominance:

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All things considered, the conclusion is unavoidable that if the Soviet Union emerges from this war as the conqueror of Germany, she must rank as the greatest land power on the globe. Moreover, she will be the power in the strategically strongest defensive position. The Heartland is the greatest natural fortress on earth. For the first time in history, it is manned by a garrison sufficient both in number and in quality.<sup>8</sup>

According to Mackinder, the dominant land power of the heartland has the potential to control the Eurasian "World-Island," and once this control is established, the conqueror could gain control of the seas as well and ultimately conquer the world:

The oversetting of the balance of power in favor of the [heartland power], resulting in its expansion over the marginal lands of Euro-Asia, would permit of the use of vast continental resources for fleet building, and the empire of the world would then be in sight.<sup>9</sup>

Mackinder's fear that the dominant power would be the Soviet Union is implicitly recognized in the maritime strategy. The overriding goal of U.S. strategy—indeed, the geopolitical basis of containment—is to keep the Soviet Union landlocked by controlling the rimlands of western Europe, the Levant, and Asia.<sup>10</sup>

Of course neither the continentalists nor the advocates of the maritime strategy deny that preventing the Soviet Union from dominating western Europe is a strategic imperative. The Soviet Union is an aggressive heartland power that combines ideology and military force in a way never seen before. The question is how best to prevent this domination.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British followed a successful insular-maritime approach to the affairs of continental Europe. The British approach was to depend almost exclusively on its sea power and to stay clear of commitment on the continent; through alliances, loans, and grants it would influence the balance of power on the Eurasian land mass. This approach worked for almost a hundred years, from the defeat of Napoleon to the outbreak of World War I. After World War I, Britain once again withdrew its troops from Europe, and the sort of isolationist pacifism that flourished in Britain during those years was a proximate cause of the growth of Nazi Germany. The concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was developed to avoid the mistakes of the pre-World War II years and the great costs of having to attack a fortified Europe defended by a totalitarian power. The lesson of the two European wars of the twentieth century was that Britain's hands-off approach to the continent had actually *increased* the likelihood of war on the continent, which then of necessity drew

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the island powers into the dispute on unfavorable terms. Western policymakers believed that if American power were abruptly withdrawn from Europe, nothing could stop the outward drive of the Soviet Union in its never-ending quest for perfectly secure frontiers. Thus the decision was made to establish NATO, despite the fact that the United States had not signed a peacetime military alliance since the adoption of the Constitution, and despite America's aversion to being bound up with the fate of foreign, particularly European, powers.

The United States learned from Great Britain's successes and failures that a coalition defense is the best way to prevent Soviet domination of Europe. But maritime superiority is the most important U.S. contribution to a coalition defense; NATO requires a strong naval element, and the United States is in the best position to provide it. And the maritime strategy is a coherent approach to utilizing that maritime superiority on a global stage in the event of a Soviet attack on western Europe.<sup>11</sup>

In a conflict with the Soviet Union, the primary value of the U.S. Navy would be to keep members of NATO in the war. Such a task would require that the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) between North America and Europe be secured. NATO's SLOCs can best be protected by allied naval forces defeating Soviet naval forces as far north as possible. For this reason, the maritime strategy places emphasis on holding Norway.

At the outset of a war in Europe, the highest priority of the Soviet forces would most likely be to gain a quick conventional victory. Although the major emphasis would be on the central front, the Soviets would also have a preponderance of forces—air, ground, and naval—for use against key objectives in Norway at the outset of hostilities. The Northern Fleet, for example, has the greatest strike capability of the four Soviet fleets. If the Soviets secured key areas of Norway, the Norwegian Sea would become an extension of the Soviet inner defense zone, and their options for attacks on Iceland and against allied SLOCs would be greatly enhanced.

Thus if the U.S. Marines participated in a naval campaign against the Soviets in Europe, the strategic center of activity would be the northern flank. But the deployment of the forces of the Warsaw Pact and its allies offers the possibility of using the Marine Corps elsewhere in a European conflict—for example, against an exposed Soviet flank in northern Germany. The three most probable Soviet invasion routes are across the North German plain to Hanover, and then northward toward Bremen and Hamburg; through the Göttingen corridor toward the Ruhr; and through the Fulda Gap toward Frankfurt. A major objective of the Soviet forces in the north would be to secure the ports on the North Sea and ultimately the English Channel.

Although Soviet efforts in Europe would most likely be focused on the northern areas, the Soviets would not neglect objectives in southern Europe. Soviet maritime objectives might involve an attack on Thrace to secure the

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Turkish Straits and ensure that Soviet naval forces have access to the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

### **The Northern Flank**

Marines would best serve NATO in Europe as part of a naval campaign to secure the northern flank. If the Soviets were able to control the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic SLOCs and to impede the flow of NATO reinforcements arriving from North America, they could prevail on the central front. Accordingly, since 1977 a Marine amphibious brigade (MAB) has been designated to reinforce Norway in the event of hostilities. In 1981, the United States and Norway signed an agreement allowing the Marine Corps to preposition heavy equipment, supplies, and aviation support equipment for a MAB.

Even though the key to the northern flank is Norway, marines could conceivably be employed elsewhere in the region to support maritime operations. Securing and controlling naval bases in Iceland or Greenland or on other islands would help interdict Soviet operations in the Norwegian Sea against the North Atlantic SLOCs.

### **The Baltic and Northern Germany**

The strategic rationale for employing marines in Europe in areas other than the northern flank depends a great deal on the course of the conflict on the central front. If NATO could contain a Soviet offensive and force the Warsaw Pact powers into a protracted conventional war, then using marines against Soviet maritime flanks would be a valuable strategy. Such operations could constitute part of a NATO counteroffensive and exploit overextended Soviet lines of communication. The strategic rationale for amphibious operations against Jutland, the Kiel Canal, and Schleswig-Holstein, or even to secure objectives in East Germany or Poland from the Baltic would be similar to an objective advanced by Winston Churchill in 1914, which was to outflank the main strength of a Soviet offensive in central Europe, thereby reducing the need for a costly continental counterattack.

Such an employment of marines would constitute an example of “maneuver warfare” at the theater level, which Edward Luttwak explains as follows:

Maneuver is made of circumventing action to bypass the barrier, to outflank the thrust, and to evade the main strength of the enemy in all instances from the weapon design to grand strategy; such maneuver is the product of surprise, deception, and above all, agility—in thought, planning and action.<sup>12</sup>

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The essence of strategic thinking is precisely to force one's opponents to expend their resources in an area that is important to their security but is not the decisive scene of action. Properly conceived and executed, amphibious operations against the maritime flank of a Warsaw Pact offensive in Europe would constitute far more than a mere distraction.

An amphibious operation against Jutland or the Baltic littoral would obviously be a great risk, with little chance of succeeding unless Soviet naval and air resources in the Baltic area were neutralized. But as Vice Admiral Mustin has observed, "No one has ever said that war with the Soviet Union would be easy. In war, ships get sunk, aircraft get shot down and people get killed."<sup>13</sup> In a global conflict with the Soviet Union, however, such high-risk options would have to at least be considered. Whether a Baltic amphibious operation could work depends on particular circumstances: assets available, operational considerations, and costs that might be incurred.

But there are excellent strategic reasons for considering such amphibious options. Not the least of these is the threat such an operation would pose to Soviet political control, both at home and over its eastern European satellites, particularly in the event of a long war. It is generally recognized that the Soviets are concerned about the political reliability of the eastern Europeans in the event of war. A NATO thrust into Poland or East Germany from the Baltic Sea might very well spark resistance to Soviet control. In the midst of a desperate struggle, such a contingency could not be ignored by Soviet planners.

## The Southern Flank

Finally, amphibious operations in the Mediterranean could be useful in exploiting the exposed maritime flank of a Soviet invasion of Europe. In the early stages of war, marines might be used to help defend the Dardanelles and keep southern European members of NATO in the war. In a protracted war, marines could spearhead an assault against the Aegean littoral and Thrace. Such an operation would have the same effect as an amphibious assault from the Baltic; that is, it would threaten overextended Soviet lines of communication and weaken Soviet political control in the region.

## Objections

Critics of the maritime strategy have raised several objections to using marines to execute the options I have described. These objections usually proceed as follows:

- Counteroffensive amphibious operations in the high-threat European theater stand no chance of success.

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- Even if they had a chance of success, such amphibious operations would require far more resources than are available to the Marine Corps alone, and hard-pressed NATO would be unable to spare troops for such undertakings.
  - But even to attempt counteroffensive amphibious operations on NATO's flanks would escalate the conflict unduly.
  - Therefore, the most reasonable use of the Marine Corps in Europe would be to reinforce Army troops fighting on the central front.<sup>14</sup>

Although these objections have some merit, their relevance depends on the circumstances faced by NATO at a particular time in a conflict. Likewise, to reject amphibious operations unconditionally denies NATO the use of an extremely flexible and versatile service and thereby simplifies the problems faced by Soviet planners.

To argue as I do that there is a strategic rationale for employing marines against the exposed maritime flanks of a Soviet offensive in Europe does not mean that I envision launching amphibious operations in the Baltic or Black Sea in the first days of a European war, any more than former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman ever actually advocated sending unsupported carrier battle groups to the Kola Peninsula. This characterization of the maritime strategy and its various components is a straw man created by the critics. Counteroffensive amphibious operations to regain lost territory or to turn the flanks of the Soviets' military position would be undertaken only after the attrition, suppression, and destruction of the Soviet forces capable of threatening such an operation.

What is true of the maritime strategy in general is true in the particular case of amphibious operations in Europe. Major Hugh O'Donnell defines the maritime strategy thus:

Far from putting forward a reckless recipe for disaster, the maritime strategy postulates a well coordinated, sequential concept of global and theater-level operations which attempts to capitalize on inherent U.S. naval strengths [and] exploit known Soviet weaknesses, all the while minimizing... exposure of capital ships and task forces to direct enemy attack.<sup>15</sup>

No one seriously contemplates recklessly sending amphibious task forces into what Jeffrey Record calls "the jaws of defeat."<sup>16</sup>

The critics are correct to call attention to the numbers of troops and the magnitude of the logistic support necessary to launch and sustain an amphibious counteroffensive:

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To have a significant impact on the Central Front, where scores of divisions would be locked in combat, the Navy would have to [send] more than a reinforced division [against the rear of the Soviet formation]. Instead for NATO to have any chance with an amphibious operation against the Soviet mainland would require a striking force of at least five divisions, something on the scale of the Allied force that landed at Normandy in June 1944.<sup>17</sup>

But again, no one claims that a single MAB or even a MAF landed on the Baltic shore would be sufficient to defeat the nations bound by the Warsaw Pact. Under the right circumstances, however, the Marine Corps could provide the amphibious spearhead for a major assault behind Soviet lines, with follow-on troops and equipment provided by the Army. Clearly the viability of this option depends on the situation on the central front, on assets available, including amphibious shipping, and on the state of mobilization, both manpower and industrial.

Concerning the escalatory potential of an amphibious counteroffensive, one must realize that a risk-free strategy does not exist. Whether the amphibious option is exercised depends, once again, on the circumstances. But to argue against the amphibious option because it risks escalating the conflict implies, ironically, that NATO's surrender is preferred to its resistance. For as Colin Gray has observed, "One cannot evade the dilemma that the better NATO's nonnuclear forces fare on land and at sea, the stronger the incentive will be for the Soviets to engage in nuclear escalation."<sup>18</sup> Many of the critics, who tend to emphasize deterrence at the expense of war-fighting capability, seem to forget that deterring one's enemy is difficult if the enemy believes a war-fighting strategy cannot or will not be implemented. Deterrence, after all, depends on one's ability to influence the opponent's calculation of risk and cost to the point, in the words of Robert S. Wood, "that compromise on a mutually acceptable state of affairs can be reached."<sup>19</sup>

The ability to conduct an amphibious counteroffensive adds an element of uncertainty to Soviet options in Europe. Uncertainty is an important component of deterrence. Accordingly, to enhance deterrence NATO planners should consider all available alternatives, no matter how difficult their implementation may appear because the details of a particular scenario are unknown. "To renounce publicly our intention to conduct [counterstrokes against the Soviets] and then to dismantle our capability for the conduct of offensive [maritime] operations seems to be the height of foolishness."<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the employment of marines as reinforcement for a land battle in Europe is always an option, again depending on the circumstances. If a war were about to be lost on the central front, holding marines for use elsewhere would be unreasonable if their employment in Europe might make a difference.

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But a Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF), with its integrated combat, combat support, and combat service support, offers a unique capability that NATO planners should take advantage of. Employing marines purely for land combat and stripping them of their organic air support is *not* the most effective way to employ their services.

Employing marines in Europe in a maritime (as opposed to land reinforcement) role is a sound and valuable strategy. The most important mission of the Marine Corps would be to contribute to a naval campaign on NATO's northern flank, either by denying the Soviets the use of the Norwegian Sea or by recapturing territory lost during the early days of a European war. The maritime strategy emphasizes the importance of the northern flank because the SLOCs in the North Atlantic are vital to Europe's supply routes. Protection of the SLOCs depends on the Navy's ability to push back Soviet naval and air power as far north as possible. In the words of one writer, "World War III may not be won on the Northern Flank, but it could definitely be lost there."<sup>21</sup>

Although marines would most likely be used to secure the northern flank, they could be used on other missions in Europe as well. Under the proper circumstances, they could spearhead amphibious counteroffensives to turn the Warsaw Pact's maritime forces in both the Baltic and the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean regions. This use of the Marine Corps would involve high risks, but decision-makers would have to look at the stakes. War is a risky enterprise, after all, and the stakes in Europe are high. The option of an amphibious counteroffensive operation should not be renounced as part of our *declaratory* strategy (what we say we will or might do) just because the circumstances may not be exactly right to implement it as part of the *operational* strategy (what we actually can do at a given time and under particular conditions).

## Technological and Operational Considerations

The strategic rationale for the employment of marines in Europe is useless without the operational capability to fulfill the mission assigned. Fortunately, recent decisions due to come to fruition during the next five to ten years significantly enhance the ability of the Marine Corps to successfully execute the maritime mission in Europe.

## Strategic Mobility

The maritime prepositioning ships (MPS) concept was developed in part to compensate for the contraction of amphibious ships that occurred during the 1970s. The MPS concept makes it possible to move heavy equipment for a

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MAB into a potential crisis area when needed. Once the equipment has been sent to a port or airfield complex, it can be married up with personnel who have been flown in by the Military Airlift Command (MAC). If the complex had to be seized by force, afloat amphibious troops could gain forcible entry, allowing the MPS MAB to follow ashore.

The MPS concept allows for the rapid deployment of a mechanized heavy MAB, which has the tactical mobility and firepower necessary to engage Warsaw Pact armored and mechanized formations. Whereas the Army has decided to keep its light division truly light at the cost of tactical mobility and firepower, the Marine Corps' MPS concept allows more troops and heavier equipment to be deployed in a shorter time using fewer MAC sorties. To deploy a prototype light infantry division (LID)—approximately ten thousand personnel and their equipment—requires about five hundred C-141B sorties. On the other hand, to marry up the approximately thirteen thousand personnel of a mechanized heavy MAB with their heavy equipment requires about two hundred fifty C-141B sorties.<sup>22</sup> Once in the crisis area, the MAB would constitute a formidable and extremely capable fighting force, with substantially more combat power than the LID (see table 1).

The MPS concept, more than anything else, gives the Marine Corps the capability to send a credible force to the European scenario. But an MPS MAB requires port and airfield facilities that have been secured. In some crisis situations these facilities may have to be seized. Doing so requires a capability of forcible entry, which is why the MPS MAB and an amphibious assault force must have a synergistic relationship.

Although the amphibious capability of the Navy and Marine Corps atrophied during the 1970s, this trend appears to have reversed. Several ship-building programs should enable the Navy to provide amphibious lift for the assault echelons of a MAF and a MAB by the mid-1990s. The LPH-1 and LSD-41 amphibious assault ships, particularly when grouped with the over-the-horizon(OTH) amphibious capabilities of the air-cushion landing craft (LCAC) and the MV-22 Osprey vertical or short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) assault aircraft, will give a joint commander the ability to combine strategic mobility with tactical surprise. The LCAC will be able to carry heavy battle tanks and self-propelled artillery at high speeds (50 knots) across a variety of beaches. Indeed, the LCAC will make it possible to conduct amphibious operations over 70 percent of the world's coastal areas, as opposed to the 17 percent open to amphibious operations conducted by presently available landing craft.

Much of this new equipment will not be fully available until the 1990s, and the ability of the Marine Corps to conduct amphibious operations in a high-threat European environment will be diminished until the full array of new equipment has been deployed. In the meantime, as has been the case throughout much of the history of the Corps, marines will have to make do with what is

**Table 1. LID (Army) and MAB (Marine Corps) equipment mixes expected in 1990**

Equipment	LID	MAB
<b>Armored Vehicles</b>		
M-60A1/M-1A1	None	53
LVT-7A1	None	109
LAV	None	30+
<b>Artillery</b>		
105-mm	54	None
155-mm	8	30
8-in. self-propelled howitzer	None	6
<b>Antiair missiles</b>		
TOW	36	72
Dragon	72	96
Vulcan (20-mm)	18	None
Stinger	40	60
Hawk	None	6
<b>Helicopters</b>		
Attack (AH-1S/T)	29	24
Utility (UH-60)	36	None
Transport (CH-46)	None	48

*Source:* Peter A. Wilson, "The Marine Corps in 1995," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, November 1985.

*Note:* The tables of organization and equipment of both units may show weapon mixes slightly different from those listed here.

available. This means that the emphasis for now should be on deploying and prepositioning MPS assets early in a crisis to obviate the requirement for forcible entry. And until the new equipment becomes available, marines probably would not be employed in some of the high-risk scenarios described earlier.

### **Tactical Mobility and Firepower**

In 1977, I argued in the *Marine Corps Gazette* that the Marine Corps did not have the artillery support necessary to prevail against a Soviet mechanized or armored force.<sup>23</sup> But given budgetary constraints, the total emphasis on amphibious assault by the Marine Corps made it impossible to deploy the substantial quantities of tanks or long-range artillery necessary to engage such a threat.

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The MPS concept changed this situation. A MAB would be able to defeat heavy counterattacks by opponents well equipped with armor, artillery, and tactical aircraft. The addition of the M198 155-mm howitzer as the close-support artillery weapon and the M1A1 main battle tank both substantially increase the firepower available to a MAGTF. The light armored vehicle (LAV) and its possible variants will help provide the mobility necessary for the heavy MAB to conduct mechanized or air mobile operations at some distance inland.

Other systems now under development can be expected to enhance firepower and tactical mobility even more by the mid-1990s. Such programs include a mobile assault gun and a multiple rocket launch system (MRLS). The MRLS will provide a tremendous volume of firepower in a very short period. The effectiveness of such a system can be increased even more by improved munitions and terminal guidance.

Traditionally, Marine Corps doctrine for amphibious operations and subsequent operations ashore relied heavily on aviation for fire support at the expense of field artillery. In a high-threat environment, this may be an over-reliance. Amphibious doctrine requires air superiority in the amphibious objective area. But with the proliferation of air-defense systems in Soviet units, air superiority does not necessarily mean that close air support could be effective against Warsaw Pact ground forces. Defended by interlocking air-defense systems, Soviet artillery could have been decisive in defeating a landing force until the deployment of the M198. The role of Marine Corps aircraft in providing fire support to the MAGTF commander should not be denigrated. Integrated air-ground operations are a unique feature of Marine Corps doctrine. But the upgrading of the field artillery available to the MAGTF provides a more balanced approach to fire support, a balance more appropriate to the high-threat European environment.

Of course, the new heavier equipment creates problems of its own, particularly in the area of logistics, strategic lift, and ship-to-shore operations. The fuel requirements of the M1 tank, for instance, are greater than those of the M60A3 it replaces, effectively reducing the M1 combat range. The M1 carries a smaller number of larger rounds and has to be resupplied more often. Such trade-offs also characterize the M198. But, as is usually the case, planners must balance improved capability against increased support requirements. The Marine Corps has not ignored the latter.<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

The Marine Corps has, over the past few years, wisely chosen to avoid geographic or doctrinal specialization, opting instead to provide general-purpose forces able to respond to a variety of global contingencies. Although it

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has avoided being forced into a Europe-only mode, the Marine Corps has enhanced its usefulness in a global conflict by developing the flexibility to fight in Europe.

Marine planners are to be commended for implementing a flexible approach to fulfilling the Corps' role and missions. To have focused strictly on amphibious assault, particularly during the dark years following Vietnam, would have severely reduced the warfighting capabilities of the Marine Corps as we entered the 1980s—a shortcoming especially significant in the high-threat European environment. On the other hand, to have opted for the suggestions of Binkin and Record would have undermined the Marines' *global* capability, which, among ground forces, only the Marine Corps possesses.

Because of this flexibility, the Marines, for perhaps the first time in history, have a maritime role in Europe. The operational capabilities made possible by the development of the MPS concept, combined with the traditional amphibious mission, enables the Marine Corps to play a central role in implementing the maritime strategy. The most likely mission of MAGTFs in Europe will be to support the naval campaign on the NATO northern flank. But other options follow logically from the strategic rationale for employing marines in Europe. Whether the options can be executed depends on the circumstances. The Marine Corps has shown its ability in the recent past to adapt to strategic reality and to develop the doctrine and equipment necessary to execute their roles and missions; this record suggests that the Marine Corps will continue to adapt in the future.

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## Notes

1. Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1976), 88.
2. *Ibid.*, 66.
3. Since this paper was written, the designations for Marine amphibious forces (MAFs), brigades (MABs), and units (MAUs) have been changed to Marine expeditionary forces (MEFs), brigades (MEBs), and units (MEUs).
4. *Ibid.*, 68–86. Jeffrey Record has effectively repudiated his earlier position. Others have taken up his argument, often without giving him credit. See, for example, Harvey M. Sapolsky, "The Real Marine Scandal," *The Wall Street Journal* (23 April 1987): 32.
5. Peter A. Wilson, "The Marine Corps in 1995," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (November 1985): 52.
6. For a discussion of how the debate over maritime strategy has improved and a comprehensive review of the available literature, see Capt. Peter M.

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- Swartz, "Contemporary U.S. Naval Strategy: A Bibliography," in *The Maritime Strategy*, supplement to U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (January 1986), and the 1986 Addendum (11 April 1986).
7. John Mearsheimer, "A Strategic Misstep: The Maritime Strategy and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 27.
  8. Sir Halford Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Norton, 1962), 272-73.
  9. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *ibid.*, 262.
  10. Colin S. Gray, "Keeping the Soviets Landlocked," *The National Interest* 4 (Summer 1986): 24-36; Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944), 37-38, 40-41.
  11. The best unclassified discussions of the maritime strategy are Adm. James D. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," in *The Maritime Strategy*, supplement to U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (January 1986); and Linton Brooks, "Naval Power and National Security: The Case for the Maritime Strategy," *International Security*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 55-58.
  12. Edward Luttwak, "On the Meaning of Strategy," in *National Security in the 1980's: From Weakness to Strength*, ed. W. Scott Thompson (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1980), 265-66.
  13. VAdm. H. C. Mustin, "The Role of the Navy and Marines in the Norwegian Sea," *Naval War College Review* (March-April 1986): 5.
  14. See, for example, Mearsheimer, "A Strategic Misstep," 27.
  15. Maj. Hugh O'Donnell, "Northern Flank Maritime Offensive," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (September 1985): 51.
  16. Jeffrey Record, "Jousting with Unreality: Reagan's Military Strategy," *International Security*, vol. 8, no. 3 (Winter 1983-84): 13.
  17. Mearsheimer, "A Strategic Misstep," 26.
  18. Colin S. Gray, "Maritime Strategy," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (February 1986): 39.
  19. Robert S. Wood and John T. Hanley, Jr., "The Maritime Role in the North Atlantic," in *The U.S. Navy: The View from the Mid-1980s*, ed. James L. George (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), 329-344.
  20. O'Donnell, "Northern Flank Maritime Offensive," 54.
  21. Robert Weinland, cited in Col. Joseph H. Alexander, "The Role of U.S. Marines in the Defense of North Norway," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (May 1984): 182.
  22. Wilson, "The Marine Corps in 1995," 53.
  23. Capt. M. T. Owens, Jr., "Artillery is the Real Threat in the Soviet Weapons Arsenal," *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 1977): 35-42.
  24. James A. Russell, "Marines: How Heavy Is Too Heavy?" *Military Logistics Forum* (March 1987): 41-49.

## Marines Outside Europe

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*Russel H. S. Stolfi*

### Initial Stages of Global Conventional War

#### *Marine Corps Operations in the Atlantic*

In the event of a global conventional war involving the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and those of the Warsaw Pact, any strategy that considers the worldwide deployment of Marine Corps air-ground task forces (MAGTFs) will depend on the size of the Marine forces assigned in advance to Europe. The MAGTF is the basic combat structure of the Marine Corps, consisting of air, ground, and support elements that are transported by the Navy's amphibious ships. The size of the MAGTF is flexible, but each is built around the rifle battalion<sup>1</sup> individually or as combined into regiments and divisions, and each contains an appropriate combination of the air, ground, and support elements required to accomplish a specific mission. The Marine amphibious force (MAF) is the largest MAGTF, the brigade (MAB) is the next largest, and the unit (MAU) is the smallest. The MAF is built around a Marine division (Table of Organization, or TO strength, nine rifle battalions), the MAB around a Marine regiment (TO strength, three rifle battalions), and the MAU around a single rifle battalion.

It is reasonable to suppose that the amphibious warfare strategy in support of Europe, defined as the region lying in a great arc extending from Norway to Greece, would be to employ one MAB in Norway and at least one MAU in the Mediterranean to support NATO's southeastern flank. This commitment would take a total of four Marine Corps rifle battalions from the eleven presently stationed on the U.S. Atlantic coast.

In a war in which the Soviets can be expected to field powerful conventional ground forces against northern Norway and possibly also against Greece and Turkey, it is difficult to escape a conclusion that those seven

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Marine rifle battalions remaining in the Atlantic would be used to reinforce those already committed to NATO in Norway and the Mediterranean. In a recent article on amphibious warfare strategy, the commandant of the Marine Corps noted that the importance of Norway to the defense of the sea lines of communication to central Europe "could dictate the eventual employment of a . . . MAF to NATO's northern flank."<sup>2</sup> It is quite possible that a strong Soviet ground attack in northern Norway would consume six marine rifle battalions and their air, combat-support, and service-support forces in MAF-level operations in Norway. Prudent reinforcement of the MAU in the Mediterranean would use up the one remaining battalion stationed on the Atlantic coast; in other words, all the Marine Corps forces in the Atlantic would be deployed on the European flanks of NATO. Marine rifle battalions and appropriate air and ground supporting forces could be shifted from the Pacific to the Atlantic coast to reinforce NATO's flanks or to conduct operations on the Atlantic littoral, but the long transit could bring forces in too late to make an amphibious attack or reinforcement effective.

The present Marine Corps concept of deploying a MAB in Norway and a MAU in the Mediterranean would leave five to seven rifle battalions for operations elsewhere in the Atlantic, depending on the reserve considered necessary to support NATO's European flanks. Thus the Marine Corps would have a maximum of seven rifle battalions to conduct at least two operations needed in a global conventional war with the Soviets—one moderately sized operation within Europe and a concurrent operation in the Atlantic.

Based on effective, systematic support of revolutionary movements and the expansion of the Soviet navy, the Soviet government has established significant naval and ground-force presence in Cuba and Angola in the Atlantic proper and in Libya on the southern (North African) flank of NATO. The Marine forces deployed on the Atlantic coast of the United States would play a crucial role in any operations to seize Cuba or to neutralize the Soviet naval forces on the Angolan coast.

Cuba is the more significant threat in the Atlantic because the Soviet presence there is stronger, the United States is in immediate danger of Cuban and Soviet missiles and aircraft, and the important U.S. sea lines of communication in the Caribbean Sea and western Atlantic, including the Panama Canal, could be blocked. Naval and Marine Corps operations against Cuba would necessarily include a mission of neutralizing the anti-American, Communist-dominated government of Nicaragua, given the geographical proximity of the two Communist states, but Cuba would be the primary focus of U.S. military operations. Although Cuba is a relatively small state, its government has developed a challenging, outsized army and air force. The U.S. armed forces would need to seize the island quickly with a major decisive military operation. Poor planning or inadequate forces could require U.S. allies

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to become involved in attrition-style operations. In military operations to seize Cuba, Marine forces would establish a beachhead, possibly as the single point of entry in advance of U.S. Army forces. The force would have to be the size of a MAF, whether or not the grand scheme involved a single lodgement or an initial opposed entry by marines alongside army forces. The Marine Corps would have to allot at least nine rifle battalions (a full-division ground element) to carry out the operation.

Following the maritime strategy in a global conventional war, the Marine Corps would be unable to allocate enough forces to establish a beachhead in Cuba while conducting operations in Europe to support NATO. This conclusion is based on the deployment of eleven rifle battalions on the Atlantic coast (Camp Lejeune) and on the assumption that Marine forces would be immediately available for operations from Atlantic ports. Naval forces in the Atlantic also might not be available at the beginning of a global conventional war in numbers sufficient to seize Cuba in a decisive, swift operation. If decisive operations in Cuba could not be mounted until several months into the conflict, relatively small Marine forces, possibly MAUs, could be used to reinforce the U.S. base at Guantánamo Bay. This effort would include the expansion of the perimeter of the base to permit aircraft to operate out of the range of enemy artillery fire as part of the temporary neutralization of Cuba.

A similar MAGTF might also be freed up at the beginning of a global conventional war to provide a circumspect but decisive U.S. presence in Nicaragua to buttress the anticommunist insurgency in that state. The mission of the MAGTF would be politically delicate: Marines would have to secure an unopposed beachhead on the remote northeast coast to establish a base area for anticommunist guerrillas while maintaining a "low profile" among the indigenous population. In such a scenario, Army units would quickly replace marines to make the MAGTF and the amphibious ships available for other amphibious operations, such as for the reinforcement of Guantánamo Bay.

The maritime strategy for the beginning of a global conventional war thus could not involve simultaneous amphibious operations in Norway, an amphibious presence in the Mediterranean, and decisive operations against Cuba. If the strategy were carried out, Marine Corps forces would either have to be assigned to the Atlantic coast in greater numbers in advance of hostilities, or preparations would have to be made to move marines from the Pacific coast to take part in operations against Cuba. A scenario involving decisive operations against Cuba would strain both Marine forces and Navy surface and aviation assets available at the beginning of a war. The strategy would be somewhat flexible because Marine Corps forces from the Pacific coast could be committed against an Atlantic target, namely Cuba. The bulk of the Marine forces at Kaneohe, Pendleton, and Twentynine Palms would form the MAF

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required to secure a beachhead in Cuba. However, such a commitment would leave only a few western Pacific forces to defend the Indian Ocean—four battalions at Okinawa, one MAU afloat, and possibly one battalion at Kaneohe. Therefore, an “Atlantic strategy” is one in which Marine forces stationed outside Europe, in the Pacific and Atlantic, would be sent to strategic areas of the North Atlantic (Cuba, Norway, and the Mediterranean) to defend vital sea lanes between the United States and Europe.

### *Marine Corps Operations in the Pacific and Indian Oceans*

If an Atlantic strategy were implemented, it would require a roughly simultaneous commitment of one MAF each to Norway and Cuba, and the Marine Corps would have no more than two MABs or a single MAF(-) (i.e., a MAF *minus* especially one or more of the rifle battalions normally in a Marine division) to conduct amphibious operations in the Pacific and Indian oceans. As mobilization proceeded in the United States, the Marine Corps would be able to assemble an additional MAF (approximately one division and an air wing) from reserve components at the Pacific-coast training facilities to reinforce the regular forces deployed in the western Pacific. These total forces—approximately two MAFs—would give the Marine Corps a wide range of attack options and the ability to conduct a single powerful, concentrated attack. In the beginning of a global conventional war, however, the marine forces in the Pacific and Indian oceans would be hard pressed by their weakness and the dispersion of Soviet targets to carry out amphibious operations to contain or eliminate Soviet forces in those waters. Perhaps the best the Marine Corps could hope for is that the Soviets would not commit powerful forces to pass through Southwest Asia to the Persian Gulf.

With the relatively small force on hand in the western Pacific, the Marine Corps would have an opportunity to select probably one target for amphibious assault. This force of five or six rifle battalions and air, combat, and support elements could be employed against any one of a number of Soviet naval installations in Third World countries or against an exposed militarily useful Soviet island, such as one of the Komandorskie group, or against a carefully selected coastal area of the Soviet Union itself, such as a location on the Kamchatka Peninsula. In the postulated absence of a Soviet drive to the Persian Gulf (or out of Afghanistan through Baluchistan to the Arabian Sea), the Marine Corps would have an opportunity to seize crucial maritime “terrain” in the western Pacific in the initial stages of a global conventional war before large reserve forces were mobilized. Assuming that the situation in the Indian Ocean would remain unthreatening, the Corps could evaluate the possibilities

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of employing its small force in a concentrated raid or seizure of an island or to secure a beachhead on a continental land mass.

If a decision were made to regain the initiative against Soviet naval forces operating out of the Seas of Okhotsk and Japan into the Pacific, and assuming that the Soviets had not escalated the conventional war by an invasion of South Korea, the Marine Corps could probably be most effective in initial operations against the Komandorskie Islands. Lying close to the western end of the Aleutian chain, these islands provide an advanced base for Soviet operations against Alaska and a defensive position protecting the northern coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula. The islands are also exposed to attack by amphibious forces because of their distance from the strong Soviet naval base at Petropavlovsk and their proximity to U.S. territory in the Aleutians. Quick seizure of those islands would enable U.S. forces to set up a base for air and antisubmarine operations and for amphibious landings against the Soviet base at Petropavlovsk. The only MAGTF available to conduct operations against the Komandorskie Islands would be a MAB(+) (i.e., a MAB *plus* especially one or more rifle battalions above those normally in a Marine regiment), but it would be a strong one, possibly comprising five rifle battalions and an exceptionally large air group. Such a force would be marginal at best for seizure of the Komandorskies, and accurate estimates would have to be made of the Soviet ground forces and the air and naval forces available for the defense of the islands. Unlike World War II, when intelligence estimates of the enemy's forces in the Pacific were used to structure U.S. amphibious forces large enough to overcome the enemy's defense, these intelligence estimates would be used to determine whether the limited forces available for amphibious assault are adequate to make an assault.

If Marine forces in the western Pacific in the initial stages of a war were determined to be inadequate for assault in the Northwest Pacific, the Marine Corps would still have to consider the use of a MAGTF in a raid on the advanced Soviet naval facility at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, or the seizure of nearby islands in order to neutralize the Soviet naval forces in the bay. The Soviet naval bases are important because they support Soviet surface and submarine operations in the Pacific and Indian oceans and demonstrate the political presence of the Soviets. Amphibious operations in Cam Ranh Bay could stimulate a declaration of war by Vietnam, and this possibility would have to be weighed carefully. It could be argued, for example, that a naval blockade would serve the same purpose as an amphibious attack. Both would prevent Soviet naval operations out of the bay, but a blockade would make it more difficult for Vietnam to justify joining the Soviet Union in a worldwide conventional war. It could also be argued that even after an amphibious raid against the Soviet bases, the U.S. Navy would be required to use blockades to prevent Soviet naval or air forces from using the facilities in the future.

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Nevertheless, a successful raid would cause the most damage to the facilities and could be combined with the seizure of offshore islands to support later blockades.

Intelligence data could show that Vietnamese ground forces located in and around Cam Ranh Bay were too strong to risk an amphibious raid against the Soviet naval installations there. If, in addition, other intelligence data discouraged an attack against the Komandorskie Islands in the Northwest Pacific, the options left to the Marine Corps would be *to wait* for stronger forces to be mobilized so that it could conduct operations with acceptable chances of success or *to conduct operations immediately* in the western Indian Ocean against Soviet naval installations in several Third World socialist states. Sailing distances from Okinawa to the western Indian Ocean are immense, sometimes requiring three weeks' travel along routes endangered by the Soviet naval installation at Cam Ranh Bay. Assuming that the marines in the Atlantic and Mediterranean would be involved in their own amphibious operations, especially in the case of the implementation of an Atlantic strategy, the Marine Corps could be forced to consider denuding the western Pacific of its forces (roughly a MAB-level MAGTF) to send them over extremely long distances to the western Indian Ocean to seize any of the several Soviet naval installations that support interdictions of fuel shipped from the Persian Gulf to western Europe and Japan. Given the locations of the Soviet naval installations on relatively exposed offshore islands (Socotra and Dahlak, for example) and on the coasts of states with relatively weak ground armies—compared with those of Vietnam for example—a MAB could seize such an installation or force its shutdown by the host country.

The commitment of a MAB so distant from the western Pacific is difficult to justify, but if Marine forces were pinned down in operations in the Mediterranean or were unable to use the Suez Canal because of political circumstance or military damage, the use of Pacific Marine forces against Indian Ocean targets should be considered. The prudence in stripping the Pacific Ocean, even briefly, of all but approximately two rifle battalions is questionable. Gathering reserves rapidly on the Pacific coast and extracting Pacific Marine forces from a lodgement in Cuba under the scenario of a decisive initial Atlantic strategy could provide enough forces to justify a daring early seizure of, for example, the island of Socotra. In the early stages of a global conventional war, marines deployed to the Indian Ocean could be teamed with Australian and New Zealand amphibious (or sea-transported) forces, which would enable operations considerably larger than those at the MAB-level to be carried out against a selected Soviet naval installation in the Indian Ocean. Alternatively, Australian and New Zealand forces could be employed to reinforce an initial weak presence of the U.S. Marines and other armed services in the western Pacific.

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### *Challenges to Marines Deployed Outside Europe*

Thus far, I have made the fundamental assumptions that the Marines would be committed decisively on the maritime flanks of NATO, would be engaged initially in an Atlantic strategy, and would not be faced with a Soviet offensive to seize or neutralize the Saudi, Iraqi, and Iranian oil and natural-gas fields clustered around the Persian Gulf. If the Soviets decided to fight a global conventional war, it is possible that they would launch offensives outside the crucial areas of central and northern Europe. For example, they could launch a major offensive on the extreme southeastern flank of NATO through Iran to the Persian Gulf. Such an offensive would be quite risky, however. The Soviets would have to set up an active, dangerous front against strong NATO forces in eastern Turkey; they would have to fight the armed forces of Iran on difficult terrain; and they would have to face Arab, Israeli, NATO, and Japanese reactions to a Persian Gulf attack. Even if the Soviet government accomplished the unlikely diplomatic coup of an offensive alliance with the Iranians, the Soviet armed forces would face strong resistance from a coalition of Turkish, Iraqi, and Saudi forces reinforced by NATO troops entering the campaign through Saudi Arabia and from amphibious and air lodgements in the extreme southern areas of Iran. In spite of the risks involved in conducting operations over great distances in Southwest Asia, the Soviet government would not have to confront the nightmare of fighting a major adjacent power, such as the People's Republic of China, in a conventional war.

The Marine Corps needs to examine the courses of action it would take if the Soviets were to launch a major offensive in Southwest Asia at the beginning of a global conventional war. The potential scale of fighting in Southwest Asia demands a MAF-level MAGTF to secure a beachhead, to combat strong local Iranian forces, or to attack the spearhead of Soviet formations or air-landed forces. The planned deployment of a MAF to the Indian Ocean would affect the entire maritime and amphibious warfare strategy by concentrating ships and marine forces in the Indian Ocean at the expense of potentially important amphibious operations in the Atlantic (Cuba) and the Pacific (Kamachatka area). Assuming that strong forces would be employed in Norway and in the Mediterranean, the Marine Corps would not have enough regular (peacetime) forces remaining to conduct operations simultaneously against Cuba and in Southwest Asia. The Marine Corps would not only have to abandon immediate operations against Cuba and the concentrated, effective Atlantic strategy associated with such operations, it would also need to develop a strategy for maintaining its presence in the Indian Ocean in peacetime.

By foregoing any plans for an offensive through Iran into the Soviet Union, the United States has presented the Soviet army an opening for launching an offensive into Iran, probably with some surprise. For a defensive

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strategy, the United States and its allies would need to develop both a political strategy that would gain support for a rapid entry into Southwest Asia and a military strategy designed to hold Soviet ground and tactical air forces as far north in Iran as possible. Because the United States must accept an extremely low profile politically on the Arabian Peninsula and even on a fairly large island like Masīrah, the Marine Corps could best anticipate war by placing a MAU in the Indian Ocean and stationing an additional MAU ashore at Diego Garcia. Such forces could be joined relatively quickly by the “traditional” MAUs in the Mediterranean and western Pacific to form a large MAB(+) that could quickly establish a beachhead on the Iranian side of the entrance to the Persian Gulf before the Soviets could invade from the Transcaucasian area. If the Marine Corps could seize this territory and develop air operations out of it, the United States and its allies would be able to conduct surface fleet operations up to the entrance of the Persian Gulf and control the air space over the gulf and southwestern Iran. Rapid reinforcement of the lodgement area around Bandar 'Abbās by follow-on Army, Marine Corps, and allied forces could result in Free World control over the Iranian coast of the Persian Gulf.

Because of the proximity of Norway and the Mediterranean to the U.S. Atlantic coast, it would be most efficient to deploy marines from Camp Lejeune to conduct amphibious operations on the flanks of NATO in Europe. The NATO flank in Southwest Asia, however, is somewhat of a problem. A MAF deployed in the western Pacific at Okinawa or conducting maneuvers off the desert coast of western Australia would have to cover an impressive distance to reach the entrance to the Persian Gulf. In contrast, however, a MAGTF originating from Camp Lejeune would have to cover roughly twice that distance because it would navigate around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid naval combat and dangers in the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal. Therefore, it seems more prudent to assign a large Pacific MAGTF operating off the coast of western Australia to make the journey to the Persian Gulf than to assign an Atlantic MAGTF stationed anywhere in the South Atlantic or off the Indian Ocean coast of South Africa. This solution is not ideal, however. Given the challenge of a large Soviet force invading Iran from the north and the dangers to a crucial Free World fuel-producing area, the Pacific MAGTF would probably be drawn into fighting well to the north of Bandar 'Abbās. The MAGTF would also have to spend a significant amount of time in the western Indian Ocean to conduct operations against Soviet naval installations and may also have to reinforce amphibious operations in the western Pacific.

### *Anticipated Deployment Plans*

One of the most important principles of war—concentration of effort—supports the view that the Marine Corps should concentrate its efforts

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outside of Europe in a few, probably not more than two or three, operations in the opening stages of a global conventional war. Assuming that a MAF is intended for operations against coastal areas and to reinforce Army amphibious formations, the Marine Corps would have enough strength to mount simultaneously two major operations against the Soviets outside of Europe. However, the Corps may be forced to respond to Soviet initiatives in several areas, such as South Korea, Iran, and possibly Thailand. A Soviet invasion of any one of these nations would demand the immediate intervention of at least a MAF, which would be most effectively mounted from the western Pacific.

If, however, the Soviets launched a conventional attack on Europe, resulting in combat in the Norwegian and Mediterranean seas, the Marine Corps would be presented with the opportunity for offensive operations on the Kamchatka Peninsula and outlying islands, for a raid on Cam Ranh Bay, or to seize Soviet naval installations in the western Indian Ocean. These offensive operations could involve either a MAF or MAB that could be readily deployed from the western Pacific. Under the same scenario (a conventional war centered in Europe), the seizure of Cuba, in contrast, would require peacetime Marine forces from the Pacific coast of the United States.

The present peacetime positioning of Marine forces appears to take account of the strategic possibilities outside of Europe in the initial stages of a conventional war. The concentration of the fundamental building blocks of MAGTFs—the rifle battalions—in southern California supports in particular an Atlantic strategy by which marines would move immediately against Norway and Cuba. If, however, the decision were made to assign the seizure of Cuba to a small nucleus of peacetime regular forces and large reserve forces assembled on the Gulf or East coasts and to delay the seizure until later in the war, the peacetime disposition of forces would be far too strong in southern California. Under these circumstances, forces would be better positioned in the Northwest Pacific, where they could take advantage of strategic opportunities, and in the Indian Ocean, where they could combat early dangers. The Komandorskie Islands are equidistant from Okinawa and the Hawaiian Islands, and if they were chosen as a first target of a Northwest Pacific strategy, it would make sense to shift perhaps one MAB, with its regiment (three rifle battalions) and air group, to facilities in the Hawaiian Islands, a second MAB to some location in southern Alaska, and a third MAB to Okinawa. Such a shift in forces to support a clearly articulated western Pacific strategy immediately upon the outbreak of a conventional war with the Soviets would demonstrate the U.S. commitment to South Korea and Japan as parallel to the increased commitment to Norway on the Atlantic side of North America.

The peacetime stationing of a MAB in southern Alaska and two MABs in Hawaii should not be too expensive and has the advantage of basing on U.S. territory, a situation not available near the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom

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gap. Marine forces stationed, for example, near Anchorage, Alaska, or on any of the main Hawaiian Islands would be much closer to Kamchatka than the marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, are to Norway. Expanded basing facilities for forces in Alaska and Hawaii would focus attention on the operational possibilities of a Northwest Pacific strategy, including, for example, MAGTF landings against the Bering Sea coast of the Soviet Union and the Komandorskie Islands, which could be extended into the seizure or neutralization of Petropavlovsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula. With the seizure of naval and air bases on the Kamchatka Peninsula, Marine forces could seize parts of the Kuril Islands and thus cripple Soviet naval operations in the Seas of Okhotsk and Japan. Successful MAGTF operations in the Kuril Islands would not only blockade the Soviet maritime province and prevent maritime movement off the coast of that area but would invite further amphibious operations against Sakhalin Island, thus placing Soviet forces in the entire region of Vladivostok-Khabarovsk in a dangerously exposed position.

Stationing marines as far west as Hawaii and Alaska would not guarantee, of course, that amphibious operations against Kamchatka could be mounted immediately or that they would be successful. Distributing one MAF between Hawaii and Alaska and placing a second MAF in Okinawa would give strategists the option of employing marines in major amphibious operations in the Northwest Pacific soon after the outbreak of a global conventional war. Even if the strength of Soviet air, naval, and ground forces deployed in and around Kamchatka in the beginning of such a war did not permit marines to be employed as quickly as hypothesized, the Marine Corps would be in a favorable position to counterattack Soviet landings in the Aleutians, to reinforce U.S. defenses there, or to build up strength that could be massed for operations later in the war. While waiting for ground reinforcements to begin amphibious operations in the Northwest Pacific, the Marine Corps could use the postulated MAF(-) in Okinawa as the primary force for neutralizing the Soviet naval installation at Cam Ranh Bay or as the amphibious force for immediate action in the Indian Ocean, either to seize Bandar 'Abbās in the event of a Soviet invasion of Iran or to neutralize the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean by seizing naval installations at Aden and Socotra in the Indian Ocean and the Dahlak Archipelago in the Red Sea.

### **Extended Global Conventional War**

Assuming that an initial conflict has progressed into an extended war, the Marine Corps would be able to perform a variety of operations outside Europe, especially when reserve MAFs and perhaps even larger forces were added later in the war. In the initial stages of a global conventional war, the Soviets, as attackers, would have attempted to press the advantages of

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initiative, surprise, and concentration of effort into a quick, outright victory with irreversible gains and to carefully negotiate a peace agreement to their own advantage. The Soviets could have reinforced their positions in their Pacific theater of military operations (Pacific TVD<sup>3</sup>) so that amphibious operations by one or two regular MAFs forward-deployed in the Pacific would not have been successful against Kamchatka. In such an event, one could assume that Soviet amphibious forces had seized the U.S. naval installations at Adak, Alaska, to secure the northern flank of Soviet Pacific fleet operations. Under this scenario, the two MAFs normally deployed in the Pacific, whether initially deployed in southern California or in the Pacific, would be forced to wait until the Navy could regain sea and air control at least in the Aleutians to permit amphibious operations there. Thus, the first operations of marines outside Europe in the Pacific could be landings against U.S. territory seized at Adak in the initial Soviet naval offensive in the Northwest Pacific. By the time such amphibious operations could be mounted, a fourth reserve MAF would have been mobilized and the Marine Corps would have the option to launch a strong attack with two full-strength MAFs, possibly reinforced by one or more Army divisions. With so strong a force, the Marine Corps would have a realistic strategic option of bypassing the Soviet forces on Adak and seizing Soviet territory in the Komandorskie Islands or on Kamchatka to establish an advanced base for naval and air operations.

In the initial stages of a global conventional war, the MAF(-) postulated at Okinawa might not have the strength to take the Soviet naval installation at Cam Ranh Bay. As the war continued, however, the situation would be more favorable: U.S. naval and air forces would be able to control the South China Sea, and marine forces would be reinforced by the reserves. The Soviet navy in the South China Sea would then be neutralized. The marines could assume that Vietnam would protect its border with China and not attempt to invade Thailand. Under these conditions, the marine forces in the entire Pacific could be concentrated in operations in the region of the Aleutian Islands, the Kamchatka Peninsula, and the Kuril Islands. This plan is comparable to the great moves made in the western Pacific during the Second World War. Alternatively, the Marine Corps could find itself "pinned down" in the South China Sea to maintain the neutralization of the Soviet installations at Cam Ranh Bay; this task may require the marines to seize more advanced areas in or islands off the shore of Vietnam and deny the Soviets and Vietnamese access to those areas.

To summarize the possibilities in the western Pacific, the Marine Corps could have a strategy outside Europe that *concentrates* marine forces against Soviet territory in the Northwest Pacific or *disperses* them more conservatively in operations against both Vietnam and the Soviet Union in the Pacific littoral region. With strong Marine forces committed to Norway and a simultaneous

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presence in the Mediterranean, the Pacific strategy leaves few options for amphibious operations elsewhere. However, the strategy does address fundamental dangers and corresponding opportunities both within and outside Europe. It highlights the strategic fact that the U.S. Navy, in terms of amphibious shipping and attack forces, and the Marine Corps, in terms of MAGTFs, can handle *only two* major areas of amphibious operations simultaneously, particularly given the Navy's great strategic task of keeping open the sea lines of communication between North America and Europe in a global conventional war.

Clear and present dangers, however, and important opportunities in a global conventional war could dictate the employment of Marine Corps forces outside Europe in other than a Northwest Pacific strategy. For example, danger and opportunity in Norway and the Mediterranean could overshadow those in the Soviet Far Eastern theater of military operations. A MAF might remain in the Pacific for insurance purposes, but two strong MAFs would be available either for reinforcement of operations in Norway or for decisive amphibious operations against Cuba to secure U.S. sea communications. With Marine forces concentrated in Norway (one MAF) and Cuba (two MAFs), a strategic inertia may develop: marines released from Cuban operations could be deployed to reinforce the effort in Norway, to conduct amphibious operations in the Mediterranean, especially in Libya (outside Europe, but in the Mediterranean), and possibly to support NATO forces defending Greece and Turkey in the Aegean Sea. In other words, the Marine Corps forces may be magnetized toward Europe, leaving inadequate forces in the Pacific.

After mobilization, the Marine Corps would have approximately four MAFs with which to carry out a two-ocean strategy that focuses on the Northeast Atlantic (and Mediterranean) and the Northwest Pacific. In such a scheme, the question of Cuba might be answered most comfortably by assuming that it would be neutralized by naval blockade and air attack until two additional MAFs could be mobilized and committed there, along with supporting Army troops. After completing Cuban operations these marines would probably be deployed in the Northwest Pacific on the rationale that if free-world forces in Europe could survive the first rush of a Soviet conventional offensive, they could continue to fight without the deployment of specialized emergency amphibious forces. These forces, therefore, could be used best in purely amphibious operations in the Pacific. By this time (perhaps six or more months into a war), the Marine Corps would be operating possibly with six divisions and associated air wings, a force strength similar to that used in the Pacific in World War II.

A Marine Corps strategy of a two-ocean distribution of forces in a global conventional war could be severely disrupted if the Soviets moved out of their southern TDV into Iran. The Soviets would be unlikely to make such an

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advance because their forces in that area are relatively weak, they would have to travel great distances, and their communications are poor. Nevertheless, the Soviets would have the initial fundamental advantages of operating from interior lines of communications against Western forces (outside of Turkey and Saudi Arabia) that are operating on extraordinarily stretched exterior lines of communications. Marine Corps forces engaged in executing a Northwest Pacific strategy would be forced to reduce the scope of operations to help compose a MAF (or a stronger force) that could seize and hold southwest Iran against Soviet invasion and reinforce Saudi Arabia. The distances these forces would have to travel, even from the Okinawa area, would be extreme, and advanced warning would be needed to allow time to gather a MAGTF large enough and close enough to prevent the occupation of the Kuwaiti and Saudi petroleum fields. Marine Corps forces in the Mediterranean could be used to reinforce or to precede the Pacific forces. But questions on the potential size of the MAGTF, ongoing operations in the Mediterranean, availability of naval shipping, and perhaps most important, the use of the Suez Canal and movement through the confined waters of the Red Sea, especially past the Soviet naval installations at its southern end, suggest difficulties. These difficulties make attractive the Marine Corps strategy for the Mediterranean, in which amphibious operations are used to secure Free World communications out of the Mediterranean and into the Indian Ocean by seizing the Soviet naval installations in the Dahlak Archipelago and Socotra and by assisting in the neutralization of Aden.

### **Marine Corps Operations in a Global Conventional War: Summary**

In the initial stages of a global conventional war in which the Soviets are assumed to attack with a significant degree of surprise, the Marine Corps would be forced to operate with three MAFs of the regular, peacetime force. With one MAF committed in Europe to secure Norway, the Marine Corps would use the other two MAFs outside Europe. If the Soviets seized Alaskan territory and persuaded Cuba to enter the war, the Marine Corps would probably have to split its forces to make counterattacks in both regions. If the Soviets did not use this strategy, the Marine Corps would have the options of concentrating the two Pacific MAFs in the Northwest Pacific to defeat the Soviet armed forces in their own Far Eastern TVD or of using one MAF against Cuba and one in the Northwest Pacific in more limited operations designed to hold the Soviets at bay until full mobilization could occur. For convenience, the concentration of two MAFs in the Alaskan area can be referred to as a "Northwest Pacific strategy," and the employment of one MAF against Cuba

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along with the “baseline” commitment of one MAF to Norway called an “Atlantic strategy.”

In the later stages of an extended global conventional war in which the Soviets make significant gains but fail to defeat the NATO powers, the Marine Corps would have similar strategic options but would have larger forces with the mobilization of reserves and more time to plan and execute operations. The Marine Corps could consider using approximately six divisions and associated air wings. With this strength, the Marine Corps could recommend to the National Command Authorities either a two- or three-division attack against Cuba with appropriate marine air support and powerful army forces. The commitment of these forces would effectively paralyze amphibious operations in the northwestern Pacific operations, an undesirable result given the need to maintain pressure on the Soviets in their own territory and to sway the governments of Japan, South Korea, and the Peoples’ Republic of China to favor an armed anti-Soviet neutrality. In order to regain the initiative in the northwestern Pacific quickly, naval and air forces might have to neutralize the “Cuban Atlantic,” and all Marine Corps forces outside Europe (at least four divisions and associated air elements under conditions of full mobilization) would have to unite against Kamchatka and the Kurils.

### **The Marine Corps Response to Crises Outside Europe**

The U.S. armed forces have responded to crises in the world approximately two-hundred times since 1946. Because of their flexibility, mobility, and “strategic loitering” capability—the ability to circulate comfortably at great distances from home base—Navy and Marine Corps forces have been called on most often to respond to crises overseas. Given the strength of allied NATO forces in Europe and the strong presence of the U.S. Air Force, Army, and Navy units stationed there, the Marine Corps has been used almost exclusively outside Europe. The scope of Marine Corps actions has been extraordinarily broad, varying from presence over the horizon near coastal states to large-scale combat in localized, low-intensity warfare (Vietnam) and localized, high-intensity warfare (Korea). The ability to execute opposed landings against coastal areas virtually anywhere in the world makes the Marine Corps ideally suited for the execution of U.S. foreign policy. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the principles of the most effective use of MAGTFs outside Europe is to look at the most successful case of U.S. intervention overseas since 1945—the Marine Corps landings in Lebanon in July 1958.

The global political situation between 1957 and 1958 was extremely complex. In an attempt to contain Soviet influence, the U.S. government had

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extended a system of alliances among Arabic, Turkish, Iranian, and Israeli peoples, and in 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had offered bilateral military and economic assistance to the states of the Arab Middle East. During the same period, the U.S. government negotiated the Baghdad Pact to block potential Soviet expansion southward by enlisting the cooperation of several states to form a physical barrier against the Soviet Union or lend stability to the region behind this front. Amid the pressures of growing Arab nationalism, the Egyptian and Syrian governments formed the United Arab Republic (UAR) in February 1958. One effect was to destabilize Lebanon, whose Muslim population demanded political fusion with the Syrian UAR. When civil war broke out in Lebanon between the Christian and Muslim communities in May 1958, the Syrian socialist government had an excuse to intervene in favor of the Muslims, and Israel in turn attacked Syria and Lebanon in defense of its own perceived interests in the shadow of the Golan Heights.

It is difficult to imagine a more complex and unfavorable situation than that presented to U.S. foreign policymakers when, on 14 July 1958, anti-Western socialists in Iraq overthrew their government, which had brought the country into the Baghdad Pact. The United States faced the dissolution of the pact and the immediate possibilities of an opportunistic invasion of Lebanon by Syria, an unrestrained civil war in Lebanon, a combined Syrian and Iraqi invasion of pro-Western Jordan, and an Israeli advance into Lebanon and Syria. Against this background, the Lebanese government requested military assistance under the Eisenhower Doctrine, impelling a decision from the U.S. president. Alerted to danger by the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon and in anticipation of a request for help, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had reinforced the strategic-loiter force in the Mediterranean, MAU (1/8) (the MAU built around the 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment), with an additional MAU (2/2). When the Iraqi coup occurred on 14 July, the original MAU (1/8) in the Mediterranean was in the process of being relieved by yet a third MAU (3/6), giving the United States a strategic-loiter force of three MAUs (built around 1/8, 2/2, and 3/6). Because the crisis had been effectively *anticipated*, the president and the JCS had positioned the ideal force for intervention in a coastal area—a force that if necessary could make an opposed landing.

Although the president and the JCS had anticipated danger in the eastern Mediterranean, they had not anticipated the Iraqi coup, and the president had to make a spontaneous decision that could have had the grave and far-reaching result of sparking a land war in Lebanon. The president nevertheless decided at 1643 (EST) on 14 July 1958 to send the marines in the Mediterranean into Lebanon to stabilize the situation; his verbal directive was given in the broadest terms. With only the briefest time to organize the mission ashore (compared, for example, with the leisurely pace of events in positioning a peacekeeping force in Lebanon in 1982), the Marine Corps faced military

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operational disaster, and the U.S. government faced the possibility of wildly destabilizing the political balances in the Middle East.

Three things helped the United States succeed in this classic case of crisis response: the president's timely decision, the manner of executing the decision, and chance seized by the commanders on the spot. In the execution of the president's decision, the armed forces commanders—Admiral Holloway (Specified Command, Middle East), Brigadier General Wade (Marine Expeditionary Brigade), Lieutenant Colonel Hadd (2/2), and Lieutenant Colonel Jenkins (3/6)—positioned themselves at the head of the Marine battalion (2nd Battallion, 2nd Marine Regiment) that had seized the international airport and was preparing to move into downtown Beirut to take the port facility. In doing so, they were able to carry out the military mission to support the political decision to stabilize Lebanon. These armed forces commanders, the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, and the commander of the Lebanese Army together decided to move the marines immediately into downtown Beirut. This formula rapidly evolved into a standard general mission that the Marine Corps can use in virtually any response to crisis. The method, at once decisive and circumspect, enables the marines to support the armed forces of another government in defense against outside invasion or internal subversion by armed minorities. For the rest of its stay in Lebanon, the MAGTF stood alongside of and in support of the Lebanese Army as a powerful reserve, tipping the balance in favor of stability.

The third element of success is that the Marine Corps had the good fortune to have action-oriented commanders in Lebanon. To paraphrase Karl von Clausewitz, the great Prussian philosopher of war, in his work *Vom Krieg* (On War)—of all the characteristics one can associate with superiority in the profession of arms, none is more important than energy in the conduct of military operations. This dictum can also be applied to crisis response. The military commanders in Lebanon in 1958 seemed to have the energy that Clausewitz spoke of, for they boldly *did something*. At the crucial juncture on the morning of 16 July, when the marines of 2/2 halted near a Lebanese Army road block north of the international airport, the most important military leaders were at the right spot, forward with their units. In a flash of intuitive insight, the commander of the Lebanese Army, General Fuad Chehab, demanded that as many vehicles as possible at the head of the marine column hold at least one Lebanese Army officer. His intention was to present the image to the people of Lebanon that the U.S. Marines were proceeding with the close control and coordination of the Lebanese Army, which was now powerfully reinforced and in control of the situation with its new ally. By this “detail” of the intervention, worked out with the allied commanders, General Chehab was able to maintain the integrity of his Christian-Muslim army and convince the populace of its

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continued fair-mindedness and its increased power to maintain law and order in the face of external invasion.

While the Marine Corps took over from the Lebanese Army the external defense of Lebanon, securing the international airport and the port of Beirut and defending the high ground east of the city and the roads leading to Damascus, Syria, the Lebanese Army was able to concentrate on subduing the factions engaged in the civil war in Beirut and other areas of Lebanon. The three MAUs present by 18 July 1958 formed a strong MAB of approximately 5500 men, fully backed by naval and air support, naval gunfire, and exceptionally powerful supporting weapons. Rapidly reinforced by an additional air-transported Marine rifle battalion and more than five thousand U.S. Army troops from West Germany, the U.S. forces became a strong deterrent against attack by Syrian or Israeli armed forces into Lebanon. These U.S. forces were in place within approximately a week after the Marine landing of 15 July 1958. By the middle of September, the Lebanese Army, with the reinforcement of the MAB and U.S. Army troops, had stabilized the political situation in Lebanon so effectively that the Lebanese government was able to hold elections in which the commander of the Lebanese Army was elected president.

From July through September 1958, President Eisenhower had successfully executed the highest level U.S. national policy to stabilize the government of Lebanon, preventing its overthrow internally by armed, minority, dissident forces and preventing its subjugation by external invasion from *either* Syria or Israel. To be successful under the conditions of 1958, the President's policy required armed force. Through the initiative and self-confidence of its leaders, the Marine Corps masterfully executed a self-generated mission of support for the Lebanese Army and helped to stabilize the political situation in Lebanon.

Strategic planners should be able to extract lessons and operating principles from the 1958 success in Lebanon and apply them to any Marine Corps landing as a response to crisis. Because the Marine Corps succeeded in as complex a situation as that in Lebanon in 1958, the Corps can expect to succeed virtually anywhere under the most complex international circumstances, so long as the same operating principles it used in Lebanon are applied. What were the "principles" or circumstances operating that give a satisfactory expectation of success?

First, the highest political authority must provide a timely, decisive order for the application of armed force. This is an obvious theoretical, "textbook" lesson, but it was demonstrated in actual human interactions in Lebanon. Another good example of this lesson was seen in Grenada in 1983. In both cases the president's timely and forceful action ensured the successful *beginning* of operations, but not necessarily the successful ending. Once applied, armed force develops its own grammar according to principles associated with war or impending war.

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Second, the commanders in Specified Command, Middle East, were forward and in a position to base decisions on the actual conditions of engagement. The commanders were able, therefore, to sort out the terrible confusion that characterizes the use of armed forces in crises. Their timely arrival in the area of operations, the strong combat forces under their command, and their presence at the head of their troops in the immediate area of the engagement all contributed to the success of the intervention. As their crucial operating principle, the commanders seem to have adopted General Ferdinand Foch's practical dictum on war that when the chaos of armed violence reigns supreme, the military commander can survive only by asking himself, "What is my mission?" and then proceed to fix on one and execute it through the fog of uncertainty in an unfamiliar land.<sup>4</sup> Early in the intervention, the Marine Corps created its successful mission-oriented style of support for the Lebanese Army. That army maintained both its tactical cohesion and the respect of the Lebanese people. By its own organizational integrity and the powerful (potential) combat support of the U.S. forces, it guaranteed the political integrity of the Lebanese state.

In any potential crisis response, the success of the Marine Corps will depend on whether the principles identified as crucial for success in the actual crisis engagement of 1958 are applied. Other useful principles exist, of course, and other historical cases can be used to guide the employment of marines in crisis response. At least three principles stand out as indispensable in virtually any crisis response in any part of the world. The National Command Authorities must anticipate a crisis, the Marine Corps must preposition its forces before the crisis unfolds, and the president and associated high-command authority must decide to intervene in the time and strength to begin operations successfully. Before the actual engagement or in its initial stage, the Marine force itself must define and execute a mission that consists of actions suitable for an armed force and that correlates to the political decision to intervene. These principles—anticipation, presidential decision, and Marine Corps mission—have characterized crisis response since 1945. The definition of a mission suitable for intervening armed marines in bringing crises to a quick, successful conclusion is perhaps the greatest and most critical challenge in the analysis of marines in crisis response outside Europe.

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## Notes

1. Given the traditional, primary importance of the marine rifleman, the author uses the term *rifle battalion* to refer to the fundamental combat battalion of the Marine Corps.

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2. See Gen. P. X. Kelley, USMC, and Maj. Hugh K. O'Donnell, Jr., USMC, "The Amphibious Warfare Strategy," in *The Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1980), 26.
  3. TVD or *Teatr Voennykh Deistvii* is translated as "theater of strategic military action."
  4. See Gen. Ferdinand Foch, *The Principles of War*, trans. by J. de Morinni (New York: H. K. Fly, 1918), 18.

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## **The Uses of Marine Forces: Lesser Conflicts**

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## Introduction: Sailors, Marines, and Small Wars

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*Frank Uhlig, Jr.*

Small wars are common nowadays. One way or another they disfigure almost all the continents. Some of them are, or have been, matters of invasion, with the army of one country thrusting itself upon a neighbor's soil. More of them are chiefly domestic, with one group of residents struggling to gain freedom from or mastery over another. Sometimes neighbors or other outsiders take part in the internal struggle, making it theirs. Sometimes, in fact, it is outsiders who start another country's internal war.

Common and distressing though they are, few small wars threaten interests vital to the United States. If the wars in Kampuchea, Angola, and Lebanon, for example, go well for the side favored by the United States (if we know which side that is), Americans can be thankful; if they go badly, Americans may grieve. But grieving is not the same thing as committing U.S. armed forces to combat to reverse the tide.

Could the United States help those it favors? Sometimes it could. If so, how? Chiefly through civil means, say those whose work follows this essay. Would military aid help? Again, sometimes yes. But because people have to win their own fight—a lesson learned from the Vietnam experience—usually the best way to help militarily is to send small U.S. teams to train local armies.

Since domestic wars have long lives and Americans tend to have a short span of interest in other people's military miseries, such a modest involvement suits our nature. Moreover, it suits the nature of U.S. military forces. These forces generally consist of heavy units trained and equipped for enormous struggles against similar forces of the Soviet Union. Because of their size, nature, and often inappropriate arms, most U.S. military forces are poorly suited for small wars. This is not to condemn them, however; they have helped to keep peace between the superpowers and they must continue to be able to do their share in that great task.

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Perhaps, as Mr. Rylander and Colonel Summers say, it is because those forces have been successful that the Soviets have turned to small wars to help them gain their ends. But, these writers warn, reshaping U.S. forces to fight minor wars would be foolish if it denied them their ability to win or, better yet, deter major wars.

Nevertheless, there are times and places in which the United States could be driven to use combat units in Third World crises and warfare. In the last thirty years, U.S. forces have been used many times, notably in Lebanon (in 1958 and again in 1982–1984); the Dominican Republic (1965); Vietnam (1965–1973); Cambodia, or Kampuchea, in the *Mayaguez* episode (1975); and Grenada (1983).

On three of these six occasions U.S. forces succeeded or at least came out of the experience without loss: these were the first Lebanese crisis, in the Dominican Republic, and in Grenada. Two other occasions were distinct failures, and one was an expensive success. The successes were times when U.S. forces, massive in comparison with the potential foe's, acted quickly. They were times when deep social passions had not yet gripped the people of the small country involved, and those people were, at least, not against the U.S. forces. In Grenada, where the population had just fallen under the thumb of a murderous gang of Stalinist thugs, the arrival of U.S. forces was highly popular. In none of the successes did U.S. troops stay long enough to wear out their welcome, however tepid that welcome might have been.

Each of the failures grew from its own roots. In Vietnam the people were not willing hosts to U.S. forces, at least not to the degree necessary; indeed, many of them welcomed, rather than feared, the aggressor from across the border. We tried to fight not only that aggressor, but also the internal enemy—when it was the job of the South Vietnamese to do that. We did our job no better than the South Vietnamese did theirs; and then, in frustration, we gave up and left to their fate those whom we had come to help.

In the second venture in Lebanon, U.S. troops, along with those of other countries, were ashore for over a year in a war-torn land. At first they were perceived as neutrals, but when U.S. forces opened fire in support of one of the contending sides, that perception unavoidably changed. The United States became a participant, favoring some against others, and the marines' welcome vanished. The opponents, using what for them was a conventional weapon—a big bomb borne by a truck—devastated the small contingent of U.S. Marines on the beach. The marines who succeeded them moved back into their ships. After a short while, the ships silently slipped away, bearing the marines with them.

In the *Mayaguez* episode, a puny event compared with Vietnam, the United States reacted quickly to the capture of an American merchant ship and the kidnapping of her 40-man crew by Kampuchean gunboats in the Gulf of

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Thailand. Under the mistaken impression that the mariners were held captive on Koh Tang, a hastily mounted assault was made on that small island by a few U.S. Marines borne into battle by Air Force helicopters. Alas, the prisoners were not on Koh Tang, but a heavily armed garrison was. Casualties in the landing force were heavy and, as it turned out, unnecessary, for while the landing was taking place, the prisoners were being released from confinement elsewhere. In all, forty-one Marine Corps and Air Force men died and fifty others were wounded as a result of the landing. Apparently, it was the quick arrival and continued presence of Navy patrol planes from the Philippines and the sinking of several Kampuchean gunboats by U.S. Air Force fighters from Thailand that persuaded the captors to return the Americans to their ship.

Armed intervention in the affairs of small countries, even in support of the well being of Americans, is a chancy business. Sometimes, as in Grenada, armed intervention must be risked, and it succeeds inexpensively. Sometimes, as in the case of the *Mayaguez*, it succeeds, but at high cost. Sometimes, as in the Dominican Republic, it ends quickly and happily. Sometimes, as in Vietnam, it goes on for a long time before collapsing in disaster.

In all these episodes the most prominent U.S. actors were marines or soldiers. Since mid-1987 sailors have been the principal American participants in a dangerous and bloody venture in the Persian Gulf. As this is written the action goes on. Judgments will be made, but not here. What conditions might once more justify landing the Marines, along with elements of other U.S. forces, to take part in someone else's "small war" (small to the United States, not necessarily to the warring nations)?

First, the outcome of the war must be vital to the United States. What makes one set of conditions vital and another not lies in the perceptions of the beholder. But let us say it is vital to the United States that the Panama Canal be open to the free flow of U.S. naval and civilian traffic. With almost as much certainty, we may say it is vital to the United States that the democratic government of Costa Rica not be overthrown in an invasion by Nicaragua. In contrast, it is important, but not vital, that the governments in Managua and Havana be friendly to the United States.

Second, the problem the United States hopes to solve through the use of armed forces must indeed be amenable to a military solution with the forces we are prepared to commit.

Third, the people this nation hopes to help must overwhelmingly want that help and want it in the form the United States proposes. U.S. troops must not be sent to help people who look upon, or may likely come to look upon, the presence of the United States as no more desirable, or perhaps less so, than that of their opponents.

Fourth, the United States must be prepared to do what is necessary to succeed. If for any reason we think this is not possible (as, for example, in

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Vietnam, where we believed we could neither blockade nor invade North Vietnam), then the government must find a nonmilitary solution to the problem or acquiesce in the results of its inaction.

Finally, U.S. citizens must be satisfied that these four conditions do indeed prevail.

If the United States were to respond positively to an appeal from Costa Rica for armed help against a Nicaraguan invasion, U.S. forces would have to land in Costa Rica to provide that unarmed nation with a shield. But if the United States wished to be successful, it would have to do more than that. Beforehand, it should make plain to the Nicaraguans that, unlike the war in Vietnam, it would be traffic into and out of our enemy's harbors, not our friend's, that would be stopped, and that the major combat ashore would take place not in the approaches to San José, Costa Rica, but in those to Managua, Nicaragua. This means that, indeed, U.S. troops near Managua would be surrounded by an enemy population. But that would be clear to both sides. And the foes would know how to get them out: Move their troops out of Costa Rica. Such foreknowledge can be a great deterrent to war.

So far I have focused on ground forces in general (for most interventions have been multiservice activities) and the Marine Corps in particular. But the Marines do not go to war by themselves. The Navy takes them there and supports them with fire and logistics. In Vietnam the Navy was poorly prepared at first to provide the necessary support, but eventually it was able to come up with enough support of the right kinds. Things have changed. The Navy is no longer poorly prepared to provide such support. It is unprepared.

In 1965 and 1966 the Navy was able to withdraw from secondary uses and from storage ships and craft of all sorts—simple, inexpensive landing ships, landing craft, and logistical ships and craft—as well as advanced-base functional components with which to support these ships and craft and the forces engaged ashore. Almost all of these are gone now, without replacement. Then the Navy also had minesweepers to keep the channels open between ports and the open sea. It had shallow-draft gun-armed ships able to provide fire before the troops set up their artillery and afterwards, along any seaward flank. Almost all of these are gone too, unreplaced.

As for the multitude of coastal and river-patrol craft used in Vietnam, craft the Navy did not have before 1965, almost none now survives. Of those remaining the best belong to the Coast Guard (as was true twenty years ago). Ironically, the very existence of that service seems now to be in question. In any event, with diminished resources the Coast Guard is fully occupied in trying not only to carry out its normal duties but also to end the seaborne smuggling of drugs into this country. The Navy has about a score of inshore patrol boats built in the 1970s.

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Among the Navy's people who learned how to carry out coastal and riverine operations in primitive places, almost all who were middle-grade or senior officers and petty officers have retired. Most who were junior left the Navy long ago. Those who remain are now heavy with gold stripes or chevrons.

Since the Navy must prepare for the possibility of again taking part in warfare in primitive places, what might it usefully do? Most importantly, it should examine what it did in Vietnam, what worked and why, what failed and why. It should also examine the experiences of other navies in similar circumstances. These inexpensive actions can provide the necessary background for making decisions about engaging in similar warfare, but in a different place and time. The Navy also can train some of its regular officers and men to handle the small combatant ships and craft the Navy will need. (For this kind of warfare, the Navy now depends largely on reservists, but if the Vietnam example were to be followed, the reservists would not be called up.)

It could draw up plans for the types of ships and craft, logistical and combatant, it would need for such a war, it could build a few, and it could identify those commercial and foreign-owned ships and craft that could serve in an emergency until better ones were built in suitable numbers.

Two types of ships come quickly to mind as potentially highly useful. The first is a successor to World War II's LST-1 class, and the second is a gunboat. The latter, a replacement for the shallow-draft, heavily gunned destroyers the Navy once possessed in abundance, might resemble the *Erie*-class gunboats of 1936. Those 20-knot, 2,000-ton ships, armed with four 6-inch guns, were built to help deal with contingencies in the Caribbean and Central America. A modern gunboat of their type might be diesel-driven, armed with Army or Marine 155-mm weapons for distant fire and 40-mm guns for close in. She would be armored well enough to protect people and equipment from automatic weapons fire, able to survive gunfire and missile hits topside and mines below, and she would have a landing deck (but no hangar or fuel) for a helicopter. She would be a real fighting ship. Like aircraft carriers, such ships need not be numerous. They might never be needed, but there might prove to be no substitute for them.

Judging by the experience in Vietnam, the new version of the LST-1 would be even more important than the gunboats. The simple, expendable, old LSTs, more than any other ships, kept the marines in the DMZ and elsewhere supplied with food and ammunition. As with the gunboats, there is nothing like them in the fleet now. But more than 40 of these old ships still serve in the navies of Taiwan and the Philippines. Altogether about 100 of them are still in use around the world. There are also over 30 more recently built ships of similar design in various navies. The LCU, a much smaller vessel than the LST, was also very useful in keeping the fighting forces ashore adequately

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supplied. The Navy still has a few of these, all in use, but their ages grow, their numbers drop, and no replacement suitable for Third World warfare is in sight.

Small ships and craft—and the advanced-base functional components from which austere bases for them and the Marines could be fashioned quickly—are cheap compared with nuclear-powered submarines, attack aircraft carriers, supersonic fighters, and guided-missile cruisers. They are so cheap as to be lost in Washington's pocket change. That is one of their virtues. But in Washington, it is also their biggest weakness, for when money runs short, the Navy tends to suck its small projects dry in order to feed its big ones.

Some people say the United States will not have to fight a small war again, and perhaps they are right. But even in big wars, or at least all those in which U.S. forces have fought so far, small and modest-sized combatant and logistical ships analogous to those just proposed have been both scarce (at first) and valuable (almost always). Naval war has its constants, and the need for such ships appears to be one of them. Those who customarily fight ashore with their backs and flanks to the sea are among those who keep that constant in mind. Or at least one hopes they do.

## The Use of Marine Forces in Third World Interventions

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*Alan Ned Sabrosky*

“Landing the Marines” in some faraway place to redress grievances, rescue American citizens, suppress disputatious factions, or wage what might be called a “small war”<sup>1</sup> is a commonplace, if somewhat exaggerated, feature of military history. Indeed, the conduct of military interventions in the Third World in the absence of a formal declaration of war has been a traditional role of the Marine Corps, obviously acting in conjunction with the Navy. The notional birth of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) in 1980 overlooked the fact that until the Second World War the Navy-Marine Corps partnership together constituted America’s “rapid deployment force,” conducting dozens of military operations abroad in low- to middle-intensity conflicts requiring the use of minimum force to achieve politically acceptable solutions.<sup>2</sup>

Today, both the Army and the Air Force have joined the Marine Corps and the Navy in Third World interventions, less out of an objective requirement for the presence of all four services in strength in every instance than to remain competitive in what has been called “the annual Pentagon budget sweepstakes”<sup>3</sup> and to carry the logic of joint operations to a predictable conclusion.<sup>4</sup> Since the 1970s, the Marine Corps has staked out an operational claim to dispatch a Marine amphibious brigade (MAB) to Norway in the event of war and has augmented its mechanized capabilities,<sup>5</sup> in part because of a perceived need to justify the relevance of the Marine Corps in an era of constrained resources and precarious amphibious assaults.

Nevertheless, the conduct of interventions in the Third World, if circumstances so dictate, remains very close to the heart and soul of Marine Corps operations today and for the foreseeable future. This paper considers (1) the political-military requirements for the existence of such a capability; (2) the capacity of the Marine Corps to meet those requirements; (3) the operational “balance sheet” of Marine Corps assets and liabilities for conducting such interventions; and (4) possible corrective measures for certain principal

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problem areas that will not erode the overall capability of the Marine Corps to play its part in U.S. national security.

## Requirements

To say that the United States must be able to intervene militarily in the Third World understates the case. Every state with interests abroad—especially major powers with global interests—requires some capability to safeguard those interests. In some circumstances, diplomacy may suffice. In other instances, economic leverage may be employed. But in certain cases, only the threat or the use of military force will safeguard U.S. interests. Some of these interests, of course, are challenged by the Soviet Union or its proxies. Countermeasures to such challenges will rarely fall into the category of “lesser conflicts” amenable to rapid resolution. But it would be extremely imprudent to allow a preoccupation with the dangerous but improbable anti-Soviet contingencies to obscure the far more real requirement to be able to counter challenges to U.S. interests and allies in the Third World—challenges emanating in large measure from sources other than the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup>

The objective requirement for a capability to intervene decisively and effectively in the Third World when necessary is balanced by the admittedly subjective consideration that many Americans and their elected representatives in Congress view such interventions with varying combinations of apprehension, uneasiness, and outright alarm. That such a state of affairs exists is perhaps the principal legacy of the American misadventure in Indochina. Historically, and especially in this century, American wars have fallen rather neatly into one of two categories: major conflicts and lesser conflicts. Major conflicts, such as the two world wars, have aroused a crusading urge in the American people, whose preferred national style has been to define an adversary as evil and then overwhelm him. Even the anti-Soviet component of the Cold War and the somewhat chilling realm of nuclear strategy fit into what Russell F. Weigley has called “the American way of war.”<sup>7</sup> Policies, strategies, and doctrines as different as the Eisenhower administration’s espousal of “massive retaliation,” “rollback,” and “brinkmanship,” the Kennedy administration’s proclamation of the “New Frontier,” and the Reagan administration’s advocacy of “a national strategy of peace through strength” to counter an “evil empire” fit comfortably with the conventional American approach to foreign policy and defense. There would either be peace or something akin to a “holy war” in which right would triumph and wrongdoers would be brought down.<sup>8</sup> Even given the specter of a thermonuclear Armageddon, the patterns of power were at least compatible with the dominant characteristics of American political culture in matters of peace and war.<sup>9</sup>

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None of this characteristic certitude, unfortunately, applies to “limited wars” of varying intensity. Before World War II, such wars tended to be almost incidental to the American people. The level of American involvement was fairly low, losses were relatively light, and the communications technology of the day did not bring trivial incidents into homes every evening in the guise of events of global significance. The U.S. intervention in the Philippine Insurrection (1899–1902) was something of an exception, but even it had the decency to be mercifully short—and the United States won. After World War II, things quickly became more complicated for the United States and its allies. Limited wars, such as Korea and Vietnam, and localized interventions, such as the Dominican Republic and Grenada, became the order of the day. Certainties fell by the wayside, some wars were won and some were lost, and the fact that Americans do not like such wars unless they are both short and successful became all too apparent. Less apparent, but equally significant, realities were that such conflicts are far more likely to occur than the high-intensity anti-Soviet contingencies that drive our defense planning, and that the United States neither wages such conflicts well nor learns well from them.<sup>10</sup>

The net effect of all this is that the United States is in a somewhat unenviable position with regard to Third World interventions, and this has obvious implications for the Marine Corps. The United States must maintain an adequate nuclear deterrent and a sufficient hedge against the need to conduct conventional warfare against the Soviet Union if deterrence fails. The Third World, however, is where we have fought since 1945 and where we will certainly be called on to fight at some point in the future. Precisely how to do so successfully is less clear. It is clear that the United States must be able to do better in such interventions than we have done in the past. The capability of the Marine Corps to conduct such interventions, either as part of the Marine Corps-Navy team or in conjunction with the Army and the Air Force, will determine in large part whether or not this country actually does better in its Third World interventions.

### **Marine Corps Capabilities Today**

The force structure, organization for battle, and strategy advocated by the Marine Corps are described elsewhere in this volume. Basic Marine Corps task organization and doctrine are well attuned to the operational requirements of interventions in the Third World. The ability to act quickly and decisively if ordered to deploy appears to be inherent in the Marine Corps propensity to tailor combined-arms forces with a mix of air and ground components to perform a specific mission. The existence of standing headquarters for both Marine amphibious units (MAUs) of reinforced battalion strength and Marine

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amphibious brigades (MABs) that exceed the Army's light infantry division in strength, with the operational ground, aviation, and service-support units assigned to them, provides the core of the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF).<sup>11</sup> The basic concept is that the relative composition of each MAGTF (and especially both the size and the mix of its ground and aviation combat components) will vary according to the mission it is expected to perform. The basic Marine amphibious unit includes an infantry battalion reinforced, a Marine amphibious brigade contains an infantry regiment reinforced, and a Marine amphibious force is comprised of a division reinforced, plus suitable aviation and combat service-support elements in each instance. Few assume that an entire MAGTF would be deployed as constituted in peacetime. Marines simply "find it more prudent to leave behind those parts of the team judged not essential to the mission at hand, rather than at the eleventh hour adding those parts which may be necessary."<sup>12</sup>

Much, of course, needs to be done to put any MAGTF into a theater of operations with reasonable prospects of executing its mission successfully. Time and distance are critical factors, and either or both may provide a less-than-optimal environment for the employment of U.S. forces in a Third World intervention. A number of programs have been implemented or planned to allow Marine Corps forces to deploy to threatened areas in a minimum of time and with a maximum of sustainability. The advent of the *Wasp*-class multipurpose amphibious assault ship (LHD), the creation of battleship battle groups (BBGs), and the maritime prepositioning ship (MPS) program are but a few of the principal initiatives that enhance the intervention capability of the Marine Corps.<sup>13</sup> Programs to modernize conventional forces—from the light armored vehicle (LAV) and the advanced amphibious assault vehicle (AAAV) to the improvement of C<sup>3</sup>I capabilities—are intended to enhance the capacity of the Marine Corps to fight and win in many different combat situations throughout the world.

Marine Corps doctrine seems singularly well suited to the requirements of Third World interventions because it emphasizes the ability to act quickly and decisively in amorphous operational situations.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the dominant characteristic of Marine tactical doctrine is its emphasis on the offensive. This emphasis applies not only to combined-arms amphibious operations, in which both seaborne and helicopter-borne assault groups attack with naval gunfire and tactical air support, but to all other operations as well. In theory, the tactical repertoire of the Marine Corps is as varied as that of any other modern military organization. In practice, however, it seems that the precedence given to the Corps' ability to provide assault forces, coupled with the relatively restricted tactical flexibility permitted to amphibious assault forces in the initial stage of an operation, has continued to predominate. It is not surprising that an institution like the Marine Corps that has built its *persona* around the assault force

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should prefer to operate in such a manner whenever possible. Some expeditionary situations in the Third World clearly call for offensive tactics; others, however, do not. It is the latter that understandably arouse concern.

### **The Capacity to Intervene: A Net Assessment**

The Marine Corps obviously has many attributes useful in Third World interventions. But it is necessary to distinguish between what the Marine Corps *can* do, or at least can be *prepared* to do with great effort, and what it *should* be prepared to do, given the geostrategic parameters within which American defense policy must be formulated. This issue should not be avoided by retreating to a restatement of formal Marine Corps roles and missions embodied in the National Security Act of 1947 and subsequent legislation or executive orders. Indeed, a realistic appraisal of operational *need* suggests that there is a substantial gulf between what the Marine Corps can do and what it should be prepared to do, at least in the emerging international security environment.

Perhaps the most fundamental concern is that the Marine Corps, like the Army, has overextended itself—yet unlike the Army, its relatively small size and scarce resources do not allow it the flexibility to meet a number of diverse requirements. There is much to be said for the ideal of a well-rounded “force in readiness,” able to deploy anywhere, at any time, against any adversary. Unfortunately, pursuit of this ideal may mean in practice being ill-prepared and ill-positioned (absent occasional flukes, such as the Grenada operation in 1983) for any specific contingency. The adage “jack of all trades, master of none” comes perilously close to describing the condition in which the Marine Corps may find itself early in the next decade, if not sooner.

Second, concern about the genuine capability of so-called unified commands to conduct well-integrated joint operations, whether or not the Marine Corps is involved, is widespread. Joint operations are obviously a function of the Marine Corps-Navy team, and in sustained operations the Air Force at least would become involved in support of a Marine amphibious brigade, perhaps even a Marine amphibious unit. A more contentious issue is mixing Army and Marine Corps ground components, seemingly for the sake of interservice harmony. Joint operations are by no means new to the United States and its defense establishment. Even putting aside questions about the relative cohesion and sustainability of Army and Marine Corps ground elements in a “come as you are” fight, incompatibility between the Army-Air Force and the Navy-Marine Corps on so fundamental a level as communications for fire support (as occurred in Grenada) arouse apprehension that worse problems exist elsewhere in the military infrastructure that would become manifest if the United States became engaged against a serious adversary.

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Third, to compound the concerns about strategic overextension and duplication of effort among the services, the Marine Corps appears to have fallen afoul of the peril of *overpreparation*. History *can* mislead, but it can also be a useful guide if interpreted prudently and not simply with an eye to bureaucratic advantage in the game of interservice rivalry. One lesson that can be derived from both history and strategy is that while the Marine Corps is a “heavy” force relative to most Third World countries, it is remarkably *light* for dealing with the Soviet Union. Put bluntly, a MAU’s four or five main battle tanks, or even a MAB’s tank company, are not impressive when compared with the mechanized capability available to even a single Soviet motorized rifle division.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, many Third World countries are acquiring sophisticated weapons systems that are relatively easy to operate, which can only make the operational task of the Marine Corps more difficult.<sup>16</sup> In short, trying to match Soviet capabilities in order to justify participation in a NATO contingency may well be beyond the Marine Corps’ wildest expectations—and the effort may divert resources from those programs that would give the Marine Corps adequate numbers of lethal weapons systems suitable for dealing with Third World adversaries.

Fourth is the question of operational balance. The Marine Corps is establishing a number of operational headquarters for its various MAGTF levels. The plan is to fully staff three MAF headquarters, six MAB headquarters, and six MAU headquarters. The MAU headquarters seem appropriate to the need for such elements; indeed, one or two more could easily be justified. But the necessity for so many MAB and MAF headquarters in the strategic environment within which the United States operates is by no means obvious. They doubtless provide spaces for senior officers, but they also divert personnel from the operational units where shortfalls all too often occur. In the past forty years, *one* MAF has been deployed on two separate occasions (in Korea—before the term had been invented—and in Vietnam); MABs have been deployed twice in combat (or near-combat) situations (in Lebanon in 1958 and in the Dominican Republic in 1965); and MAU-level units have been deployed more frequently (e.g., in Beirut and Grenada). Circumstances in which more than a single MAF or MAB are required at the same time could arise. But it defies both logic and strategic sense to think that the Marine Corps has any rational requirement for *nine* MAF- or MAB-level headquarters.

Fifth, the Marine Corps capacity to conduct operations effectively in the Third World is becoming something of a paradox. In terms of organization for combat, doctrine, and the integrated use of combined arms for sustained operations in “lesser conflicts,” the Marine Corps is superior to any of its U.S. or foreign competitors. But it has become encumbered by many major weapons systems whose existence is operationally counterproductive in such missions. Ships and hardware are increasingly expensive, increasingly hard to

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procure, increasingly hard to repair or replace—and most importantly, increasingly difficult to risk losing for reasons both political and budgetary, much like the armies of the eighteenth century. Yet the tendency has been to increase technological sophistication and firepower (neither of which are bad attributes, to be sure), at the expense of mobility and numbers—something an intervention force needs above all else. Classic examples of this tendency are the M198 15-mm towed howitzer now in the Marine Corps inventory, and the M1A1 main battle tank slated to enter the inventory in the early 1990s. Both are excellent weapons systems in their own right—especially the M1A1, designed to prevail against Soviet armor on a European battlefield. But the best tank in the world has little value unless enough of them can be deployed quickly when and where they are needed. Put bluntly, too many Marine Corps procurement decisions in recent years have shaped a force that is too heavy to deploy quickly in strength into the Third World, where it doubtless will have to fight, but that will forever be too light to prevail against Soviet forces, which its major weapons systems are intended to counter.

Finally, the actual employment of a MAGTF larger than a MAU (e.g., a MAB) relies unrealistically on maritime prepositioned ships and a level of strategic airlift that are unlikely to be available when and where they are required. This has obviously been the subject of considerable debate inside and outside the military. Matters such as the accurate computation of sailing time for forces without MPS and flying time for those forces *with* MPS in place and accessible complicate the strategic equation. The more important concern, however, is that the MPS approach requires a benign environment in which ships can be offloaded and airlifted personnel can be married up with their equipment. This requires access to friendly adjacent countries, or at least the existence of a secure bridgehead with adequate airfield and port facilities nearby. These are likely to be absent in many contingencies. Moreover, the MPS vessels themselves are hardly invulnerable. In fact, they are exceptionally lucrative targets to (for example) the missile-armed patrol boats in the inventories of a growing number of Third World countries. The weakness of military strategic airlift capability, its dependence on a fragile Civilian Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) capability, and the simple fact that it takes a great deal of strategic airlift to support strategic air mobility forces, all call into question the operational premises on which the capability of the Marine Corps to intervene in Third World conflicts is based. At best, it is a valiant effort to manage the potentially unmanageable in a challenging strategic environment.

### **Preparing Better for Intervention**

What do these questions mean for the Marine Corps and its capability to intervene successfully in Third World conflicts? How can the Marine Corps

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better prepare for intervention? First, political, budgetary, and institutional constraints must be acknowledged. But one should also appreciate that change *is* possible, as anyone contemplating the state of American defense in 1987 in contrast to its condition in 1977 can attest. It would be prudent to assume that no significant reallocation of Defense Department resources that would benefit the Marine Corps at the expense of other services will occur; that there will be neither a significant increase nor a significant reduction in the Corps' share of defense resources—although resources within the Corps itself may be reallocated. Finally, it must be acknowledged that the Marine Corps will have to give up *something* of value to itself in order to obtain enough of what is needed to protect the national interest in lesser conflicts.

The first step in building a notional Marine Corps to meet U.S. future needs is to acknowledge that a better division of labor between the Army and the Marine Corps is both proper and prudent when it comes to preparations for war.<sup>17</sup> As noted earlier, joint operations are inherent in Marine Corps and Army operations, as each depends on either the Navy or the Air Force (if not both) for transport, resupply, and support. But fewer is better when it comes to the involvement of component commands, especially on the ground. One *can* pool Army and Marine Corps elements together for a single operation, of course, but—interservice rivalries aside—doing so routinely seems unnecessary. The success of joint operations depends less on the technical skills that each service possesses than on how differences in organization, doctrine, sustainability and cohesion among the services are reconciled. After all, Army formations have conducted amphibious operations, and the Marine Corps has had parachute battalions, but there is no obvious need to complicate matters more than is necessary by combining services generally so different in so many ways. This means that the Marine Corps should eschew preparations to become embroiled in anti-Soviet conflicts (i.e., major wars) and concentrate instead on preparing itself for interventions in the Third World, while the Army should focus on major wars. Neither service will appreciate this division of labor for institutional reasons, to be sure. Perhaps it might be instructive to allow U.S. strategy and force planning to be guided for once by something other than the desires of individual services to preserve missions and force structures out of a sense of institutional self-interest.

The second step is to change the number and level of MAGTF headquarters relative to the number of forward-deployed MAUs afloat at any one time. As General P. X. Kelley once observed, "The effective employment of Marines depends upon timeliness as well as readiness."<sup>18</sup> It also depends on reducing headquarters overhead and enhancing end strengths in the operational units to provide that readiness. The current system, unfortunately, is top-heavy with headquarters and forward-light in deployed units. The MAGTF concept, with its provision for stable headquarters, is excellent, but there are too many

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large MAGTF headquarters to make sense. One can make a case for two MAF headquarters, vice the currently programmed three; one could make a case for two MAB headquarters in place of the six currently programmed; and one can easily make a case for six MAU headquarters, overseeing four forward-deployed MAUs at a given time, in place of four MAU headquarters and two forward-deployed MAUs as is currently the case. Timeliness, after all, depends as much on positioning as it does on planning. In the Grenada incident for instance, the United States was fortunate to have had a MAU en route to the Mediterranean in the vicinity; otherwise, things would have been rather more complicated, to say the least. Four forward-deployed MAUs—one each in the Mediterranean and the western Pacific as at present, plus one each in the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean—would position Marine forces close to the areas where they would most likely be needed. Such a procedure would certainly entail a substantial revision of shipping and employment plans and schedules, but the strategic advantages to such an arrangement would outweigh the disadvantages. Under this plan MAUs could not rely as heavily on MPS and CRAF assets; instead they would have to increase their capability for forcible entry into a less-than-benign environment. In short, this reorientation would bring plans and assets more into accord with reality.

The third, and in many respects most critical, step is redirection of the procurement programs for major weapons systems. There is more than a measure of truth to the proverb that “quality is better than quantity, at least if it is available in large numbers.” Survivability and lethality are important on any modern battlefield in any theater of operations. But the “look-see-hit-kill” lethality equation of advanced weapons technology reduces the survivability quotient of any weapons system. More to the point, any weapons system that cannot be taken to the battlefield in sufficient numbers to make a tactical difference simply is not an asset, regardless of its objective technical merits. Finally, there simply is no direct correlation between size and cost and lethality with respect to battlefield “quality.” New munitions, such as the armor-piercing, fin-stabilized, discarding-sabot (APFSDS) round for light (e.g., 76-mm) guns, and enhanced target-acquisition capabilities have reduced sharply the time-honored correlation between size and lethality.

These observations suggest that procurement of hardware for a force such as the Marine Corps that is oriented towards interventions in the Third World should proceed in accordance with the “three L’s” principle: that is, choose weapons systems that are (a) light, (b) lethal, and (c) sufficiently inexpensive so that a lot of them can be bought at a reasonable cost. There are at least four reasons for such a criteria. First, it is more cost-effective; one can buy more copies of a given item for a given outlay than can be had of a more expensive and theoretically more capable larger system. Second, lighter and simpler systems (not always synonymous attributes, of course) are easier to

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maintain and generally less burdensome to sustain in the field. Third, lighter systems can be transported by a wider inventory of ships and aircraft, in greater numbers, with less difficulty than heavier systems, independent of the differential in their respective capabilities. And finally, it hurts less tactically to lose one of a larger number of light systems than it does to lose one of a smaller number of heavier systems.

Two major Marine Corps procurement systems illustrate the consequences of attempting to do too much and the liabilities any single service (especially a relatively small one) experiences in attempting to make independent major procurement buys. These systems are the M198 towed 155-mm howitzer and the M1A1 main battle tank. Both are technically capable systems; both are well-suited for anti-Soviet contingencies in Europe; and both are markedly ill-suited for the types of contingencies the Marine Corps should be prepared to meet in Third World interventions. For instance, there are a number of light tanks on the shelf in the United States (to say nothing of other countries), produced by Cadillac-Gage, the AAI Corporation, and others, that would be ideal for operations in the Third World. They weigh 13 to 19 tons (vice the M1A1's 55 tons), require approximately 20 percent as much fuel as the M1A1 to cover the same distance, and mount 76-mm to 105-mm guns with good penetrating effect using APFSDS rounds.<sup>19</sup> They are also more transportable: A C5 can carry one M1A1 or eight light tanks, and smaller transports (C130s and C141s) can carry two light tanks (but obviously none of the M1A1s), thereby enhancing the number of relevant aircraft that could support an intervention.

Much the same situation holds for the M198 howitzer when contrasted with the new British-designed M119 towed 105-mm howitzer, now being procured by the Army for its light divisions. The M198 certainly has more "punch" than the M119, but the latter is more mobile, has a higher rate of fire, and is more easily transportable. In short, the M119 possesses the principal attributes required for the artillery of an intervention force.

The Marine Corps may have no choice but to retain the M198, perhaps supplementing it with M119s. But the M1A1 decision needs to be reconsidered in order to permit the exploration of lighter tracked armor—ideally, with an amphibious capability—more suitable to the operational requirements of Third World interventions.

Finally, Marine aviation needs to reduce both the extreme diversity of aircraft types in a Marine air wing and the duplication of effort with the Navy and Air Force. Put directly, the Marine Corps needs to get out of the air-superiority and deep-interdiction business and concentrate its fixed-wing assets on the single mission most important to the Marine Corps at large: close air support. Other missions can properly be left to the other services with fixed-wing combat aviation assets. Thus, instead of deploying the F/A-18, the Corps

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should concentrate on vertical or short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) aircraft such as the AV-8B, AV-8C, or their successors; it should search for less expensive (if less glamorous) platforms than the *Wasp*-class LHDs for V/STOL aircraft to accompany deployed MAUs. The British experience in the Falklands demonstrated precisely how such aircraft from relatively simple platforms could conduct effective operations in extremely challenging circumstances.<sup>20</sup> Such a shift would be better operationally and logistically for the Marine Corps. Carrier-based naval aviation would be available to support any U.S. intervention in which the Corps becomes involved and can execute other missions as needed. Here, as elsewhere, a better division of labor can reduce redundancy in force structures and enhance tactical efficiency.

### **Retrospect and Prospect**

Clearly, the United States must be able to intervene if necessary in the Third World. Different services, including the Marine Corps, can and have played different parts in such interventions. Certain procurement decisions aside, the basic Marine Corps MAGTF concept and doctrine appear to be particularly suitable for operations in the Third World. Indeed, there are no discernable organizational or doctrinal flaws peculiar to the Marine Corps that cannot be remedied. In short, corrective action within the Corps is feasible without a major institutional upheaval.

The paradox, however, is that most the factors that influence the capacity of the Marine Corps to intervene successfully in the Third World lie outside the province the Marine Corps controls independently. Yet these factors must be taken into account. For instance, it will be extremely difficult for the United States to obtain sufficient prepositioning and reliable access to meet all contingencies. Whether it will be possible to provide adequate resources for strategic lift (especially strategic airlift) in an era of constrained budgets is not clear, especially in the aftermath of the 1986 election. Whether the 1988 election will worsen or improve those conditions remains to be seen.

The United States has the best prospects for a successful intervention, moreover, when it acts proactively rather than reactively, yet many constraints inherent in the American political system inhibit doing what is operationally preferable.<sup>21</sup> Allied support for an intervention can well be critical politically if not operationally. But for many states it is politically very difficult to openly endorse the use of force by the United States against a neighboring country, as the recent U.S. experience with Libya made clear. Further, as the events attending the involvement of the Marines in Beirut underscored with particular force, it is eminently clear that neither the Congress nor the American people will support costly interventions abroad, national interests or strategic goals notwithstanding. Finally, all the services are preoccupied with institutional

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interests to the detriment of the development of a strategically sound capability to execute this type of mission. That this situation is perfectly normal in a bureaucracy does not make it any less debilitating in operational terms. The United States can try to “muddle through,” of course, but Americans are not all that good at doing so. We should leave it to those who appear to do it well, such as the British, and set about putting our own house in order so that any interventions in which the Marine Corps is involved have good prospects for success.

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### Notes

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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3. Sabrosky, “The United States Marine Corps,” 219.
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5. Lt.Col. David W. Brown, “In Norway, Europe's Northern Flank: A Role for U.S. Marines,” *Amphibious Warfare Review* (Summer 1986); Jim Stewart, “Marines Fight To Find a Role in Modern Warfare,” *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* (25 May 1986); and Lt.Col. Kenneth W. Estes, “Armor in the Amphibious Force,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 1986).
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  11. Lt. Gen. B. E. Trainor, "The Marines," *Amphibious Warfare Review* (1986); and Sabrosky, "The United States Marine Corps," 210–215. After this paper was drafted, the term *amphibious* was replaced by *expeditionary* in all unit designations.
  12. Trainor, "The Marines," 9.
  13. Lt. Col. G. M. Brooke III and Lt. Col. Frederick McCorkle, "Rapid Response Force Options," *Amphibious Warfare Review* (Summer 1986); Col. Gordon Batcheller, "MPS: The Rest of the Story," *Amphibious Warfare Review* (Summer 1986); Paul Stillwell, "Battleships for the 1980s," and Frank Uhlig, Jr., "Amphibious, Mine, and Auxiliary Forces," in James L. George, ed., *The U.S. Navy: The View from the Mid-1980s* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985).
  14. This treatment is drawn from Sabrosky, "The United States Marine Corps," 212.
  15. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1986–1987* (London: IISS, 1986), esp. 8–9, 37–38.
  16. Trainor, "The Marines," 149–150.
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  18. Gen. P. X. Kelley, "Statement on Posture, Plans, and Programs for Fiscal Years 1987 through 1991," *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 1986), 32.
  19. The Marine Corps studied variations of a light tank, both independently as the Mobile Protected Weapons System (MPWS) and then (after 1981) as the Armored Gun System (AGS) following its merger with the Army's Mobile Protected Gun System (MPGS) program. No decisions have been made, and the AGS program has been terminated as an independent effort. This paper suggests reopening the MPWS program, with or without Army participation.
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## The U.S. Marine Corps and Low-Intensity Conflict

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*R. Lynn Rylander*

If Marines have become accustomed to easy victories over irregulars in the past, they must now prepare themselves for the increased effort which will be necessary to insure victory in the future.

—U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, 1940

The United States Marine Corps is no stranger to low-intensity conflict (“small wars” in the Marines’ lexicon). “From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli” commemorates important victories in low-intensity conflicts in 1847 and 1805, respectively. Since 1776, small wars, or low-intensity conflicts, have accounted for 46 percent of all Marine Corps landings and battles. Of the 301 Medals of Honor awarded to marines, 30 percent have been awarded for deeds of heroism in low-intensity conflict.

Low-intensity conflict is also not new to the human race. The tactic of wearing down an adversary one step at a time without arousing an effective response was first articulated by Sun Tzu in the sixth century B.C.<sup>1</sup> The revolution that gave birth to the United States and the U.S. Marine Corps and served as the model for so many other struggles for freedom was in large part a low-intensity conflict. Clausewitz recognized that “the People in Arms” (i.e., guerrillas) could not, alone, defeat a conventional force. He saw value, however, in their ability to “nibble at the shell and around the edges”<sup>2</sup> of an opposing force in areas just outside the theater of war.

Roughly fifty years ago, low-intensity conflict took a new turn. In China, Mao Zedong was distilling centuries of experience in low-intensity conflict in works such as *On Guerrilla Warfare* and painting them with the ideological brush of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>3</sup> “Wars of national liberation”—the communist term for low-intensity conflict—have been with us ever since. In the United States, the Marine Corps was distilling more than a century and a half of experience in low-intensity conflict in its *Small Wars Manual*.<sup>4</sup> This

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1940 document is probably no longer widely read, but it should be, because it contains many truths about low-intensity conflict that America has since lost sight of.

This paper addresses the role of the Marine Corps in low-intensity conflict (LIC). The threat posed by LIC to the national security of the United States is gaining increased recognition, giving rise to a determination to devise an effective response. I approach the issue of LIC from three perspectives: the threat, the response, and the capability evolving within the Marine Corps today. In doing so, I present some thoughts about the Marine Corps of the future.

## The Threat of Low-Intensity Conflict

### *Definition of LIC*

One of the greatest difficulties in dealing with low-intensity conflict is understanding just what it is. One observer has described it as “the Saturday-night special of conflict.” The *Small Wars Manual* notes that small wars (LIC) are “conceived in uncertainty, are conducted often with precarious responsibility and doubtful authority, under indeterminate orders lacking specific instructions.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, LIC is by nature ambiguous, a point stressed repeatedly at the January 1986 Low-Intensity Warfare Conference sponsored by the secretary of defense.

Definitions of LIC abound. An official publication of the Joint Chiefs of Staff defines low-intensity conflict as

a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and ranges from diplomatic, economic, and psychosocial pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low-intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic area and is often characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and level of violence.<sup>6</sup>

This definition of LIC appropriately emphasizes its political, social, economic, and psychological dimensions. Perhaps less appropriately, it approaches the problem from the perspective of a superpower, placing LIC in the context of “limited” struggle, “confined” geographic area, and “constrained” weaponry, tactics, and level of violence. For those personally engaged in LIC this definition misses the mark. To them, LIC is anything but limited, confined, and constrained.

Recognizing the deficiency, the National Security Council has recently adopted the following, more universally applicable definition:

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Low Intensity Conflict is political-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states. It involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. Low Intensity Conflict ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. It is waged by a combination of means employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. Low Intensity Conflicts are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications.<sup>7</sup>

### *Manifestations of LIC*

Since a majority of Americans may never agree on the definition of LIC, it may be more productive to describe LIC by deduction. Certainly, LIC is neither peace nor major, declared war. It is not conventional nor nuclear deterrence, although these factors form the backdrop for LIC. Vietnam was not LIC, not at least the way the United States approached that conflict after 1965, because the United States tried to make something of it that it was not—a small version of a war on the plains of Europe.

LIC manifests itself in a number of ways—insurgency, state-sponsored terrorism, trafficking in illegal narcotics for political ends, and disinformation. Although these manifestations differ in tactics, their common strategic objective is disrupting an existing order. Individually or collectively, they represent a complex interaction of social, political, economic, psychological, and unconventional military factors. They are protracted assaults designed to erode the will of the opponent without provoking an effective counteraction.

LIC finds its roots in real or perceived systemic inequities: Population explosions that outstrip resources, poverty, upheavals such as oil crises followed by oil gluts, and political systems that concentrate power in the hands of a few at the expense of the many. All these problems can and do contribute to instability. When the inequity is in the balance of political power, the reaction from the people may be a legitimate desire and quest for freedom. Or the reaction may be an attempt to replace the existing order with one even more repressive and unjust, although such objectives are seldom advertised as such. Revolutions supported by communists commonly show their true colors only after achieving power, as in Nicaragua.

Although low-intensity conflict traces many of its roots to the pervasive instability in the Third World, it is not restricted to the Third World and is highly susceptible to exploitation by outside parties seeking to achieve their own ends. In fact, the Soviet Union and its surrogates, recognizing the strength of the U.S. conventional and nuclear deterrent, have seized on low-intensity

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conflict as an attractive way to undermine U.S. interests without direct confrontation.

Those who have studied LIC agree that it poses a more immediate threat to U.S. security than any other form of conflict and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future—certainly through the end of this century. What it means today can be easily catalogued.

Since Cuba fell to Castro, seventeen other countries—ranging from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to Angola, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua—have undergone violent change in their political and social systems. Today, one out of every four countries around the world is engaged in some sort of conflict. There are at least nine active insurgencies in our own hemisphere, including those in El Salvador, Colombia, Peru, and Chile. Armed combat is a daily fare for some four million people on this planet.

International terrorism is an increasingly virulent component of LIC; its practitioners are becoming more sophisticated and increasingly intertwined in mutual support. Since 1968, 8,000 terrorist incidents have been recorded, claiming more than 5,500 dead and 11,000 wounded. In 1985 alone, nearly 900 deaths resulted from 851 incidents.

Today's terrorism is especially dangerous because of state support for activities and the resources thus made available. The role of countries such as Libya and Cuba and organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization is broadly understood. Less obvious is the extent to which the Soviet Union pursues a two-track policy of conventional diplomacy and covert support for terrorism. According to the director of Central Intelligence, approximately six hundred people travel to the Soviet Union every year for indoctrination and terrorist and paramilitary training, for which expenditures run to more than \$200 million.

Some terrorist organizations have a symbiotic relationship with international narcotics dealers. The relationship seems to be based more on mutual self-interest than on ideology. Drug trafficking is a lucrative, relatively risk-free source of income for terrorists. Drug dealers, terrorists, and insurgents frequently coexist in the same regions as a matter of security, and armed terrorists and insurgents may even provide security for the drug manufacturing and distribution network.

Drug running is, in part, a simple, garden-variety criminal activity motivated by greed. Increasingly, however, it has a political component, as with Latin American terrorist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, M-19, and Sendero Luminoso. Thus it must be considered an integral part of the low-intensity assault on the West.

In 1985, international terrorists victimized the citizens and facilities of some ninety countries. U.S. citizens are now targets of about 25 percent of all international terrorist incidents, which have increased in both brutality and

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lethality over the past decade. In 1985, thirty-eight Americans were killed and one hundred sixty were wounded. From January 1986 through the Karachi, Pakistan, hijacking in early September 1986, twelve Americans were killed and one hundred were wounded in terrorist attacks and related operations.

In addition to terrorist operations and drug running, the United States must contend with the Soviets' use of "active measures"—disinformation, front activities, propaganda, and agents of influence. The United States estimates that fifteen thousand Soviet citizens are engaged in active measures, for which the Kremlin spends three to four billion dollars a year to support.

In sum, since the end of World War II, the West has been under subtle assault. The tactics have become increasingly sophisticated and diverse. The strategic goal of undermining Western interests without direct confrontation has remained constant.

For too much of the postwar era, the West viewed the various components of this assault as isolated and unconnected. The United States tried without success to respond to the threat in Indochina and then ignored any threat for almost a decade. Fortunately, the United States no longer ignores the threat, and it no longer accepts the view that low-intensity conflict is the exclusive domain of U.S. antagonists or an inevitable, irreversible force of history.

## **The U.S. Response to Low-Intensity Conflict**

### *Strategy*

The U.S. response to LIC is motivated by recognizing the "consequences of failing to deter conflict at the lowest level possible,"<sup>8</sup> and it is shaped by three realities. First, although most of the world's instability stems from indigenous causes, the Soviet Union, particularly in the last fifteen years, has sought increasingly to exploit this instability for its own purposes. Second, the world is witnessing what President Reagan has called "the democratic revolution"—indigenous resistance to communist regimes installed or maintained by the Soviet Union and its surrogates. Third, just as the United States shares its stake in freedom with other nations, it must look to them to assume a proper part of the burden of gaining and maintaining freedom.

These realities and the multidimensional nature of LIC dictate a two-pronged strategy. First, the United States must deal with the underlying instability that fuels LIC and must counter Soviet and surrogate exploitation of it. This step will require a comprehensive, coordinated program of economic, humanitarian, and security assistance; diplomatic initiatives designed to resolve regional conflicts; the use of military forces in counterterrorism, contingency response, and peacekeeping operations; and a national program of drug interdiction.

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Second, the United States must deny the practitioners of this form of conflict the benefits accorded by law to states engaged in legitimate international relations. It does not accept the claim that Soviet gains are inevitable or irreversible; therefore, it will support indigenous resistance to repressive regimes. The United States views terrorism as a criminal activity; steps should be taken to disrupt and preempt the operations of state-supported terrorist organizations. Interdiction alone will not resolve the problem of illicit drugs, and ways should be found to disrupt and eradicate the underlying manufacturing and distribution mechanisms.

### *Components of the Strategy*

The key to a successful response to LIC is to treat comprehensively all manifestations of LIC as interconnected elements of a single threat and to use all available foreign policy tools, including military strength and the vitality of the U.S. economy. In what is commonly known as the Reagan Doctrine, President Reagan has identified four tools that the United States can use: *Security assistance and arms transfer*, to support the efforts of others to strengthen their own defense; *economic assistance*, to help others earn their own way; *diplomatic initiatives*, to begin resolving regional conflicts; and *support for "freedom fighters,"* to give others the chance to fight their battles themselves.<sup>9</sup>

The elements of U.S. power used to confront LIC must constitute a coherent whole. Each element must be carefully integrated and coordinated. Recent legislation creates a Low-Intensity Conflict Board within the National Security Council, and Congress has proposed the establishment of a new position, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for Low-Intensity Conflict. Thus, the coordinating mechanism is in place.

### *The Role of the Department of Defense*

Low-intensity conflict poses a serious dilemma for any defense establishment, and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) is no exception. LIC is not punctuated by a galvanizing event such as Pearl Harbor. It is not susceptible to solution through the application of mass and firepower and is, in fact, predominantly nonviolent. It does not offer the prospect of decisive victory, and because it is a protracted struggle, military operations, over time, become increasingly open to criticism in an open society.

Reflecting on this dilemma, Secretary of Defense Weinberger developed the following guidelines for the employment of U.S. combat forces:

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1. The United States should not commit forces to combat unless the circumstances are deemed vital to national interests or to those of U.S. allies.
  2. If the United States commits forces to combat, it should have a clear intention of winning.
  3. If the United States commits forces to combat, political and military objectives must be clearly defined.
  4. Forces committed must be consistent with those objectives.
  5. The United States must have the sustained support of the American people and the Congress.
  6. Commitment of forces to combat should be a last resort.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, the secretary's guidelines put significant constraints on DOD's role. In the last five years, however, DOD has taken steps to enhance military capabilities within those bounds. These steps include the following:

- As an outgrowth of the 1980 attempt to rescue the hostages held in Teheran, DOD created highly ready counterterrorist forces drawn from all four armed services.
- DOD has undertaken the revitalization of U.S. special operations forces (SOF) after a decade of neglect.
- In recognition of the need to institutionalize the required capability, DOD is establishing the U.S. Special Operations Command.

## **The Role of the Marine Corps in Low-Intensity Conflict**

### *Traditional Roles and New Challenges*

By law, the Marine Corps is organized, trained, and equipped for the "seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign."<sup>11</sup> The Marine Corps also has primacy in the field of amphibious operations.

The missions uniquely assigned to the Marine Corps mean it has historically been the First to Fight. From 1800 to 1934, marines landed 180

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times in thirty-seven countries. During the one hundred years preceding publication of the *Small Wars Manual* in 1940, marines were actively engaged in small wars in all but fifteen years.

Traditionally, the Marine Corps role has consisted of two major components. The first is contingency response, demonstrated in the Boxer Rebellion and during the unrest in Latin America in the early 1900s. The second is peacekeeping operations, such as those conducted in more recent decades in Lebanon. As noted earlier, however, the face of low-intensity conflict began to change in the 1940s. What was once the domain of the dispossessed became the vehicle for the spread of ideologically motivated “wars of national liberation.” The postwar breakup of the old empires provided both the fuel and the test bed for such wars. More recently, state-supported terrorism has been added as an important component of low-intensity conflict.

In the free world, the breakup of the empires also meant that the traditional colonial powers would no longer maintain the established order in the Third World. Equally apparent was the disinclination of the United States to serve as the “world’s policeman”—and this disinclination was reinforced by the U.S. experience in Southeast Asia.

The changed nature of low-intensity conflict poses a significant challenge to the Marine Corps. Clearly, the traditional roles of contingency response and peacekeeping operations will continue to be a critical part of the U.S. response to LIC. The Marine Corps is well prepared to meet such challenges. Counteracting terrorism is also essential to the security of the United States. Although marines do not have the specialized skills of counterterrorist forces, their high state of readiness and forward deployment near many potential trouble spots argue that they may be called on to engage in such operations *within the confines of their organization, training, and equipment.*

The real challenge for the Marine Corps stems from the civil-military nature of low-intensity conflict. Clausewitz called war an “act of mutual slaughter.”<sup>12</sup> The basic conflict in a major war is opposing forces pitted against each other—“us” against “them.” The military means used in this kind of conflict are mass, firepower, and maneuver. The conflict in LIC is also between opposing forces—guerrillas against government—and the military means are the same, although used differently. But LIC features an additional conflict in which both sides fight a “war” for the people’s allegiance (see figure 1). The war *cannot* be won, and should not be fought, by conventional military means.

The war for the people’s allegiance imposes a different set of requirements on military forces. As important as they are, contingency response,

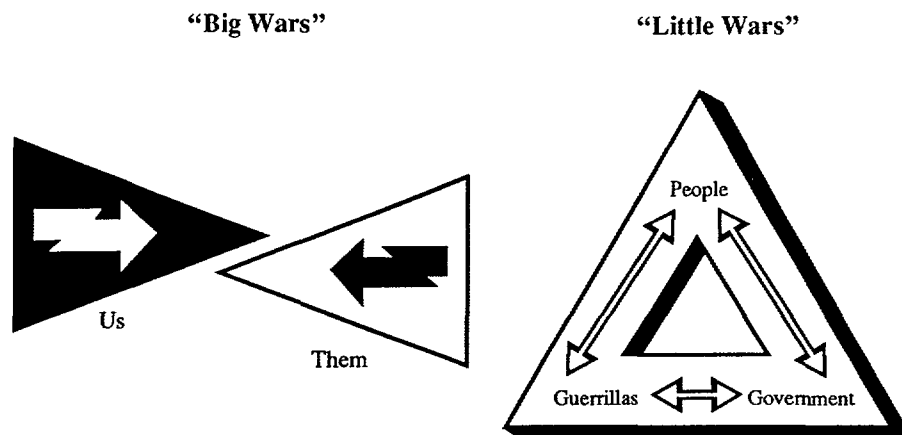


Figure 1. The conflict in major war and LIC

peacekeeping, and counterterrorism constitute a relatively limited portion of the U.S. response to LIC. In fact, the nature of LIC argues for a response that relies heavily, if not exclusively, on the ally's indigenous capabilities (see figure 2). In this case, the U.S. response is one of support—providing military training through foreign internal defense (FID) operations on the one hand, and using unconventional (guerrilla) warfare on the other. Key elements range from security assistance training to humanitarian assistance to civic action. This emphasis on support is spelled out in the Reagan Doctrine and implied in Secretary Weinberger's guidelines for the employment of combat forces.

Taken together, these challenges to the Marine Corps become vexing. On the one hand, its traditional, critical roles are substantially circumscribed both by the nature of LIC and by contemporary U.S. policy. On the other hand, the U.S. response places a premium on civil-military capabilities that, at least in the postwar era, have not been fundamental to Marine Corps philosophy.

I am not suggesting that the Marine Corps lacks the capacity to extend its operations into the broader range of activities demanded by LIC. In fact, the Marine Corps' combined-action platoons (CAPs) in Vietnam were one of the most well-reasoned (and successful) approaches to that kind of conflict. However, the Marine Corps is not now focusing on such a broad range of capabilities. This being the case, the questions become these:

- Should the Marine Corps adapt to the changed nature of LIC?
- If so, what changes would be required, and could they be made without degrading current Marine Corps capabilities?

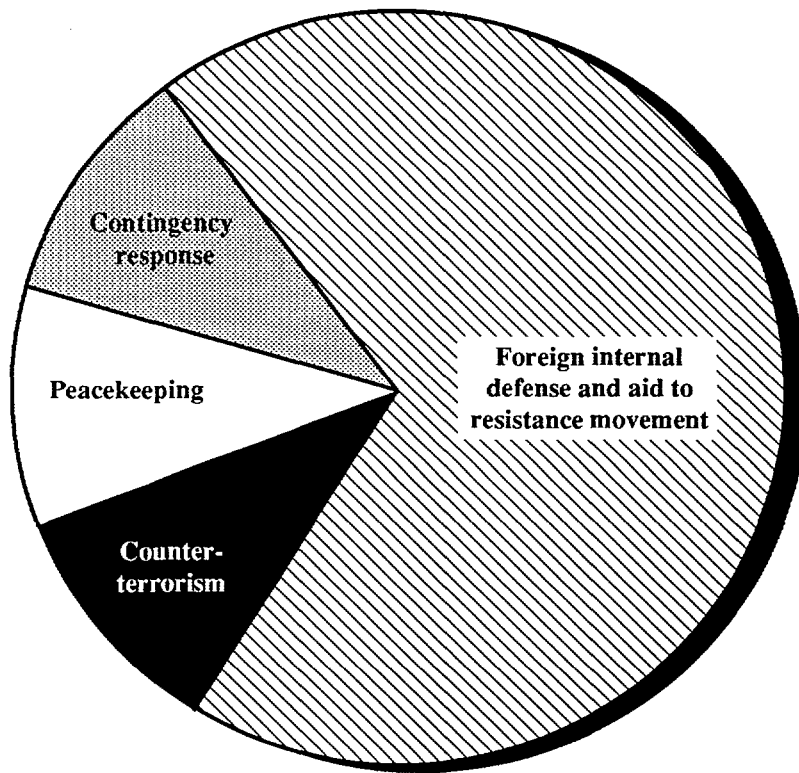


Figure 2. The U.S. response to low-intensity conflict

### *Recent Experience*

Building on the unique qualifications of Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs), in 1985 the commandant directed an aggressive program of enhancements culminating in the establishment of the Marine amphibious unit (special-operations capable), or MAU(SOC).<sup>13</sup> The MAU(SOC) initiative recognizes that the Marine Corps has an inherent capability to conduct a broad spectrum of special operations and seeks to enhance that capability through specialized organization, training, and equipment. These enhancements will improve conventional Marine Corps operations as well. When fully implemented, the Marine Corps will have MAU(SOC)s in both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleet Marine Forces.

In large part, the MAU(SOC) is a response to the threat of low-intensity conflict. Its role, however, is circumscribed by two factors. First, the Marine Corps has consciously and properly sought not to duplicate existing special-operations units, such as the Army's Special Forces, the Navy's

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sea-air-land (SEAL) teams, or the Army's Rangers. Thus, the spectrum of *missions* is somewhat limited. Second, special-operations forces (SOF) are only a limited, although important, part of the U.S. response to low-intensity conflict (see figure 3). On the one hand, the response to LIC draws heavily on medical, engineering, and other military capabilities available outside the special-operations community. On the other hand, special-operations missions extend across the spectrum of conflict. SOF must have a broad range of skills, many of which are applicable only at higher levels of violence.

Two key points need to be made about the MAU(SOC) concept. First, it does not signal a change in Marine Corps doctrine. Rather, the intent is to enhance the traditional maritime capabilities of units routinely deployed with the fleets. Within the framework of existing doctrine, however, the Marine Corps is exploring the ramifications of joint special operations when the circumstances dictate.

Second, the MAU(SOC) is essentially a direct-action unit focused on the introduction of forces from the sea—the Marine Corps specialty. This means that even with the creation of the MAU(SOC), Marine Corps capabilities remain concentrated in the areas of peacekeeping, contingency response, and counterterrorism. The most visible component of counterterrorism—hostage rescue—is seen as a MAU(SOC) mission only *in extremis*, when dedicated hostage-rescue forces are not available and immediate action is required.

With regard to foreign internal defense and unconventional warfare, the Marine Corps' decision not to duplicate existing special-operations capabilities

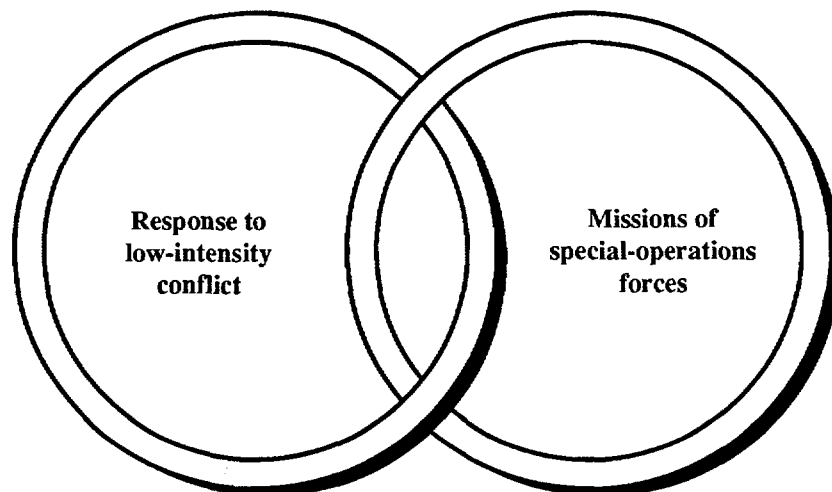


Figure 3. Low-intensity conflict and special operations

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severely limits its role. In this area U.S. forces, and especially SOF, have six primary missions:

- *Foreign internal defense (FID)*. The military facets of nation building—military and paramilitary training, intelligence, psychological operations, and civil affairs—conducted by SOF in conjunction with other components of the government and designed to support another government’s efforts to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The classic counterinsurgency mission falls within this category.
- *Unconventional warfare (UW)*. Military and paramilitary operations such as guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, sabotage, and subversion conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive territory. U.S. forces, or the indigenous troops they advise, seek to create the instability that FID is designed to overcome.
- *Psychological operations*. Psychological warfare against adversaries, as well as political, military, economic, and ideological actions designed to create, in neutral or friendly foreign groups, emotions, attitudes, or behavior that support the achievement of national objectives.
- *Civil affairs*. Activities that affect the relationship between U.S. forces and the indigenous civilian population, authorities, institutions, and resources. They can play a key role in the national-building process.
- *Reconnaissance*. The collection of intelligence, either separately or in support of other SOF operations.
- *Strike (direct action)*. Interdiction, raids, personnel recovery, and other operations conducted in hostile or denied areas, either unilaterally or in conjunction with indigenous forces.

The last two missions, reconnaissance and strike, are subsumed under the categories of peacekeeping, contingency response, and counterterrorism. They are, in fact, part of the Marine Corps speciality. The first four missions require the specialization in organization, training, and equipment that one finds in the existing special-operations community—a community the Marine Corps has vowed not to enter. As President Kennedy noted in 1962 with regard to LIC:

It requires in those situations where we must counter it, and these are the kind of challenges that will be before us in the next decade if freedom is to be saved, a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.<sup>14</sup>

This different kind of military training is specialization. For example, members of the Army's Special Forces are specialists in the paramilitary component of LIC—largely training. The capabilities of special forces are the main reason that they account for roughly one-third of U.S. mobile training teams. Army and Air Force psychological operations units are designed specifically for that mission, as are Army civil affairs units.

Without that degree of specialization, the Marine Corps can play a training role, but to an extent limited by doctrinal considerations. The Marine Corps can also play a limited role in civil affairs through its two reserve component civil affairs groups.

Table 1 compares the MAU(SOC) mission to the four major components of the U.S. response to LIC and illustrates the constraints on the Marine Corps.

**Table 1.** MAU(SOC) missions and the response to LIC

Mission	Counter- terrorism	Peacekeeping	Contingency response	FID and UW
Amphibious raids	X		X	
Security operations	X	X	X	
Limited objective attack	X		X	
Mobile training teams		X		X
Noncombatant evacuation operations	X	X	X	
Show-of-force operations	X	X	X	
Reinforcement operations		X	X	
Civil affairs		X		X
Deception operations	X	X	X	
Fire support control	X	X	X	
Counterintelligence	X	X	X	
Initial terminal guidance	X		X	
Electronic warfare	X	X	X	
Hostage rescue	X		X	

FID, foreign internal defense; UW, unconventional warfare.

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## Integrating the Marine Corps Capability

### *Limits*

All of the above can be summarized by saying that the role of the Marine Corps in low-intensity conflict must be established within two parameters:

- *The changed nature of LIC.* Before World War II, the Marine Corps was the cutting edge of the U.S. response to LIC. This is no longer the case. The Marine Corps still differentiates between the familiar (e.g., intervention operations) and the not-so-familiar (i.e., the civil-military aspect of LIC).
- *The changed nature of the U.S. response to LIC.* Amphibious landings are no longer a major factor in LIC. Contemporary U.S. policy with regard to LIC fully takes into account the inherent civil-military nature of the problem. It stresses economic and security assistance and places severe limits on any potential U.S. combat role.

Given these factors, the Marine Corps role in low-intensity conflict can be summarized as follows:

- By virtue of its routine forward deployment, the Marine Corps will continue to be a key element in U.S. contingency response.
- In areas such as hostage rescue, the development of specialized U.S. capabilities means that the Marine Corps may be used only *in extremis*.
- The Marine Corps is unlikely, as a matter of policy, to be involved in sustained combat operations (as opposed to contingency response) in LIC.
- In the absence of doctrinal change and specialized organization, equipment, and training, the Marine Corps will play a very limited role in foreign internal defense and unconventional warfare, which constitute the bulk of the military effort in LIC.

None of these conclusions is meant to diminish the importance of the Marine Corps role nor to suggest that the Marine Corps has been “squeezed out of the market” by the changing world order nor that the Marine Corps should

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scrap its doctrine, which is rooted in over two hundred years of tradition. These conclusions do, however, suggest a need for a proper appreciation of those limits and an exploration of ways to optimize Marine Corps capabilities in that context. Doing so entails (1) enhancing traditional capabilities and (2) changing the focus.

### *Enhancing Traditional Capabilities*

The MAU(SOC) concept is an excellent example of the Marine Corps' response to a challenge to tradition. It makes an outstanding force even better. The concept is as yet somewhat limited in that it concentrates solely on *deployed* MAUs (and those preparing to deploy); thus, the benefits derived from specialized training and equipment tend to be transitory. With experience, effort, and money, these benefits could be extended to *all* Marine Corps elements regardless of their deployment status.

### *Changing the Focus*

Emphasizing foreign internal defense and unconventional warfare would pose a great challenge to the Marine Corps because it raises the prospect of weakening the direct link between fleet and Marine Corps deployments. Simply put, the critical element in LIC today is not the introduction of forces ashore, but the operations of those units on shore. The second critical element is that those operations, in most cases, will be nonviolent.

Any change in doctrine must be considered in the context of the changes in the national security structure that were signed into law in October 1986.<sup>15</sup> First, a Low-Intensity Conflict Board is being established within the National Security Council to provide centralized oversight for the U.S. civil-military response to LIC. Oversight within the Department of Defense is being enhanced through the creation of a new position, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. U.S. special-operations capabilities will be improved with activation of the U.S. Special Operations Command.<sup>16</sup>

The new organizational structure clearly recognizes the difference between LIC and special operations. At the same time, the U.S. Special Operations Command is likely to play a central role in the U.S. response to LIC, and, as a result, the response is more likely to be joint.

The challenge here can be stated simply but will be exceedingly difficult to resolve: What is the relationship between the Marine Corps—the MAU(SOC), in particular—and joint special operations? On the one hand, the MAU(SOC)s need not—in fact, should not—be assigned to the command,

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because theirs is a Marine Corps (not a joint) mission. On the other hand, their capabilities are a part of and must be integrated into the overall U.S. response.

The second challenge is to assess the prospect of an increased nonviolent role for the Marine Corps. This role may require increased attention to and further expansion of the Marine Corps civil affairs capability. It may mean the use of Marine Corps medical, engineering, and other combat service support units in nation-building operations. Clearly, such operations may reduce the support essential to deployed units, so they also require careful attention and perhaps expansion of support forces.

Task organization is crucial, whether in the context of the Marine Corps or joint operations. One possible model is the Security Assistance Force (SAF) developed by the Army in the 1960s. (The SAF remains a part of Army doctrine in name only.) The SAF was a deployable package of medical, engineering, psychological operations, civil affairs, and other relevant military capabilities organized under a Special Forces headquarters. While they existed, SAFs gave the United States a readily available, comprehensive way of dealing with the unstable civil-military factors of LIC. For the most part, the Marine Corps has the same broad range of capabilities and could organize them in this manner within the confines of existing doctrine.

## Summary

The Marine Corps is likely to play a limited role in low-intensity conflict for the foreseeable future. The traditional part of that role will remain extremely important but will not resemble the Marine Corps' first 150 years in scope or intensity. The Marine Corps *can* play a less traditional, nonviolent role within the confines of existing doctrine if it chooses to do so. That will be the greatest challenge to the Marine Corps for the rest of this century.

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## Notes

1. See Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).
2. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 480.
3. Although Mao wrote prolifically for nearly a half century, the essence of his thinking on low-intensity conflict comes from the period 1936 to 1938. The key ideas can be found in: Mao Zedong, *Basic Tactics*, trans. Stuart Schram (New York: Praeger, 1966); Mao Zedong, *On Guerrilla Warfare*,

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- trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Praeger, 1966); and Mao Zedong, *Selected Military Writings* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1966).
4. U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940).
  5. *Ibid.*, 9
  6. Definition approved on 20 November 1985 for Joint Chiefs of Staff Pub. 1, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).
  7. Definition approved by the National Security Council in 1987.
  8. Caspar W. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," remarks to the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., 28 November 1984.
  9. Ronald W. Reagan, *Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986).
  10. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power."
  11. Title 10, *United States Code*.
  12. Clausewitz, *On War*, 149.
  13. Commandant of the Marine Corps Memo 02-85, "The Marine Corps and Special Operations," 22 July 1985.
  14. John F. Kennedy, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 454.
  15. Title 10, *United States Code*, as amended by the *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*.
  16. Since 1986, the major structural changes addressed in this chapter—an LIC Board under the National Security Council, a Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for LIC, the U.S. Special Operations Command, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict—have all been implemented.

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## An Open Letter to the Next Commandant

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*Allan R. Millett*

Dear General X:

All of us who know you are thrilled with your appointment. We do not, however, envy you the problems you will face in the next four years. One of the most serious problems, I believe, will be the continued insistence by our political leaders that Marines help them with international problems that are beyond the Corps' capacity—and probably theirs—to solve. The latest problem is “low-intensity conflict” or “out-of-area operations.” Violence in the new nations has certainly been inherent in world politics since World War II. You may remember that in the early 1960s we called this phenomenon “people’s war” or “revolutionary warfare” and called our response “counterinsurgency,” but for reasons of which you are keenly aware, those terms now carry an odor that makes them unappealing in interagency memos and presidential decision memoranda from the National Security Council staff.

I have recently read two interesting papers that are parts of a symposium on the state of the Marine Corps—one by Dr. Alan Sabrosky of the Army War College and another by Mr. R. Lynn Rylander from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD/ISA). Dr. Sabrosky (who is really still a Marine gunnery sergeant at heart) discussed potential Marine Corps operations against Third World armies in areas outside the Eurasian rimlands. He thinks the Fleet Marine Forces need to be reorganized and rearmed to enhance mobility, but I would rather sacrifice a little movement and hold on to the current firepower since it’s never clear just what sort of weapons will appear these days in *anybody’s* hands. Sabrosky is probably right that the United States cannot always assume that structuring forces to meet the “worst threat” will produce forces optimally organized for “lesser included threats,” but the Marine Corps is versatile enough that it need not worry too much about this problem. The larger problem is to make sure that Third World intervention (if necessary) meets the following criteria: the political objectives may be gained by destroy-

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ing hostile military forces; the operations will be of limited duration; there is a prospect of limited casualties; and the promise of popular political support at home and in the area of operations is based on the precisely defined purposes of intervention. The military future of the United States would be enhanced if political leaders would reexamine the potential of United Nations-sponsored international forces, which might or might not include U.S. armed forces. After all, the Korean War did not work out badly for us or for the South Koreans. The problem with the U.N. "peacekeepers" is that they haven't shot anyone recently, an action that usually brings some measure of respect.

Like other civilians in his office since the early 1960s, Mr. Rylander discovered that the world is a violent place and that much of the violence comes from regional military bullies, insurgent movements, "pariah" states that encourage insurgency and subversion, and stateless groups of terrorists who may or may not want to take power but who are willing to kill innocent people while they make up their minds. I have no quarrel with Mr. Rylander's description of the unhappy world of the 1980s, but the world has always been unhappy and its anarchy has been increased by the threefold growth in the number of sovereign states and the spread of modern weapons, a phenomenon that began in the late nineteenth century. This is not a world that the last administration created nor is it one that the present administration will change. Nor has the United States ignored Cold War insurgencies since 1945; it has even had some modest successes in places we sometimes forget, such as Greece, the Philippines, Guatemala, the Congo, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, and Thailand.

My problem with Mr. Rylander's paper is at the level of policy: I find no coherent, persuasive rationale for increased U.S. involvement in low-intensity conflict, at least not one that will sell in Peoria. There may very well be one. In fact, I'm sure there is, but it is *not* because the Soviets or the Cubans or their surrogates are involved. The Communists probably will always try to find some advantage in "people's wars" because the passion for Marxist-Leninist rebellion did not die with Ché Guevara. Instead, the United States needs to combat people's wars in all their manifestations with a positive rationale that fuses vital national interests with America's traditional political idealism. Since the Wilson administration, the United States has held a conviction that people should determine their public lives without violence; U.S. policymakers should use this conviction as at least one guide to international action. Humane, liberal ideals do not require America to become stupid too or to find national interest in every bit of political violence throughout the world.

My point is that the United States has faced a political crisis whenever it has considered military intervention in a low-intensity conflict. The Vietnam War—whose varied "syndromes" are now pandemic—did not make the

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problem easier, but it may help to remember that the first congressional investigation of Third World low-intensity warfare occurred in 1902 and was followed by similar inquiries into pacification operations in the Dominican Republic (1916–1924), Haiti (1915–1934), and Nicaragua (1926–1933). Remember also that the Marine Corps bore the brunt of these investigations. Perhaps Secretary Weinberger would consider a seventh commandment to his “big six” requirements for U.S. military action: Do not commit U.S. troops to a “people’s war” unless they are allowed to fight and unless the fighting will serve a reasonable national goal in the international arena, not a domestic political goal. Mr. Rylander stresses that U.S. responses to insurgency should be nonviolent, and he is probably right. If so, land the Peace Corps, not the Marine Corps.

I have not yet offered any usable advice. But I do have some ideas about how you might serve both the nation’s and the Corps’ interests. They are listed below.

*Use the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as a forum for evaluating America’s vital interest in combating “people’s war.”* The leaders of the forces that may have to combat people’s wars should educate the public—through Congress—on what the implications of U.S. policy might be. In your public appearances, media interviews, testimony before Congress, and published statements, you should educate the public on the limitations of force as well as the preconditions for the successful use of force in Third World interventions. The lack of historical perspective in our political and foreign policy leaders borders on the pathetic. It is not an academic problem; it invariably costs people their lives. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, you have a constitutional duty to advise your political superiors on the consequences of their military decisions. That you perform this duty is especially important since our political system almost guarantees that the political appointees in the executive branch will bring little relevant experience to their offices and have no serious academic preparation for their positions. You might as well take advantage of the ill-conceived JCS Reorganization Act of 1986 and accept the fact that you will have to build your constituency outside the JCS arena if your positions are to have any influence within the Pentagon bureaucracy. No matter which political course you choose, you should use your position to increase public awareness of the problems that attend intervention in low-intensity conflicts.

*Insist that combating people’s war is a government problem, not a Defense Department problem.* Other executive agencies do not seem to be following up the Defense Department’s activism in improving the country’s ability to combat people’s war. In this case, bureaucracy is *not* active, and for a good reason: For two decades, the civilian executive agencies have been pummeled by the public and Congress over their roles in foreign security

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assistance, psychological warfare operations, covert operations, and intelligence activities. If the U.S. government enters another counterinsurgency era, you should insist that *everybody* take part. Successful counterinsurgency requires a wide range of skills and functions that cannot be provided by the military alone, perhaps not even by the government alone. Furthermore, the Marine Corps has already found itself abandoned in the field by other U.S. agencies when the counterinsurgency campaign turned sour, and I see no evidence that bureaucratic self-preservation is any less compelling now than it was in the 1920s and 1930s. You should support any organizational arrangement that ensures full bureaucratic participation in counterinsurgency operations. Coordination will be a nightmare, but the broad organizational commitment is the best chance you have of protecting the Corps and winning the war.

*Insist that the Department of Defense organize and train both military and civilian personnel for joint internal security functions.* Although the U.S. Army runs admirable schools at Fort Bragg and Fort Gordon for military-assistance specialists, the Department of Defense needs a single, unified educational institution to attack all phases of preparation for internal security functions. The obvious choice would be the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management, but DISAM would need a broadened charter and a more demanding curriculum. It would probably make good sense to merge DISAM and the Defense Intelligence College, because counterinsurgency operations rise or fall on the quality and security of intelligence. Individual service members should be allowed—should they so choose—to commit their entire careers to internal security activities abroad, even as civilians after their military retirement. The Defense Department needs its own foreign service corps for security assistance.

*Continue to insist that the Marine Corps has a limited contribution to make to counterinsurgency operations and should not divert resources to expand its contribution.* Because marines have a hard-won reputation for taking orders and moving out, you may find it hard to resist the chance to prove again that the Marine Corps is “a force in readiness” and should be the “first to fight.” Although the Corps served as the nation’s “colonial infantry” for forty years (1899–1939), it did so in part because the Army did not want the mission and because expeditionary duty also allowed the Corps to develop and train units for its general war mission, the seizure and defense of advanced naval bases. Even so, recall that the interventions in China (1927–1941) and Nicaragua (1926–1933) wiped away almost a decade of field training for amphibious assaults for a great number of marines, and the losses were not overcome until World War II. The nation’s requirement for an amphibious assault force that can fight against all potential foes, from the Soviet Union on down, has not changed.

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Your predecessors have just finished a difficult decade of building the Corps to a new high in spiritual, intellectual, physical, and material readiness. The Corps' leaders have sought to recruit and retain quality marines and have done so; they have worried about equipment modernization and improving tactical firepower and mobility, and the improvements have come; they have insisted that the Corps have greater strategic mobility, and that too has improved through maritime and land-based prepositioning. Yet, for all the improvements, this service is a "one shot" Marine Corps, and it cannot fight a major contingency if it is committed piecemeal to "peacekeeping" operations of extended duration. The Vietnam experience should have taught military planners what happens to the Corps in a protracted land war, and even the mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve for that conflict would not have provided much sustainability under the conditions in which that war was fought. Remember, too, General, that you command a Corps in which the majority of officers and noncommissioned officers are married; these families will not applaud indefinite separations for Third World pacification operations. Save the Corps for a commitment that really counts. No single counterinsurgency campaign I can imagine meets that criterion.

I am not suggesting that the Marine Corps be a "no show" service if the United States again intervenes in a people's war. I doubt that the Corps' reputation or self-respect could survive a holdout, but the Marine Corps has little *institutional* business in a people's war that has not reached the level of conventional military operations, or Phase III of the Maoist model. Fleet Marine Force (FMF) units might contribute to the counter guerrilla portion of a counterinsurgency campaign, and depending on the geography, using sea-based light infantry for selected counter guerrilla missions may offer substantial advantages. Population control and positional security operations belong to native forces because they are cheaper and more likely to have the knowledge of local conditions that such missions require. Even though the language might be less a barrier in Central America than it was in Southeast Asia, population control is not easily learned, and one can be foolish in Spanish, English, or Vietnamese.

On the other hand, I see no reason why a small number of marines—or even small elements of the FMF, such as the force reconnaissance companies—could not be sent to serve in counterinsurgency operations as part of the American "country team." I doubt that more than a thousand marines would be involved. (Even at the height of the Vietnam War the Fifth Special Forces Group numbered only about three thousand officers and soldiers.) The Marine Corps has within its ranks highly experienced, superbly trained individuals who can provide expertise to a counterinsurgency campaign, and I think you should use them. The model of a reformed Marine security guard program,

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established in 1946 (*United States Code* 10:5983), provides the framework for the limited use of marines in troubled Third World nations. Marine security detachments might be expanded to include security-assistance experts. The Marine Corps has such a pool of officers among those former infantry officers who have now shifted their primary fields to intelligence and logistics. I would *not* recommend, however, that the FMF be restructured for special operations, especially for nonviolent missions. To do so would detract from the Corps' true purpose—to prepare to conduct amphibious operations against the armed forces of other modern, well-armed, and hostile nation-states.

Given marines' love for their past, it is seductive to remember the *Small Wars Manual*, Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak's prescient understanding of the need for pacification in Vietnam, and the relative success of the combined-action platoon program. But with these successes also recall that two earlier eras of counterinsurgency brought no major profit to the Corps. Three of your predecessors—John H. Russell, Thomas Holcomb, and David M. Shoup—recognized the peril to the organization. I hope you will do the same.

Respectfully,

Allan R. Millett  
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve

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## Notes

The best single introduction to the framework of insurgency is J. Bowyer Bell, *On Revolt: Strategies of National Liberation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976). For a broad historical survey of insurrections and civil wars, see Robert Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1975) and D. M. Condit et al., *Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict*, 3 vols., Center for Research in Social Systems, American University, for the Department of the Army, 1967–1968. For the American post-1945 experience in counterinsurgency and its context in current policy, see Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance* (New York: The Free Press, 1977); Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1986); Sam C. Sarkesian and William L. Scully, eds., *U.S. Policy and Low-Intensity Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1981); and Frank R. Barnett, B. Hugh Tovar, and Richard H. Shultz, *Special Operations in U.S. Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1984). See also Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977). The best comprehensive description of the Marine Corps' past and present functions and their relationship to American defense policy is *The Marine Corps Role in National Defense*, by the

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Commanding General, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Operational Handbook OH-1, June 1985. For the Marine Corps experience in "small wars," see Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Macmillan Inc., 1980), which also includes an extensive bibliography on the major military interventions in Central America and the Caribbean. On pre-1945 Marine Corps doctrine, see Ronald Schaffer, "The 1940 *Small Wars Manual* and the 'Lessons of History,'" *Military Affairs* 36 (April 1972): 46-51.

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## A Conception of War

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*Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., USA (Ret.)*

Mr. Rylander and Dr. Sabrosky have provided very useful insights. But they share the shortcoming of most analyses of “lesser conflicts.” They do not begin at the beginning.

In his landmark article, “The Role of Doctrine in Naval Warfare,” in the March–April 1915 edition of the United States Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Lieutenant Commander (later Commodore) Dudley W. Knox concluded that

both ashore and afloat we . . . imperatively need first of all a *conception of war*. Once this is created we will be enabled to proceed, with our eyes open and our course well marked, towards a coherent comprehensive scheme of naval life. Doctrines, methods and rules may be made to flow consistently and logically therefrom. Strategy, tactics, logistics, gunnery, ship design, ship exercises, shore and ship organization and administration—every ramification of the profession—may be developed with confidence and wisdom, and harmoniously interwoven . . . into a competent and homogeneous body.<sup>1</sup>

One of the major reasons the U.S. Navy has been so successful with what has been called the 600-ship navy is that, wittingly or unwittingly, it took Knox’s advice. The Navy’s Sea Plan 2000 study, which forms the intellectual foundation for the 600-ship plan, reiterates what Knox wrote over sixty years earlier: “The determination of such matters [as to “whether our strategic forces and tactical operations shall be offensive or defensive in character”<sup>2</sup>] produces a ‘conception of war’ which furnishes a point of origin, without which we are as uncertain of our bearings as a vessel in a fog.”<sup>3</sup>

“A vessel in a fog” is a kind way of describing the current confusion over low-intensity conflict. Analysts are “uncertain of their bearings” for the precise reason Knox emphasized. They lack a conception of war.

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Consider the official Joint Chiefs of Staff definition of low-intensity conflict, as presented by Mr. Rylander:

[Low-intensity conflict is] a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and ranges from diplomatic, economic, and psychosocial pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low-intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic area and is often characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and level of violence.<sup>4</sup>

Not only is this no conception of war, it fails even as a basic definition. At best, it is a description masquerading as an explanation. Further, even as a description it is deficient, for it draws distinctions without a difference. All wars, Carl von Clausewitz reminded us over a century ago, are “limited politico-military struggles.” All wars—not just low-intensity conflicts—have constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and level of violence.<sup>5</sup> The June 1986 edition of *Field Manual 100-1*, the U.S. Army’s basic doctrinal text, states unequivocally that “since war is primarily a politically directed act for political ends, the conduct of a war, in terms of strategy and constraints, is defined primarily by its political objectives.”<sup>6</sup>

Note the emphasis, that war is defined by its *political* objectives. By adding “social, economic, or psychological objectives,” the would-be definition of low-intensity conflict becomes even more confusing because it fails to make the vital distinction between ends and means.

In war the “ends” are always political. The “means,” as the Joint Chiefs of Staff definition of national strategy makes clear, include “using the political, economic, and psychological powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war to secure national objectives.”<sup>7</sup> That is more than a textbook definition. It is precisely what the guerrillas in El Salvador are doing today—using political, economic, psychological, and military means to achieve the political end of establishing a Marxist-Leninist government. But the U.S. response is fragmented, and one of the reasons is that the current definition gives low-intensity conflict a foundation of sand. Neither “doctrines, methods and rules” nor “strategy, tactics, [and] organization” flow, as Knox put it, “consistently and logically therefrom.”

What, then, is our conception of war, and how does low-intensity conflict fit into it? Mr. Rylander gave us a hint with his reference to the Marine Corps’ 1940 *Small Wars Manual*. To relabel “low-intensity conflicts” as “small wars” is the beginning of wisdom. Such a title forces one’s attention in the right direction—away from jargon toward a logical and understandable conception of war. Looking at low-intensity conflict as a form of war provides a usable frame of reference—the principles of war—on which to build.

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The principles of war ask three fundamental questions: What is the United States trying to do? How is the United States going to do it? and Who is going to command and control it?

The first question is both obvious and deceptively simple, yet it is a question seldom asked. What *is* the United States trying to do? What political end is it trying to achieve with low-intensity conflict?

### Extending the Deterrent Shield

As Sabrosky and Rylander have pointed out, when the United States faces a threat, the goal is to build a deterrent shield to prevent the conflict from escalating to a higher level of the "conflict spectrum," which ranges from nuclear war at the high end to low-intensity conflict at the low end. And what is deterrence? In his 1978 book, *No Soft Options*, Sir Peter Hill-Norton (British Admiral of the Fleet and former chairman of the NATO Military Committee) defined it this way: "Deterrence is all about creating a fearful doubt in the mind of a potential aggressor that any likely gain is simply not worth the inevitable risk."<sup>8</sup>

Seeing the political goal as deterrence is useful in ways that the current definition of low-intensity conflict is not. It is helpful to view the problem of low-intensity conflict as a product of *success*, not of failure. It is precisely because the United States has been successful in deterring conflict at the higher levels of violence that those who wish America harm have been forced to ratchet down their attacks to the lower levels of conflict.

The ideal, of course, is to deter all levels of conflict. Many people have argued that the United States should not apply its military resources to nuclear and major conventional conflict, where the likelihood of war is least likely, but should apply them instead to low-intensity conflict, where the likelihood is immediate. Although well intended, this argument is not only misdirected, it is dangerous as well. As that master strategist Herman Kahn once remarked, "There are many doors that are not being opened because someone is leaning against them."<sup>9</sup> Kahn was saying that a threat is least likely at the higher levels of conflict because two deterrents are at work, one against the threat of nuclear war and one against overt conventional war. Together they create that "fearful doubt" that any likely gain is not worth the inevitable risk. If we weaken those deterrents by diverting resources to the lower levels of conflict, aggression may return to the higher levels of violence, which, unlike low-intensity conflict, could jeopardize the very survival of the nation.

Thus the answer to the second question posed by the principles of war—How is the United States going to do it?—must begin with the understanding that deterrence of low-intensity conflict must be carried out *simultaneously* with ongoing deterrence against nuclear war and overt conventional war.

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## Coalition Warfare

Collective security, an important element of the deterrent shields against nuclear and overt conventional war, must also be part of the deterrent shield against low-intensity conflict. In fact, collective security is, if anything, even more important at lower levels of conflict. Most of the attacks have not been directly against the United States but against the governments of U.S. allies in the Third World.

The deficiency of the United States' counterinsurgency doctrine during the Vietnam era, which is also apparent in the doctrine now being developed for low-intensity conflict, was that it did not identify the entity responsible for counterinsurgency. The doctrine was written as if the United States itself were faced with an insurgent attack. The goal of "winning the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese illustrates this point.<sup>10</sup>

The Marine combined-action platoons (CAPs) used in Vietnam have been cited in several papers as a successful approach to counter an insurgency. CAPs combined a U.S. Marine squad and a Navy medic with a unit from the Vietnamese regional force or popular force (i.e., local militia) to provide both security and civic action for a Vietnamese village. On the surface the CAPs were enormously successful, for they genuinely succeeded in winning the hearts and minds of the local villagers. But there was a flaw that was not immediately apparent. The more these U.S. forces won over the local villagers the further the villagers were alienated from their government in Saigon, which was not able to match the U.S. performance. Yet U.S. forces were sent to Vietnam to strengthen, not weaken, the Saigon government. U.S. military tactical successes were achieved at the expense of the strategic purposes of U.S. foreign policy.

There was nothing wrong with the counterinsurgency doctrine. Most of it was based on sound principles. But U.S. policymakers failed to see that the doctrine was constrained by the dynamics of coalition warfare. They should have remembered the lesson of World War II, when the government's attempts to reconcile the differences among British, French, Chinese, and Russian allies created enormous difficulties. The requirements are even more demanding when coalition partners are unequal, as policymakers found during the Korean War when U.S. and South Korean political objectives diverged. But in Vietnam, the United States slid almost unconsciously into the paternalistic patterns of its French predecessors. Pushing the South Vietnamese aside, the United States attempted to win the war on its own.

In his excellent work, *Autopsy on People's War*, Professor Chalmers Johnson of the University of California at Berkeley emphasized that when the U.S. government was asked to aid an ally faced with an internal insurgency, "a well-honed response required careful analysis . . . to ensure that American

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efforts were directed against the 'export' of revolution, not the suppression of genuine revolution."<sup>11</sup> Stated another way, the United States was able to keep the external aggressor at bay (as it did in the Korean War against the Chinese and North Korean invaders and in Vietnam against the North Vietnamese regular army until the U.S. withdrawal in 1973), but the war against the internal insurgency was another matter. That was not America's war. It was South Vietnam's war, and only to the degree that the South Vietnamese won the hearts and minds of their own people could they succeed in eliminating their internal insurgency. America could help them, but it could not do the job for them.

In all fairness, it must be emphasized that although the official definition of low-intensity conflict does not take account of the requirements of coalition warfare, U.S. actions so far in Central America have been better than its words. It was the armed services that insisted on the assignment of only fifty military advisors to El Salvador, and it is the military that has resisted pressure from the U.S. government to increase that number. Evidently drawing on the lessons of Vietnam, military officials have been adamant that the Salvadoran government understand beyond doubt that the war is theirs and they are the ones who must fight it.

Further, our foreign policy makes clear that the United States has both the will and the capability to intervene militarily if either Cuba or Nicaragua tries to emulate North Vietnam by launching a cross-border invasion to "consolidate the revolution." U.S. naval forces in the Caribbean, the U.S. infantry brigade in Panama, and the logistics base in Palmarola, Honduras, are all concrete and specific barriers to the "export of revolution" by force of arms.

## Command and Control

U.S. military responses to the problems in Central America are on track, but the responses from the other elements of the government are not. Although all concerned, civilians as well as military, appear to believe that the problems in that area are primarily political, economic, and psychological rather than military, only the military has a chain of command in place. This is a failing in the area of concern of the third question posed by the principles of war, Who is going to command and control it?

Within a country threatened with an internal insurgency, the U.S. ambassador is, in theory, charged with coordinating the U.S. political, economic, psychological, and military response. In fact, however, few ambassadors have the training or inclination for such a command, and even those who do are hampered by "stovepipe" controls (i.e., direct control exercised by Washington agencies over their detachments in the field) exercised by the U.S. government agencies involved.

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Even though most such conflicts are regional rather than country-specific, there is no command-and-control mechanism other than military (with its geographic unified commands) at the regional level to coordinate the U.S. response. The effect is that problems of low-intensity conflict are skewed toward a military solution.

During the Vietnam War, as Ambassador Robert Komer pointed out in his *Bureaucracy at War*, "the bureaucratic fact was that below the presidential level everybody and nobody was responsible."<sup>12</sup> The same is true today. National, regional, and international goals are unclear, and political, economic, psychological, and military power is uncoordinated and unfocused. The result is that there is no effective deterrent against aggression at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict.

### Developing a Conception of War for Low-Intensity Conflict

Based on the ideas discussed so far, a conception of war for low-intensity conflict begins to take shape. First, it is based on the realization that low-intensity conflict is a form of war—that is, an act of force against the United States, either directly or indirectly, to compel this nation to do the enemy's will. Second, the objective is clear: The United States will use its political, economic, psychological, and military power to deter and, if need be, to counter such coercion.

This deterrence must be carried out simultaneously with deterrence of higher forms of conflict, and it must be carried out through collective action with U.S. allies. As the coalition partner of those allies under internal attack, the United States must do all it can to help them help themselves through political, psychological, economic, and military materiel assistance, as well as through support for the training of their armed forces.

At the same time, the United States must be prepared for direct military action to protect vital national interests and to counter any attempts by external aggressors to seize power by force of arms.

Finally, the United States must establish a coherent organization for combat for low-intensity operations. In addition to strengthening the authority of the U.S. ambassador in countries under internal attack, regional and national command-and-control centers must be established to ensure the coordinated application of U.S. power. A good starting point would be to reexamine the role of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support organization in the Vietnam War. Although not widely appreciated, this organization had great success in coordinating U.S. political, economic, psychological, intelligence, and military power toward the defeat of the Viet Cong insurgency.

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## The Use of Marine Forces

The military role in low-intensity operations would be twofold. First, the United States would provide training and military assistance to allies faced with an internal insurgency. Because training and equipping indigenous forces is their primary wartime role, the Army's Special Forces Groups are the organizations best suited for this mission. The members of these groups are specialists in the geographic orientation and native languages of the area in which they are needed. As they have done in the past, Marine Corps advisors should supplement these training teams. Because it is a logical extension of its wartime missions, the responsibility for training should remain with the Army.

The second military responsibility should be to maintain the capability for military intervention to protect vital U.S. interests and to counter any attempts by external aggressors to seize power through force of arms. Traditionally, as both Mr. Rylander and Dr. Sabrosky have pointed out, this has been the role of the Marine Corps; that role is still valid today.

As a practical matter, the forces sent to an area involved in a low-intensity conflict should build on existing military structures. (Practicality is one of the most important but least observed fundamentals of war.) Just as Army Special Forces Groups are ideally suited to the internal-defense training mission, so the Marine Corps, with its amphibious units already afloat in trouble spots around the world, is ideally suited for the role of direct military intervention.

Even if the Marines never had to land, their very presence is a deterrent. If they did have to land, however, the amphibious units could count on naval gunfire support and air support from embarked Navy and Marine fighters and fighter-bombers. Their unilateral command-and-control systems would be rehearsed and well understood, and their logistic and resupply systems would already be in place.

This readiness gives the Marine Corps a major advantage over the Army. In the midst of a crisis, Army forces would have to move to the crisis area, coordinate airlift, sealift, close air support, and fire support with both the Navy and Air Force, and establish appropriate joint command-and-control procedures.

Assigning the intervention mission to the Marine Corps is not only militarily sound, it is psychologically sound as well. There is a difference in the public perception of sending in the Marines and committing the Army. Marine Corps intervention is seen as temporary. Army intervention is seen as the commitment of the nation to sustained combat.

Sending in the Marines carries important messages to allies threatened with internal insurgency and to the American public. The message to the ally is that the aid is temporary—meant to hold an external aggressor at bay or to

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protect a vital American interest—and that the United States has no plans to commit combat troops to a war that the allies themselves must fight and win. But more important is the message sent to the American people. They will usually approve a temporary intervention in defense of national interests abroad, but Americans want no sustained commitment to combat unless their nation is directly threatened. If intervention is necessary, sending in the Marines conveys the message that the public is being heard.

The Marine Corps has an important role to play in the deterrence of low-intensity conflict. The key to understanding its role, however, is in understanding what that conflict is all about.

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### Notes

1. Lt. Cdr. Dudley W. Knox, USN, "The Role of Doctrine in Naval Warfare," United States Naval Institute *Proceedings*, 41: 2 (March–April 1915); reprinted as "The Doctrine of War: Its Relationship to Theory and Principles," with introduction and commentary by Col. Wallace P. Franz and Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., USA, *Occasional Paper* (ACN 81029), Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 20 April 1981, 30 (emphasis added).
2. *Ibid.*, 28.
3. *Ibid.*, 29.
4. Joint Chiefs of Staff Pub. 1, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1979); addendum approved 20 November 1985.
5. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 606–608.
6. *Field Manual 100–1: The Army* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, June 1986), 9.
7. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military Terms*, 217.
8. Admiral of the Fleet Sir Peter Hill-Norton, *No Soft Options: The Politico-Military Realities of NATO* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 27.
9. From my notes on a lecture given by Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute, 10 July 1969, at Croton-on-Hudson, New York.
10. "Hearts and minds" became shorthand during the Vietnam War to describe the whole body of counterinsurgency literature. See Douglas Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance 1950 to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), for an overview of counterinsurgency doctrine.

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11. Chalmers Johnson, *Autopsy on People's War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 44.
  12. Ambassador Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), 82.

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## **The U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Navy Tomorrow**

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## Introduction

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*Christopher Jehn*

The preceding three parts of this volume have considered the state of the Navy-Marine Corps team today and its use as an instrument of U.S. power and policy in major and lesser conflicts. The message there is a familiar one to those of us who are privileged to know well the United States Marine Corps and its capabilities in consort with the strike and amphibious forces of the United States Navy: The Navy-Marine Corps team provides extensive, flexible, and responsive combat power for a wide variety of contingencies. This is a message the American public and its political leaders seem to understand instinctively. And so do our nation's potential adversaries, judging from the resources they invest in countering Marine Corps capabilities rhetorically as well as militarily. Despite these "endorsements," it is prudent to ask whether and how well the Marine Corps and its partners in the Navy are prepared for the future. That is the subject of the essays that follow.

We begin with a paper by Colonel M. B. Darling that describes the changes underway today in the equipment and thinking in the Marine Corps and the Navy for the amphibious warfare mission. Most notably, the air-cushion landing craft (LCAC) has given the Navy-Marine Corps team the capability to land *all* elements of the assault force from over the horizon. This option was previously available only for those elements of the assault force that could be carried from ship to shore by helicopter. Working through the implications of over-the-horizon assaults on such important necessities as command and control, fire support, and logistics is challenging enough. But the introduction of the LCAC is more far-reaching. Because the LCAC greatly expands the fraction of the world's coastlines subject to assault (LCACs can cross many beaches that conventional craft cannot), the commander of the amphibious task force has options not otherwise available: he can launch his assault at a place and time of his choosing rather than where and when geog-

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raphy might dictate. This greater flexibility greatly complicates the defender's job and makes an amphibious assault a much more credible threat.

Although the LCAC may be the most revolutionary new equipment the Navy-Marine Corps team has introduced since the helicopter, there are other important developments—most notably the MV-22 Osprey and the CH-53E heavy-lift helicopter. As Colonel Darling correctly notes, these new aircraft, together with the LCAC, give our amphibious forces increased capabilities: combat power ashore can be built up much more rapidly, and the commander has new options for advanced-force operations, feints, demonstrations, and raids from an extremely long distance or along a greater length of coastline. What his paper implies but does not make explicit is that this new equipment does more than prompt Marine and Navy officers to consider new tactics and options for major amphibious assaults. These new systems also greatly increase this country's options for conducting lower-level military actions, such as raids, evacuations, and other special operations. And that brings us to the point of this part of our volume: Do these new capabilities and the new and different threats to our country's interests dictate new roles and missions for the Marine Corps (and the Navy's amphibious forces) or change the emphasis on the amphibious mission?

The four commentaries that follow address this question. They also address the broadest question of this sort: What should or does the future hold for the Marine Corps? Congressman Dicks begins with a pointed discussion of the fiscal aspect of these questions. Although impressive starts have been made on the LCAC and MV-22 programs (as well as prepositioning programs and new amphibious ships), they are a number of years and many dollars away from completion. Their successful completion will depend, at least in part, on how well the Marine Corps continues to demonstrate its flexibility and capability. General Phillips argues that the amphibious mission has never been all the country asks of its Marine Corps, but now more than ever, the Marine Corps' ability to contribute across "the entire spectrum of conflict" must be cultivated. That means the Marine Corps and Navy must exploit and implement what General Phillips refers to as a "renaissance" in amphibious warfare, but they must also prepare for lesser contingencies, including many in which combat never occurs, and for joint operations.

Admiral Mustin's comments echo Colonel Darling's argument: What seemed like science fiction just fifteen years ago (air-cushion landing craft, tilt-rotor aircraft) is reality today, and it has greatly expanded the options available to our political leaders. The challenge for the Navy-Marine Corps today is to incorporate new equipment and ideas while remembering the essential maritime character of the Marine Corps and its capabilities for other than full-scale amphibious assaults. Robert Murray concludes by offering three challenges to the Navy-Marine Corps team and noting three obstacles it will

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have to contend with. His challenges boil down to *thinking*—thinking harder and better about the uses and ways to increase the effectiveness of amphibious forces and thinking about military professionalism, what its requirements are, and how to improve it. The obstacles he describes are familiar—the budget, faddism, interservice competition—but they bear repeating.

The consensus of these commentators is clear: amphibious warfare remains (and should remain) the bedrock for the Marine Corps, but amphibious *operations* may be a more appropriate term since it encompasses not only assaults of the size of Inchon or the World War II campaigns but also much smaller and more likely actions. A spirited discussion among our commentators in response to questions from the audience supported that judgment. Preparing and training for large-scale amphibious assaults remains the Marine Corps' most daunting challenge, but the Corps is far more likely to be asked to perform less demanding missions. Being ready for those lesser missions while continuing to progress in the art and practice of amphibious warfare will fully occupy the Marine Corps in the future as it has in the past.

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## Amphibious Concepts and Requirements

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*Col. Marshall B. Darling, USMC*

The fundamental elements of U.S. national military strategy are deterrence and, if deterrence fails, defense as far forward as possible in a posture of global coalition. The maritime strategy sets forth the global maritime elements of the national military strategy. The amphibious strategy, an integral part of the maritime strategy, provides a global perspective on the role of amphibious forces in fleet operations across the full spectrum of threat—from peace, to crises, to global conventional war.

Amphibious forces provide the National Command Authorities a broad range of military options for responding to situations throughout the spectrum of conflict. During peacetime, amphibious forces maintain an aggressive forward presence at sea and ashore to demonstrate U.S. strength and resolve. In crises, amphibious forces are often the primary intervention forces because of their high state of operational readiness and their capabilities to respond rapidly and to be self-sustaining. In war, they can be employed to control the scope and duration of the conflict as well as to strike enemy vulnerabilities as part of efforts to terminate war.

Amphibious forces can make a strategic difference throughout the spectrum of conflict. Their continuous forward deployment and ability to respond quickly to changing national aims reflect a credible warfighting capability that is the greatest deterrent of all.

In conflict, whatever the scale, the primary missions for amphibious forces are the following:

- Seize and defend advanced naval bases, or seize footholds for introduction of follow-on forces;
- Deny use of areas to enemy forces;

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- Fix enemy forces;
  - Prevent reinforcement;
  - Extract forces in contact.

The utilitarian nature of these missions means that a quick response with an adequate force will accomplish them more effectively and more efficiently than any other military option.

The amphibious doctrine is the way the Marine Corps does business, and it remains sound. We have thoroughly reviewed and continually update our standing publications, and the Marine Corps is ready now, and will be ready, despite the revolutionary changes that will come about in the next fifteen years, to go to war.

Three special problems, or “peculiarities,” confront forces conducting amphibious operations. Foremost is the character of the threat. In an example I will use here, an amphibious force attempting to seize a beachhead along a hostile maritime flank may be faced by the equivalent of a Soviet motorized rifle division (MRD). This threat can be described as prepared forces in place, highly mechanized, highly mobile, with heavy firepower and highly sophisticated weaponry. Most Soviet surrogates and clients have equipment similar to Soviet forces and have adopted the organization and doctrine of a Soviet MRD for anti-amphibious defense. Marines must be able to perform their mission under the most difficult possible conditions, which would be to conduct an amphibious assault on the Soviet littoral itself. The enemy’s primary weakness, which assault forces must exploit to be successful, is that they must defend a broad front of coast. The objective of U.S. and allied amphibious operations should be to force the defender to maintain a mobile defense, holding in reserve a major portion of his forces, in order to be able to respond quickly to attack anywhere along his assigned coastline. The natural corollary to this is that the more accessible to assault the area is, the less able the defender is to concentrate his forces where the attacker is required to come ashore.

The second set of “amphibious peculiarities” is what I call “military factors.” Getting to a position to commence an amphibious assault may bring to bear all aspects of naval warfare—antisubmarine, anti-air, anti-surface, and so on. Peculiar to amphibious warfare, however, is that, against the prepared enemy in place (the threat), amphibious assault begins with zero friendly combat power ashore.

In today’s and tomorrow’s environment of sophisticated space reconnaissance platforms, it is not reasonable to expect that a force of 50 to 100 ships, depending on whether a MAB or a MAF is going ashore, can deploy and

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reach an objective without the defender knowing it. Therefore, assault forces must attain tactical surprise to keep the defender unsure of exactly when and where the assault will come. Tactical surprise is a prerequisite to the objective of establishing decisive combat power ashore before the defender can reinforce the area or bring his full defense to bear in counterattack.

Combat power ashore must be built up rapidly in order to have the assault element on the ground and on the offensive before the defender can react with force. This is not an easy task. In addition to the obvious requirements placed on ships and ship-to-shore assets, effective, reliable, and secure command and control is essential. The need to conduct the initial assault from over the horizon exacerbates the command-and-control problem. New systems and solutions are required to direct air-cushioned landing craft (LCACs) and aircraft to precise landing areas outside the range of traditional tactical UHF and VHF radio, to coordinate close air and surface fire support over extended ranges, and to ensure connectivity between supporting naval forces at sea and the landing force ashore.

Building combat power ashore also includes the ability to sustain forces ashore as they become engaged in combat. If amphibious ships are forced to remain over the horizon because of the danger of mines, hydrography, or in-place defenses, the Marine Corps will need additional capabilities in this vital area.

“Natural factors” are a third type of peculiarity to conducting amphibious warfare. The average tourist views the beach as an idyllic place—having, of course, chosen in advance a beautiful spot in the best season. That luxury is not available to forces in an amphibious assault on a hostile shore. Outside the tropics, the perfect beach day and even the perfect beach are rare. In fact, before the advent of the LCAC, only 17 percent of the world’s coastline was accessible to amphibious assault using surface craft. Beach gradients, sandbars, and reefs served as natural protection for the other 83 percent, much of which is in the upper latitudes. With the LCAC, over 70 percent of the world’s coastline is penetrable to waterborne assault. Surf, sea state, wind, visibility, and salt water also challenge our ability to rapidly project combat power ashore and assist the defender in his mission.

We must capitalize on those natural forces that work to the disadvantage of both the defender and the attacker—especially poor visibility. At night and in poor weather, the enemy’s defense problems are compounded. The ability to maneuver and shoot without being seen is a decided advantage. Our objective is to overcome these natural obstacles to be able to land where we want to land, not where the defender would choose to face us, and to do so in all conditions of weather and visibility, day or night.

To perform amphibious operations successfully, marines must be able to embark, land, and sustain a credible force. We must press for the flexibility

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to land where, when, and by what means we choose, day or night, in all weather and sea states, independent of hydrography. Successful amphibious operations exploit the inherent mobility of naval forces and utilize surprise and deception. Assault is by both air and surface, supported by air and surface fire.

Consider the following example of a 1990s amphibious assault. The amphibious task force (ATF) has been tasked to seize a port and airfield complex in preparation for introducing follow-on forces. Five port and airfield complexes are located along the coast. Seizure of any one of these would constitute mission accomplished. An area this large would be defended by a force the size of a combined-arms army. In this example, the amphibious objective and selected area is defended by a motorized rifle regiment (MRR) and elements of the headquarters of a motorized rifle division.

The ATF will have the potential to achieve tactical surprise on a scale that borders on strategic. From a stand-off range of more than 400 n.mi., a force equipped with Osprey and LCAC and supported by carrier-based or theater air power can threaten more than a thousand miles of coastline within twenty-four hours.

The power projection force, composed of fifty-six amphibious ships, two or more carrier battle groups (CVBGs), three battleship battle groups (BBBGs), and associated escort and replenishment ships, will arrive in the theater so as to preserve tactical surprise. Deception will be used as much as possible to conceal the strength, location, and destination of each group.

Operations preparatory to the assault will be conducted to gain information and to isolate and prepare the objective area. These preassault operations are conducted by subordinate elements of the ATF acting as an advanced force. They include reconnaissance, minesweeping, naval surface fire support, air strikes, underwater demolitions, and destruction of beach obstacles.

Insertion of reconnaissance units into the intended force beachhead by Osprey aircraft launched from 400 n.mi. may occur twenty-four hours before the assault. The mission of the reconnaissance teams will be to position sensors, observe enemy positions, conduct route reconnaissance, observe avenues of approach, reconnoiter landing zones and beaches, and provide terminal guidance for the assault forces. The ability to conduct deception operations across a broad area with the Osprey means that even if some teams are discovered, the enemy will remain uncertain of the actual assault area.

Today, the Marine Corps lacks this kind of flexibility. Ships supporting this type of operation would have to close to approximately 75 n.mi. of the objective to be within the range of the helicopter. The commander must decide whether to split his forces or simply not take advantage of these tactical measures.

The ability with the MV-22A Osprey to threaten a broad frontage adds depth to the commander's area of influence as the amphibious task force continues its approach. From 200 n.mi., raiding parties may be sent inland to neutralize specific targets, such as command and control centers, to establish blocking positions at critical choke points, or to make attacks to harass and create confusion among the defenders. The intent is to force the enemy to commit reserves prematurely or to fix units in their reserve positions, thereby weakening the enemy's defense. In the example in figure 1, Ospreys carry a raid force of two reinforced companies to cause general confusion within enemy defenses. A squadron of Ospreys is launched approximately six hours before H-hour with the raid force. The raid will last one hour. During this time the assault aircraft may orbit at sea "on call" to extract the force. Dedicated fixed-wing anti-air warfare (AAW), electronic warfare (EW), and close air support will be provided by the carrier battle groups. Battleship battle groups could provide surface fire support as necessary from a standoff distance.

As the main force nears the assault area, ships will be echeloned in the best formation for their missions. In figure 2, an example of a sea echelon area, the assault ships are positioned with the LCAC-carrying LSDs in the vanguard. These LSDs may serve as "mother ships" for LCACs carried to the objective area in LHDs and LHAs. They will come closest to the beach horizon during the initial assault, at 25 to 35 miles from the beach.

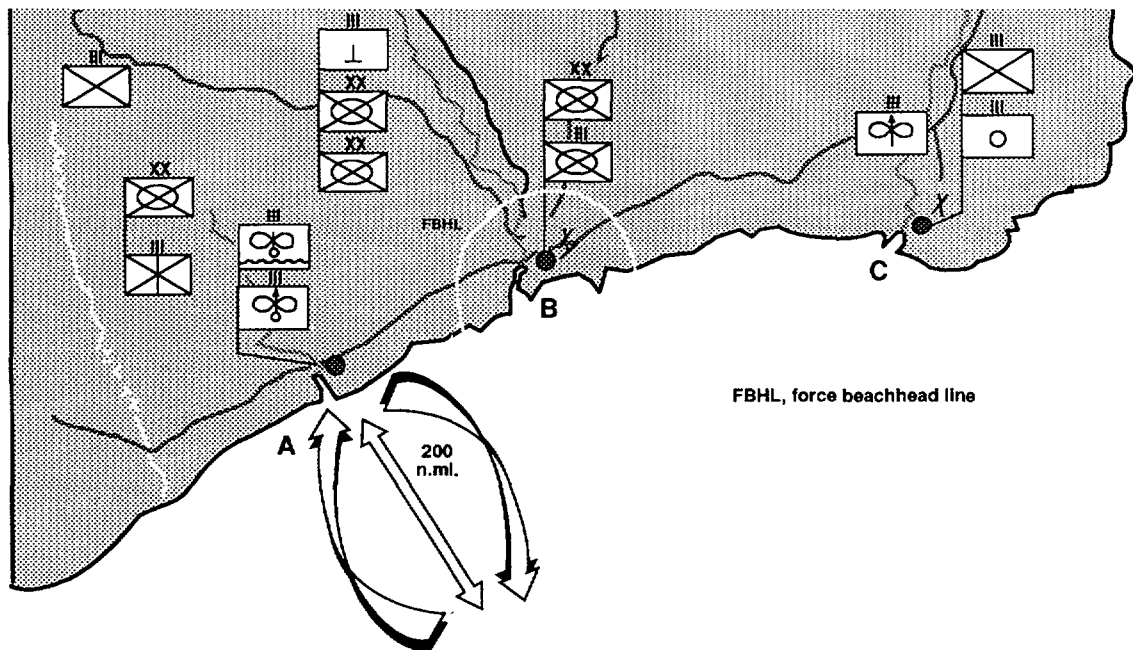


Figure 1: Amphibious raid, 2220, D-1

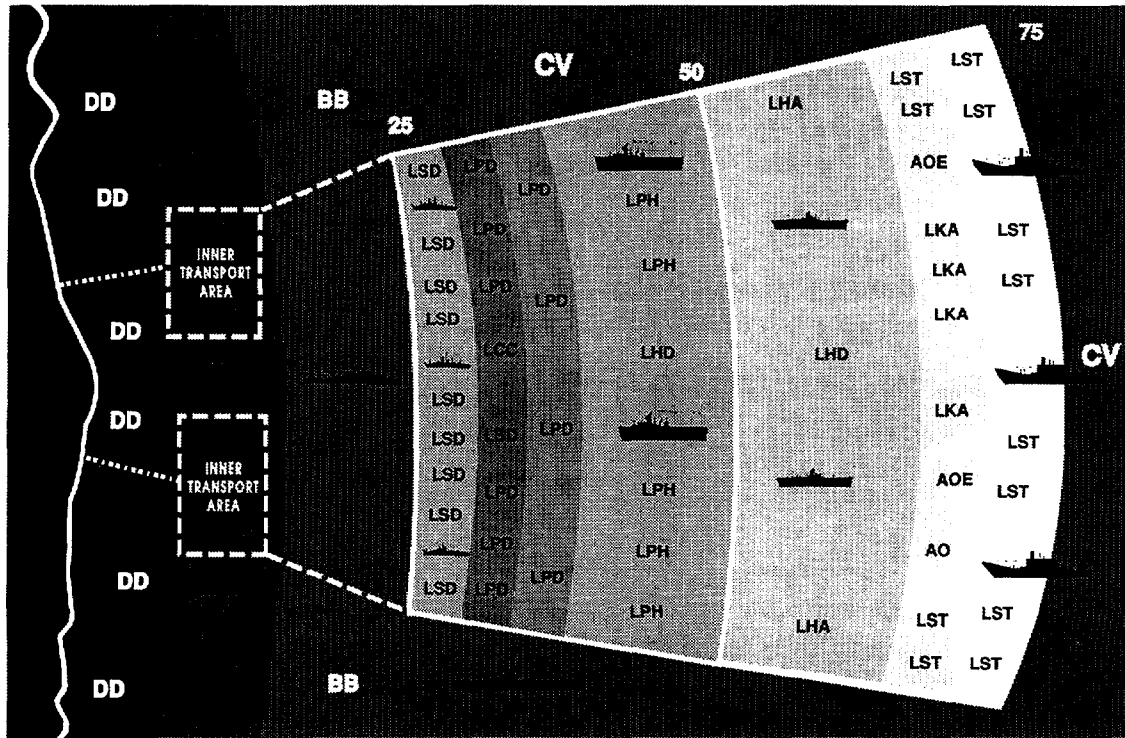


Figure 2: Task force disposition for MAF assault

The remaining ships will be further out to sea dispersed in the transport area, with the LPDs and LPHs closer in than the LHAs and LHDs. Ships such as the LSTs and LKAs are the furthest out, awaiting orders to participate in the general offload. They remain available for selective, on-call offload by Osprey and CH-53E Super Stallion if necessary.

Fire support ships will be positioned shoreward and on the flanks of the ATF to give surface fire support to the assault force as well as AAW and antisurface warfare for the amphibious force. The carrier battle groups operate approximately 200 to 300 miles beyond the transport area.

An amphibious demonstration is conducted to deceive the enemy and encourage him to take an unfavorable course of action, such as fixing forces in place or withholding reserves. The size and apparent objective of the demonstration force are essential to its credibility. The force must be large enough to evoke the desired reaction, yet not so large as to weaken the main attack. The location of the demonstration must be far enough from the main assault area to confuse, divide, and weaken the defense. Because of the Osprey's speed and range, this demonstration could be conducted as far as one hundred miles away from the main assault area.

In the example in figure 3, at 0400, half an hour before the main assault, an amphibious demonstration is conducted against a third port and airfield complex seventy-five miles from the actual objective area. The purpose of the demonstration is to fix the enemy forces in this area, to prevent their movement to the primary assault area, and to force the enemy commander to withhold his reserve. The demonstration will simulate an ATF supported by BBBGs and CVBGs.

The key element of the demonstration is a “turn-away landing”: two Osprey squadrons approach a plausible landing area, then proceed back over the horizon to simulate a second sortie, continuing to the actual landing area. Only the speed and range of the Osprey make this tactic possible. With today’s aircraft, the commander would have to weaken his main effort by separating his forces to create such a diversion.

At H-hour, a combined waterborne and vertical assault is conducted to seize the ATF objectives (figure 4). The demonstration force joins the main force. A vertical force of four battalions (BNs) is inserted inland to isolate the objectives while two battalions land across the beach in LCACs. The surface force will form mechanized combined-arms task forces to secure the vital area and link up with the inland forces. Three battalions remain in reserve.

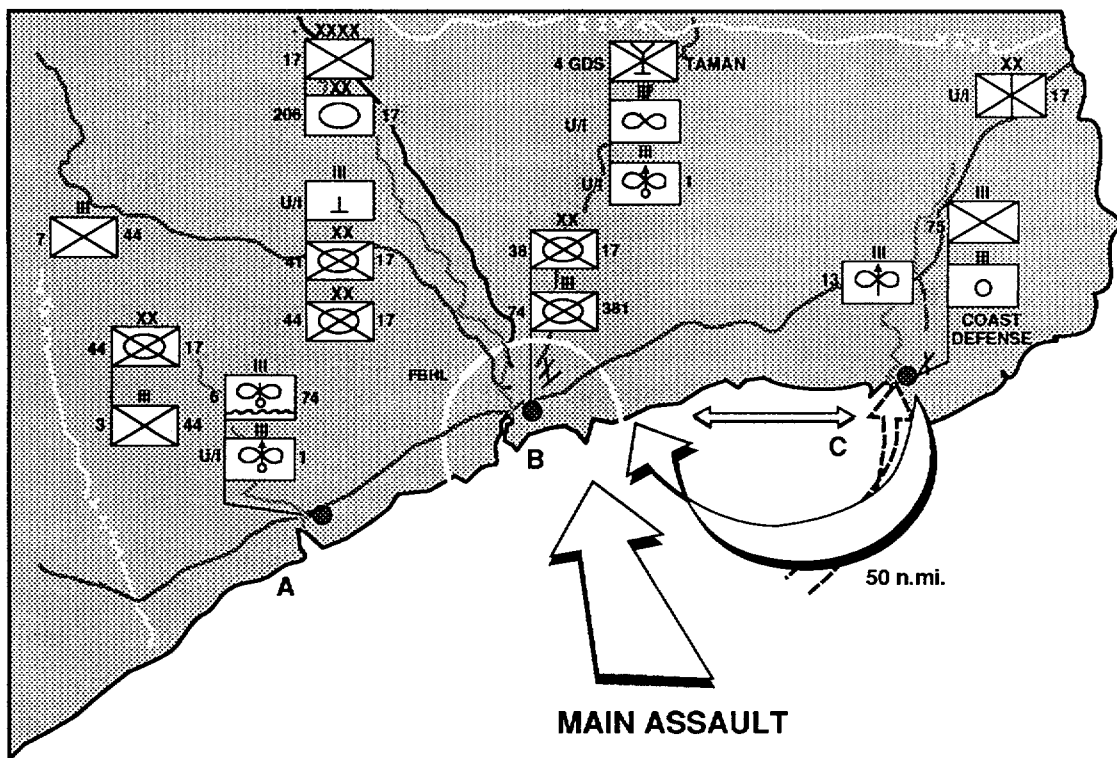


Figure 3: Demonstration, 0400 (H-30) D-day

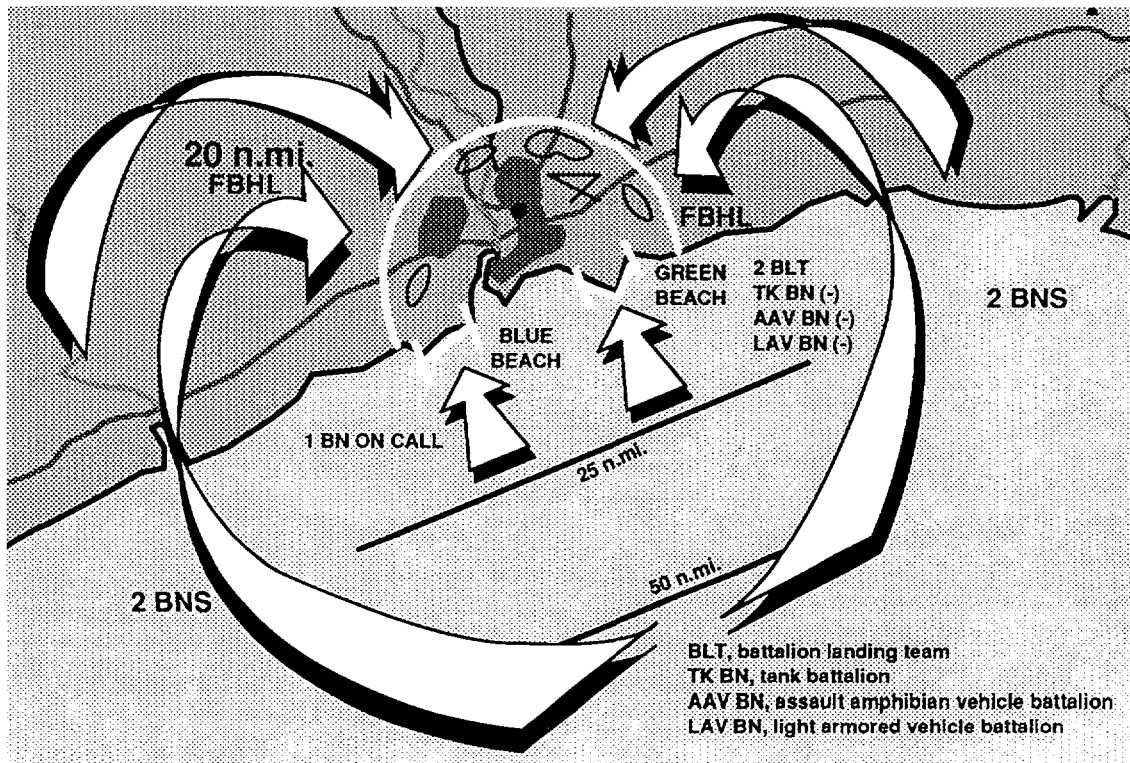


Figure 4: Main assault, 0430, H-hour

The assault is a team effort. The primary goal is to get the assault elements ashore as rapidly as possible. The requirement to land in 90 minutes is to get ashore with enough combat power to avoid being thrown back into the sea. Any method or equipment that reduces the time significantly increases the prospects of success. The combination of Osprey and Super Stallion from the air and LCAC from the sea offers an unparalleled capability to mass forces ashore quickly in sufficient strength to defeat expected counterattacks.

The essential usefulness of the amphibious operation stems from mobility and flexibility (that is, the ability to concentrate balanced forces and to strike with great strength a selected point in the hostile defense system). The amphibious operation exploits the element of surprise and capitalizes upon enemy weaknesses through application of the required type and degree of force at the most advantageous locations at the most opportune times.<sup>1</sup>

To achieve the capabilities our sample assault has presented, the Marine Corps has a number of planning objectives that translate into programming requirements (table 1). We must have the capacity to lift the assault

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**Table 1. Generation of program requirements**

<i>Assault echelon fingerprint</i>			
	MAF	+ MAB	= Total
Troops	37,770	12,230	50,000
Kft <sup>2</sup>	784	293	1,077
Kft <sup>3</sup>	1,793	697	2,490

<i>Assault element fingerprint</i>			
	MAF	MAB	Percent of total
Troops	8,725	2,835	23
Kft <sup>2</sup>	158K	42K	20
Kft <sup>3</sup>	18K	7K	1

echelons of a MAF and a MAB in amphibious ships. This is the specified requirement from defense guidance. We must be able to make a forcible entry on a hostile shore because that may be the only option available to introduce follow-on forces or to secure an advanced naval base. A 50,000-man MAF is the only realistic means of fulfilling that mission, given the large area that must be seized to prepare for subsequent land operations. Additionally, because of our global interests and maritime orientation, we must have a concurrent capability with a smaller force (MAB) to affect the tactical balance elsewhere—for example, as a means to clear a lodgement for or to reinforce a prepositioned brigade. Amphibious forces are a vital part of the war plans of every CINC.

These amphibious ships must have the capabilities of spreadloading, of being selectively offloaded as the landing force requires resupply, and of allowing the marines to maintain unit integrity and the best possible state of readiness when the landing force is landed. These ships must also be survivable.

Although they will launch the assault from over the horizon, they still go in harm's way. Significantly larger and more capable than their World War II ancestors, each amphibious ship carries a heavy share of the assault echelon's landing force. Because the landing force assault echelon (AE) fingerprint is fixed by the number of amphibious ships available, the AE has been scrubbed to ensure that only the bare essentials of the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) are embarked in amphibious ships. Therefore, each ship's load is critical to the success of an amphibious operation. The ships must be able to withstand battle damage, to control flooding, and to defend themselves from enemy attack in order to get their part of the landing force ashore. They are

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more likely to be attacked than more capable surface combatants, not only because of where they go, but because the marines they carry can be seen to be a direct threat. The accepted standard of survivability for Navy combatants is therefore a minimum for amphibious ships.

The second programmatic requirement derived from our planning objectives is the capacity to lift, launch, and recycle enough ship-to-shore assets to put the assault element ashore in 90 minutes. The rapid buildup of combat power ashore is critical. Also necessary are over-the-horizon command and control and intelligence collection and dissemination to know what our forces are doing and what steps the defender is taking to react to the assault.

The following ongoing programs respond to these requirements in the ways noted:

- Amphibious ships: LHD, dock landing ship LSD-41, LSD-41 (CV), LX
  - Capacity: MAF (AE) + MAB (AE)
  - Versatility: Air capable; well decks
  - Survivability: Self-defense; collective protection system (CPS); hardened
- Ship-to-shore assets: LCAC, Advanced Assault Amphibians, MV-22A Osprey, CH-53E Super Stallion
  - Speed and range
  - All-weather
  - Independent of hydrography
  - Over the horizon
- Command and control: Position-location reporting system (PLRS), digital communications terminal (DCT), single-channel ground and airborne radio system (SINCGARS), VHF relay, HAVEQUICK
  - Over-the-horizon communications
  - Over-the-horizon control
  - Theater tactical interoperability
  - Security
  - Volume
- Intelligence: Tactical remote sensor system (TRSS)/forward pass, remotely piloted vehicle (RPV), fleet imagery support terminal (FIST), lightweight-battlefield surveillance radar (LBSR), Joint Service Imagery Processing System (JSIPS), ship's signals exploitation space (SSES) upgrade
  - Over-the-horizon targeting
  - Over-the-horizon control of sensors/reconnaissance

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Dissemination: Fusion ashore/transmit to ATF; capacity to receive, process, and pass high volume of information

- Fire support: 16-in. improvement (extended range/improved conventional munitions), assault ballistic rocket system (ABRS), 5-in. precision munitions
  - Extend depth of battlefield
  - Ship standoff
  - Improved kill.

To embark, land, and sustain a credible force on a hostile shore is no small task. To accomplish it, the Marine Corps must have the flexibility to land where and when we choose and to deal with the peculiarities that are endemic to the conduct of amphibious warfare. We are making reasonable progress toward attaining this goal with the programs now in place. To land from over the horizon, independent of weather, darkness, and hydrography will make the amphibious forces of the late 1990s a significant force for power projection into the next century.

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#### Note

1. Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, *Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*. U.S. Army FM31-11; U.S. Navy NWP 22(B); U.S. Air Force AFM 2-53; U.S. Marine Corps LFM 01.

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## Commentary

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*Congressman Norman D. Dicks*

Money well spent is the lifeblood of any operation, and this is especially true for military operations. If money is mismanaged by the services, as with any other organization, they will not attract or keep the dedicated people needed to perform their mission, nor can they acquire and maintain the increasingly expensive tools they need. Allocating funds is my primary responsibility as a member of the subcommittees on defense and military construction of the House Appropriations Committee. At times my job is frustrating, but when I can help pass legislation that ensures money will be spent wisely—serving taxpayers, the services, and the nation—my job also is tremendously satisfying.

Any discussion about the future of the Marine Corps must include an attempt to define the roles that the Corps should play in meeting the nation's foreign-policy objectives. Then Congress and the Department of Defense (DOD) must assign priorities to these roles in the context of both the overall military requirements and the entire budget. Such decisions require careful judgment, and they are as important a factor as any other in shaping the future of the Marine Corps.

Level-funded budgets have been mentioned as an optimistic forecast for the next few years. I want to focus on why such budgets can be a reality and discuss their likely consequences.

Perhaps the biggest incentive for working toward a level-funded budget is the signal that Congress is receiving from the public. Since 1980, Americans have reversed their attitude toward defense spending. In 1980 an overwhelming majority, exceeding 60 percent, consistently supported increased funding; today less than 20 percent share that view. The reason in part is that taxpayers do not believe they are getting their money's worth from the defense buildup; they have heard the horror stories about procurement of spare parts. The Congress and DOD are both working to improve that situation, and I think

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we are making progress. Restoring credibility with the public depends on procurement reform and a stable budget.

Over the ten years I have served in Congress, defense appropriations have nearly tripled—from \$109 billion in FY 1978 to \$274 billion for FY 1987. It is unrealistic to expect that funding levels will continue to grow in real terms indefinitely for any program. Yet that is the premise on which Congress and DOD base defense-spending plans.

Facing the problem of the defense budget is not easy. A recent *Washington Post* article described Undersecretary of the Army Ambrose's efforts to help the Army do just that. He identified a \$100-billion gap between Army planning and spending levels likely to be approved for the remainder of this century.<sup>1</sup> The Navy-Marine Corps gap is at least of the same magnitude.

The most pressing factor is, of course, the federal deficit. The actual deficit for the fiscal year just completed (FY 1986) was \$220 billion. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) estimates the FY 1987 deficit at \$163 billion, a figure that many find overly optimistic. These large, unprecedented deficits are already squeezing the U.S. government in two ways. First, the portion of the budget that must be used to pay interest on the existing debt is ever increasing. Second, these deficits drain our investment capital and thereby curtail the nation's ability to meet its full growth potential.

In late 1985 Congress enacted the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill in response to the deficit crisis. I opposed the measure because I feared arbitrary, across-the-board cuts would be made without regard to priorities or efficiency. I also opposed the bill because it mandates that half the cuts required to meet deficit targets must come out of the defense budget, even though defense represents only about one-third of the overall budget.

When the Supreme Court struck down the requirement for automatic sequestration, Congress was given some flexibility. But the deficit targets included in the Gramm-Rudman law remain powerful political forces. The target for the coming year will require that at least \$54 billion be cut from the FY 1987 budget as approved by Congress, according to the latest figures from OMB.

Looking at the experience of the past year, some may be tempted to conclude that Gramm-Rudman is a paper tiger. Although implementing the law was rather painful, it was not the disaster some predicted. In many ways, Congress "met" the Gramm-Rudman targets in 1986 through one-time steps that will not be possible for the outyears. We milked dry any excess funds from previous years. We saved nearly \$3 billion by delaying a payday by one day. Such finagling will not be possible next year, and the \$11-billion windfall we reaped from the tax bill this year will turn into a \$17-billion shortfall next year.

Most importantly, the difference between military-service plans and approved appropriations increases every year—on one side by military-service

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plans based on ever-increasing resources, and on the other side by budgetary targets to decrease the deficit.

The bottom line is that the defense-spending plans for the coming years demand reappraisal. How the Marine Corps will fare in the defense budget depends on many factors within Congress. The advantages that Mr. O'Rourke identified are valid and will help the Marine Corps.<sup>2</sup> He notes the lobbying power of the marines in Congress, who are perhaps the most effective legislative fighting force on the Hill. (John Murtha, who serves on my subcommittee, is by himself worth at least a MAB.) The controversy over strategic forces and the corresponding desire to put more emphasis on conventional forces also will help the Marine Corps. In this respect, Senator Nunn's appointment to head the Senate Armed Services Committee could be a positive development.

Other factors within Congress might be less favorable for the Marine Corps. Because of the nature of defense spending, there is a considerable lag between the approved budget authority and actual outlays in hardware programs. Actual outlays determine the deficit in any given year, and in order to reduce outlays, three to six times as much budget authority must be cut from the hardware accounts as from the personnel and operations accounts to save one dollar of outlay. Because Marine Corps appropriations requests concentrate on these readiness accounts, Congress may be forced to cut a larger percentage from the Corps' budget than from the budgets of the other services in order to protect the investment accounts. To some extent Congress had to make such cuts this year to meet the deficit limits set by Gramm-Rudman.

The success of the Marines Corps budget also depends on whether the DOD budget is politically realistic. Secretary of Defense Weinberger has indicated his intention to submit budgets based on a continuous rate of 3-percent real growth. If he submits such budgets, Congress will have to decide how to allocate the necessary cuts. Traditionally Congress has been more supportive of the Marine Corps than has the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). I am proud to have worked to secure the AV-8B over OSD's opposition and to have played a central role in accelerating the LSD-41 program beyond Pentagon plans. The Marine Corps has fared less well when OSD and the services have decided how to allocate cuts.

The major weapons system for the Marine Corps that will be under the closest scrutiny in Congress is the MV-22 Osprey. The House and Senate have cautiously approved the program. The V-22 provides a quantum improvement in the ability to conduct an amphibious operation over the horizon. Complementing the air-cushion landing craft (LCAC) and new classes of amphibious ships, the Osprey is the latest "surprise attack" craft in the Marine Corps' collection, and in amphibious operations, surprise attack is essential to victory. But the V-22 is extremely expensive. Whether the Marine Corps can sustain the program using its own funds is an important question. Although the other

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services have signed on for part of the program, their priorities may change if they are faced with a major budget squeeze. Thus, although the program seems to be proceeding smoothly with sufficient funds, it is still too early to tell just what the other services and Congress will do when funds run low.

Apart from the budget problem, Congress continues to review the overall mission of the Marine Corps. The amphibious assault mission, which is identified uniquely with the Marine Corps, has received both positive and negative assessments over the years. The Corps is currently riding the crest of a resurgence in attention to this mission, which may be a response in part to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, oil crises, and instability in Iran. The experiences of Grenada and the Falklands point to the importance of amphibious assault in lower-level conflicts.

The Marine Corps, with the help of this recognition and of Congress, has improved its ability to meet the mission: A new generation of LSD-41 is on its way; the LHD program is proceeding; the LCAC is a reality; the AV-8B is in service; four battleships have been reactivated; and the maritime prepositioning program is under way. All of these actions are departures from the neglect of the 1970s, and each is a step toward improving the nation's defense. However, much work still needs to be done to help the Marine Corps meet its objective of being able to deploy 1.5 Marine amphibious forces.

The critical question is whether this level of attention and support will continue. Part of the answer inevitably depends on changing world events. For example, a renewed oil crisis would accelerate current plans to improve capabilities for amphibious operations. Instability in any key area of the world would be a further reminder of the importance of this mission.

On the other hand, if the United States and the Soviet Union take steps to reduce their nuclear arsenals, the United States would build up its conventional forces in Europe. Such action could renew the pressures on the Marine Corps to "heavy up," similar to those in the 1970s.

The key to the future of the Marine Corps is flexibility. In the past decade the Corps has greatly improved its flexibility, but its goal must be to weather any changes required of it to be an effective fighting force. Amphibious operations will continue to be the Marine Corps' forte, but it is learning to excel in other missions as well. These include prepositioning on land, as is now being implemented in central Norway, and prepositioning at sea, as has been done in the Indian Ocean. The new Marine Corps missions also include the transport to contingencies by air. Thus, the question I want to pose is this: What emphasis should be placed on each of the unique missions the Corps can perform? The answers—worked out by the Marine Corps, military analysts, the government, and the taxpayers—will guide the future of the Marine Corps.

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## Notes

1. *Washington Post*, 19 November 1986.
2. See Ronald O'Rourke's essay, "The Marine Corps and the Navy Today: An Outsider's View," in Part 1 of this volume.

## Commentary

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*Lt. Gen. John Phillips, USMC*

The Marines have worked hard to maintain and improve the sustainability, modernization, force structure, and readiness of their service. These are the four pillars on which the Marine Corps stands, and because they are sound, the Marine Corps is in excellent shape today. One need only look at the Corps' inventory of weapon systems, aircraft, and platforms to see the strength of this armed service and the progress it has made. And because of this stability, the Marine Corps agenda for the future, described here by Colonel Darling, is feasible; it does not hinge on something way out over the horizon. Each item on the agenda can be accomplished or procured over the next several years. Two new vehicles, the air-cushion landing craft (LCAC) and the Osprey, will bring major changes to the Marine Corps and to the defense of this nation.

The Navy has organized an LCAC program at Camp Pendleton, California, and testing is underway. In about a year and a half, it will organize another LCAC program in Little Creek, Virginia. After testing the vehicle, there will be six LCACs on each coast, and in the next ten to fifteen years that number should increase to forty-five, for a total force of ninety LCACs.

Today's LCAC can travel 200 nautical miles at 40 knots carrying a payload of 60 tons. Tests show that the LCAC is capable of exceeding these limits, particularly the payload capacity, which has been increased to 75 tons with good results. These capabilities mean that an amphibious task force can launch an assault from over the horizon, before the enemy becomes aware of its presence. Even when the enemy knows the task force is over the horizon, the speed and mobility of the LCAC so enlarge the area of possible assault that the enemy cannot predict the location of the assault precisely enough to mass his defenses. Furthermore, with the LCAC, the Marines can cover 70 percent of the world's coasts, as opposed to 17 percent without it.

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The Osprey can be launched at 250 miles and can go 150 miles inland; it can carry 24 assault troops or the equivalent. The Osprey enables the Marine Corps to assault a coastline over a range of about 260 miles. So, again, even if the enemy knows the task force is over the horizon, he cannot organize his hard defenses in a particular area because the Osprey enlarges the area of possible assault.

The amphibious battlefield has been significantly increased in width and depth as a result of the capabilities of these two pieces of equipment. The Navy has increased amphibious lift accordingly; with 76 additional amphibious ships, the Corps has 35 percent more lift. With the LCAC and the Osprey, the Corps can defend the entire Atlantic coast 24 hours a day, from the coast itself. A motorized rifle division protected by an Osprey can defend an area twice the width of the division's front. The enemy must consider the consequences of trying to penetrate such a protective shield—the enemy's flanks and rear certainly would be under surveillance and possibly attack through the Corps' use of reconnaissance and raid capabilities.

All of these things will be possible on a 1000-mile coast in ten to fifteen years, which will change amphibious warfare dramatically. And, of course, by then there will be new technological breakthroughs such as what we read about in the defense community's professional magazines. Surface craft may be endowed with a stealth capability by then.

Amphibious warfare is going through a renaissance, and strategists around the world are beginning to realize how much amphibious operations can contribute to national defense in the future. Amphibious forces will be able to participate in the entire spectrum of conflict, from deterrence to all-out global war. The Marine Corps continues to be associated with deterrence (through presence and show of force) and with use of force in limited war. Indeed, these tasks are important, but the Marines have capabilities that can make a global impact if used. And it is this potential that makes the Marines unique. The war games that have been played in and around the United States this past two years point to the strength of the maritime and amphibious strategies. Military analysts now evaluate "competitive strategies." The amphibious warfare of the future will be as competitive a strategy as one can find anywhere. It will erode the enemy's timelines, planning, and defenses, and it will exploit the enemy's vulnerabilities.

Naval forces have been involved in 80 percent of the contingencies and crises since World War II, whether bullets flew or not. The National Command Authorities are likely to continue to rely on those forces in the future.

Joint-service forces under unified commands receive more emphasis in future warfare strategies. For example, a command is being established that unifies the services' special operations forces. These forces are especially useful in low-intensity conflicts, and I would expect that the Marine Corps will

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be working much more closely with them to help initiate operations from the sea. The Marines would also be able to provide muscle to back up these highly trained tacticians. For example, the Marines would assist in the counterterrorist actions of the Army's special forces. In larger conflicts, I expect that unified commanders will use the additional authority that has been given them through recent laws. They will participate in all the combatant areas, and combat commanders will certainly want to use all of their components in any exercise, operation, or fighting in which they are involved.

I believe that the use of joint services and combined operations is going to grow in the years to come. I expect to see F-15s and F-16s flying around the battlefield in support of joint-service operations. I expect to see follow-on forces working closely with the Army. I expect to see U.S. armed forces working with U.S. allies in a combined arena with their ships, their marine corps, their navies, and their air forces. Regardless of whether the defense community gets SDI or whether the president succeeds in reducing the world's arsenal of nuclear arms, conventional forces will continue to be the mainstay for defending the United States. The U.S. Marine Corps offers this nation a versatile, ready conventional force and offers the National Command Authorities the flexibility to carry out foreign policy and to protect this nation's interests around the world.

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## Commentary

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*VAdm. Henry C. Mustin, USN*

I want to emphasize a few points about amphibious warfare from my perspective as a former fleet commander and a member of the OPNAV staff. The impact of technology on military tactics is implicit in all of the papers presented here. History is filled with lessons written in the blood of the people who did not understand the impact of technology. For example, the repeating rifle, introduced in the Civil War, changed infantry and cavalry tactics forever. Many Confederate soldiers died because they didn't understand that. The Allies won World War II with technology that had not even been on the drawing board when the war started in 1939. The finest Polish cavalry was no match for the Nazi Panzers. The notion that aircraft could threaten battleships was unheard of, and people didn't understand the concept of antisubmarine or submarine warfare. At the end of the war, U.S. forces had things that had never been available before, such as radar, proximity fuzes, and nuclear weapons. The officers and men of the Navy and the Marine Corps had had to invent the tactics to use those new technologies on the fly and under fire.

Today, new technology comes in at an unprecedented rate, but we have the opportunity to develop the needed tactics and concepts while no one is shooting at us. All of us in uniform must seize that opportunity. The explosion of technology shows no signs of slowing in the near future. Within my own brief time in the Navy, new technology has been introduced that is now commonplace—including nuclear power, guided missiles, supersonic jet aircraft, digital computers, and circuits so small you need a microscope to see them. Tom Clancy's book *Red Storm Rising* gives us a glimpse into the future and how some high technology may play out. The technology coming into use by the Marine Corps, as described by Colonel Darling, was largely viewed as Buck Rogers science fiction fifteen years ago when I first came to the Pentagon. The number-one challenge for all of us now on active duty is to

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figure out how to use this technology as it comes into the fleet and into the Marine Corps to save the lives of young sailors and marines.

The second thing I want to talk about is what General Phillips touched on, and that is flexibility, which I want to address in terms of concepts of operations. The Navy and the Marine Corps are the country's most powerful and flexible force for deterrence, and deterrence is the bedrock of the national strategy. With the Navy and the Marine Corps, you can send powerful, credible forces when and where you choose, to stabilize a situation or to deter someone, no matter who, and you can do that without crossing any borders and without launching any aircraft from another nation's base, which might cause you trouble in the future. That adds up to deterrence. Although deterrence is usually treated with a lot of very fancy sounding academic terms, I think it's pretty simple. If you walk into a bar and Mean Joe Green is sitting there next to Woody Allen and you're looking for a fight, you're most likely to punch Woody. That's deterrence. With Navy and Marine Corps forces, if you send them forward for the purpose of deterrence and it turns out that your estimate of the situation was wrong, you can get them out of there as fast as you put them in, and you can do that easily, while staying in international waters. You can't do that with air or ground forces once you put them in. So the options and the flexibility that the Navy and Marine Corps team bring to the National Command Authorities cannot be matched by any other armed force, not only of this country but of any other country in the world.

That brings me to my next point. In order to maintain this kind of capability, the Navy and the Marine Corps have to practice continually and to develop the concepts needed to operate together as a fleet. There is nothing wrong with the term *Fleet Marine Force*. We should not let the concept behind that title ever drift away from us: We have to get the marines there, and that's the job of the Navy. It's a job that will get increasingly difficult if we want to go against the Soviet Union. In order to maintain that integral capability in the Navy-Marine Corps team, we've got to practice together, deploy together, get drunk together, and do anything else together you can bring to mind, but it's imperative that we do it often and on a sustained basis. That means that we've got to understand certain truisms. We tend to talk about the 600-ship navy as if it were the navy of everyone's wildest dreams. Nobody ever said that. It is our minimum force. In 1970 the chief of naval operations said we needed 1,000 ships and, in fact, we had 1,000 ships. So 600 ships is a minimum force. With 600 ships, for example, CINCLANT will still have only 50 percent of the forces he says he needs to fight the battle in the Atlantic. What that means is that either the marines must be forward well before hostilities begin or the amphibious task forces must develop a whole new concept of operations. They must not be talking on the radio all the time so the enemy knows where they are, so that both the Marine commander and the amphibious task force

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commander must understand and agree on when and under what circumstances marine weapons will be used to defend the task force while it is en route from A to B. All these things must be sorted out in advance, because it is very difficult to sort them out when bullets are coming by. Mistakes are paid for with the lives of your men.

The Navy and Marine Corps can remain the force of choice for the United States of America, no matter what the circumstances are. Those of us in uniform must deliver that case persuasively, and we must articulate our requirements. If we do not, then all we have done is to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

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## Commentary

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*Robert J. Murray*

I have a few things to put on the agenda for discussion as we in the defense community think about and plan for the Marine Corps of the future. Three items are areas that need improvement, and three are obstacles to watch for and work around.

First, the Marine Corps needs to expand its thinking about amphibious warfare. Amphibious operations have been developed into a fine art form. The Marine Corps studies them, trains for them, and exercises the concepts. It knows the amphibious business very, very well. But as important as they are, amphibious operations are mainly a means of delivering combat power. More time—a good deal of it—must be spent thinking about likely future missions and how to accomplish them, not only how to get to the place of confrontation, but the reason for going and what to do when we arrive. How can the Marine Corps help assure success in different kinds of missions? What are Marines likely to be asked to do in the future, and how can it be done well? What missions are likely to be assigned? History says a great deal about what the Marines might be asked to do tomorrow.

One mission, for example, is the presence mission—that is, symbolizing by our physical presence the importance the United States places on particular regions and countries. Presence is a form of deterrence. In 1979 I was part of a team that went to the Indian Ocean to negotiate access for American forces to local bases. We spoke to several heads of state. One leader was worried because he had depended to some extent on Iranian troops to protect his country, and with the fall of the Shah, the troops had been withdrawn. I told him about the U.S. carrier task forces just over his horizon. I said, “There are 25,000 sailors and marines out there, and they can be here before your breakfast tomorrow.” He smiled broadly, and he was very helpful to us in terms of bases—not just for that reason, of course, but he saw the political weight of it.

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Other missions are more demanding and difficult than the presence mission—in particular, the task of intervening in another country or against another force. Sometimes this task is large and long-term, as in Korea and Vietnam; sometimes, as in *Mayaguez*, Desert I, Grenada, and Lebanon, the task is shorter but intensely demanding. The record of our country in interventions is not impressive. Our execution has left much to be desired.

The problems with our execution are not always the result of military shortcomings. I disagree, for example, that Lebanon was a bad show and that the Marine Corps shouldn't have been there. I was on the commission that investigated the bombing of the marines in October 1983. The Marine Corps mission in Lebanon, in my opinion, was needed by the country and appropriate for marines. George Shultz was right when he said he needed military help in order to make diplomatic progress there. In retrospect, it is clear that the marines helped calm Beirut and provided temporary stability there. In fact, the marines bought the diplomats about six months of relative tranquility, from September 1982 through March 1983. Had the diplomats been successful in that time, the intervention would have been a success, and the marines would have come home (along with the diplomats) as victors. Had the United States recognized even by June 1983 that American diplomacy had failed, as hindsight tells us it had, and then made the decision to withdraw, no marines need have died. Withdrawal in June would have been hard, but not as hard as it was after October.

But I am not trying to criticize the decision makers. I am saying that we have forty years of experience with crises and interventions of various sorts. We must study them for their lessons for the future. Interventions are complex political and military operations that must be taken as seriously as amphibious operations, the defense of NATO, and nuclear war. Although this is not a matter only for the Marine Corps, marines can make a significant contribution.

The Marine Corps must also continue thinking about that most demanding but least likely circumstance, war with the Soviet Union. The work that the Marine Corps and the Navy have done with respect to the northern flank of NATO is an example of constructive mission thinking and a very significant contribution to deterrence and defense. I am not suggesting that the Marine Corps become scenario-dependent or regionally oriented, simply that marines need to understand the kinds of places and situations they might encounter so that they can train and exercise effectively to increase the chances of success.

Second, a better officer education program is needed, particularly for senior officers of all services. The services are excellent at skills training. Officers learn a vast amount about the communities they serve in and the equipment they are responsible for; they also learn a good deal about troop leadership and about principles of military success. With few exceptions,

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however, this training and education at the war colleges stops at the level of lieutenant colonel. Yet this is the precise moment when an officer makes a major transition in his career—from responsibilities heavily oriented toward unit-level, community-centered, single-service activities, to responsibilities that demand knowledge of political objectives, the policy process, and ways to combine the forces of all the services most effectively to achieve national objectives. Continuing education for senior officers should help them operate in these areas. Education ought not to end with the war colleges. Examples of what I think is necessary are the CAPSTONE course, Harvard's two-week summer program for flag officers, and Harvard's eight-week course for colonels. But education is more than specific courses; the process should include frequent seminars, working groups, and war games that continue throughout the career of an officer, four-star officers included.

Congress has lately been concerned with military officers being too single-service oriented and parochial and has passed laws aimed at broadening officers' perspectives. But to solve the problem of parochialism, the laws will have to be buttressed with new educational programs for senior officers. Such programs must be developed.

Education for civilian leaders also needs our attention. In our system of government, top leadership is continually turning over. Civilian leaders hold their jobs a short time. It is a military responsibility—or at least an opportunity—to educate civilian leaders in the constructive use of military forces, not just to sell them programs or get another 2 percent in the budget. Moreover, discussion with political leaders must take place before a crisis occurs; otherwise it's too late. Defense leaders must do a better job of involving civilian leaders in war games and in dialogues about military strengths and limitations. They must also involve the services and political leaders of our allies, because if the United States is involved in a big war, we will be in it with other nations. Many of them have a lot of experience we could share. A program to accomplish this has begun at the Naval War College; it is an example to build on.

Third, military professionalism must be strengthened. To do so, career patterns must change. People should have longer tours and not be moved so quickly from job to job. I have a friend who is on his third job in two years. He may be one of the Navy's brightest sparks, but he contributes very little to the long-term development of the jobs he has done, because he is only in them a few months. To get real work from people, we need to strike a better balance.

We also must have something that seems paradoxical—more specialists and more generalists. Our personnel management now tries to achieve both within the same person. We need to separate them and to prize both.

Take, for example, the job of defense procurement. Procurement is not the most exciting field, and officers usually don't choose military careers to be

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an acquisition manager. But the government is proposing to spend about a trillion dollars over the next five years in defense capital investment accounts, and that trillion dollars needs to be managed well. As Congressman Dicks said, we all hear a lot about mismanagement and \$100 ash trays. If defense acquisition is not managed well, public support for strategy, force structure, and operations is undercut. The ability to manage big, expensive, complicated programs cannot be acquired through one or two tours in the acquisition field; it requires a long-term commitment. An acquisition job is as important to the Marine Corps as an operational job. If you don't get acquisition right, you aren't going to get warfighting right.

The military also needs specialists in the intelligence field—people with in-depth knowledge about regions in which we become militarily involved. The defense community doesn't prize these people enough and doesn't help them enough in their careers. It doesn't seem to think they are essential to the operational team. Marine Corps operations in Norway are an example of this pattern. The United States has been committed for some years to provide marines to Norway as part of our NATO mission. Marines have stockpiled equipment there and periodically exercise with the Norwegians and other allies. In the early exercises, the Corps frequently rotated the people involved—different units, different officers. The Norwegians seldom met the same Marine officer twice. The Marine Corps wasn't building experts, wasn't building long-term knowledge, and didn't give the Norwegians confidence in the marines' ability. I am told the Corps is better now at these things in Norway. But what about elsewhere in places marines might be asked to intervene? The Marine Corps must develop and consult with people knowledgeable about these regions.

The Marine Corps also needs more generalists—or more precisely, people who can integrate information about complex political and military circumstances, people who know how to integrate forces from various services in an effective operational plan, people who understand how the Army and the Air Force and the Navy work, who understand their strengths and their weaknesses, who can say to themselves, for example, "We could use an AWACS in this situation; we can plug into the Air Force for this mission." In sum, the Marine Corps needs experts and needs breadth of vision, and it needs to create a career management system to achieve both.

Now let me briefly mention three obstacles I see for the future. One is the budget. Congressman Dicks has addressed that issue, and I need add little. It appears that DOD will be living with a no-growth budget for the next few years. This will put a premium on creativity and shrewd management to get the job done.

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A second obstacle is faddism. Fashionable schemes, such as the special operations forces command, for example, may be a fad. They must not stop marines from serious thinking about the tasks that lie ahead.

A third obstacle is excessive competition among the services and the commanders in chief. We in the Department of Defense spend too much time thinking about how to increase our share of the defense budget or of the forces available, and too little time thinking about how to do a better job with what we have. The Congress, despite good intentions, may be contributing to this competitiveness by involving the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the unified commands more deeply in the budget process. Everybody in Washington is in the budget business. Hardly anybody is in the warfighting business. So Congress takes the people who are supposed to be in the warfighting business and puts them into the budget business. They are going to have even less time than before for warfighting. Soon everyone will wonder why they are not better at warfighting.

Only a rich country could afford to behave the way we do, but, rich as we are, our tactics are not proving successful. How can we overcome this competitiveness among ourselves? Competitiveness is in the nature of our political system. It is democratic and politically advantageous. It is useful in budget debates. But for organizing military forces for accomplishing missions, it is disadvantageous. The services must overcome excessive competition and find ways to work together in the national interest. This will be done, I suspect, only if military officers come to the conclusion that greater cooperation is important. Education can help in this endeavor.

These are the challenges I see for marines and for the rest of us concerned about national security.

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## Glossary

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AAW	anti-air warfare
ACB	air contingency battalion
AE	assault echelon
AFOE	assault follow-on echelon
APFSDS	armor-piercing, fin-stabilized, discarding sabot
ATF	amphibious task force
ATGM	air-to-ground missiles
BBBG	battleship battle group
BN	battalion
CAP	combined-action platoon
CINC	commander in chief
CINCLANT	Commander in Chief, Atlantic
CRAF	Civilian Reserve Air Fleet
C <sup>3</sup>	command, control, and communications
C <sup>3</sup> I	command, control, communications, and intelligence
CV	aircraft carrier
CVBG	aircraft carrier battle group
DD	destroyer
DMZ	demilitarized zone
DOD	Department of Defense
FIE	fly-in echelon
FMF	Fleet Marine Force
FSSG	force service support group
FY	fiscal year
HOMC	Headquarters, Marine Corps

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IMA	intermediate maintenance activity
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LAV	light armored vehicle
LCAC	landing craft, air cushion
LCC	amphibious command ship
LHA	amphibious assault ship, general purpose
LHD	amphibious assault ship, multipurpose
LIC	low-intensity conflict
LID	light infantry division
LKA	amphibious cargo ship
LPD	amphibious transport dock
LPH	amphibious assault ship, helicopter
LSD	landing ship dock
LST	landing ship tank
MAB	Marine amphibious brigade (now called Marine <i>expeditionary</i> brigade)
MAC	Military Airlift Command
MAF	Marine amphibious force (now called Marine <i>expeditionary</i> force)
MAGTF	Marine air-ground task force
MAU	Marine amphibious unit (now called Marine <i>expeditionary</i> unit)
MAUSOC	Marine amphibious unit, special-operations capable
MPS	maritime prepositioning ship
MRD	motorized rifle division
MRLS	multiple-rocket launch system
MRR	motorized rifle regiment
MSC	Military Sealift Command
MTM/D	million ton-miles per day
NCA	National Command Authorities
NDRF	National Defense Reserve Fleet
n.mi.	nautical mile(s)
NSE	naval support element
NSFS	naval surface fire support
NTPS	Near-Term Prepositioning Ships
O&M	operations and maintenance
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPNAV	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
OPTEMPO	tempo of operations
OTH	over the horizon

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PCS	permanent change of station
POMCUS	preposition of material configured in unit sets
RDF	rapid deployment force
RDJTF	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
RDT&E	research, development, testing, and evaluation
RRF	Ready Reserve Force
SDI	strategic defense initiative
SLOCs	sea lines of communication
SOF	special operations forces
TAH	hospital ship
TAVB	aviation logistics support ship
TOW	tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missile
UDP	Unit Deployment Program
V/STOL	vertical or short takeoff and landing

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## Contributors

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