

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

*Form Approved*  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 20-04-2013		2. REPORT TYPE Master of Military Studies Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) September 2012-April 2013	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A Case Study for the National Maneuver Force Exercise Concept of the Armed Forces of the Philippines				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A	
6. AUTHOR(S) LT COLONEL FRANCISCO DOMINGO R. FERNANDEZ				5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A	
				5e. TASK NUMBER N/A	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N.A				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES N/A					
14. ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to examine the continuing need for robust amphibious capabilities for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in order to respond to the country's evolving threats and security challenges. It proposes a National Maneuver Force (NMF) Exercise Concept that the AFP should institutionalize to ensure the effective utility of amphibious operations within the framework in which the NMF has been conceived. To highlight this requirement, the paper will explore the historical case study of Operation Chromite. It fuses lessons from Chromite to ascertain the key operational factors that are relevant to the Philippines' security challenges. Accordingly, the implications of these lessons draw inspiration for the resurgence of the amphibious philosophy in the AFP to examine the methods, means, and applications of this capability. It incorporates into the NMF the factors of promoting a force-in-readiness, employment of a joint force to create synergies among the services, and the essentials to leverage other capabilities from partner-nations. Perhaps more than anything else, Operation Chromite demonstrates that amphibious capabilities have to be available to the AFP at the time of crises and national emergencies.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS NATIONAL MANEUVER FORCE EXERCISE CONCEPT; OPERATION CHROMITE; ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 24	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Marine Corps University csc
a. REPORT Unclass	b. ABSTRACT Unclass	c. THIS PAGE Unclass			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**TITLE:**

***OPERATION CHROMITE: A Case Study for the National Maneuver Force Exercise Concept  
of the Armed Forces of the Philippines***

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## *Executive Summary*

**Title:** *OPERATION CHROMITE: A Case Study for the National Maneuver Force Exercise Concept of the Armed Forces of the Philippines*

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**Thesis:** This paper will examine the continuing need for robust amphibious capabilities for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in order to respond to the evolving threats and security challenges of the country. To highlight this requirement, the paper will explore the historical case study of Operation Chromite.

**Discussion:** The Philippines faces an ever-evolving and complex set of security challenges in a highly globalized world. According to its National Security Policy (NSP) 2011-2016, the country continues to confront internal security threats coming from a protracted communist insurgency and a secessionist rebellion in parts of Mindanao. Disputes over territorial claims among nations in the region add to the complexity of the challenges. Considering the strategic environment, maritime interest, and the country's archipelagic landscape, there is no capability more functional and indispensable to the AFP than the full spectrum of amphibious operations.

Operation Chromite draws inspiration for the resurgence of the amphibious philosophy in the AFP to examine the methods, means, and applications of this capability and the factors for consideration amidst the nation's security environment. As the security challenges continue to become complex and uncertain, the AFP cannot merely remain as a national defense force designed for internal and ground-dominant operations. It needs transformation into a national security force capable of protecting the sovereignty over its territories and provide protection to its maritime and other strategic interests. The strategic security challenges discussed necessitate the introduction of a National Maneuver Force Exercise Concept that would empower the AFP to adapt to changes faster in the internal/regional security environment. Accordingly, the fundamental operational perspectives of Chromite will help to conceptualize the NMF Exercise Concept intended to promote the utility of amphibious operations and manage change in the AFP.

**Conclusion:** By reviewing the historical case study of Chromite, important lessons on the need to maintain a trained and ready force for amphibious operations, the synergies of inter-service collaboration, and the effectiveness of multinational forces were considered into the NMF Exercise Concept. Perhaps more than anything else, Operation Chromite demonstrated that amphibious capabilities have to be available to the AFP at the time of national crisis and emergency.

## *Acknowledgments*

I would like to acknowledge the guidance and leadership from my thesis adviser, Dr. Craig Swanson. His high standard of academic excellence set the conditions for this challenging yet fulfilling endeavor. His vast experience as a Lt. Colonel in the United States Marine Corps, proved invaluable in guiding me to frame my thoughts about the future of the Philippine Marine Corps in particular, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in general.

I am also profoundly grateful to Dr. Chris Harmon and the Leadership Communication Skills Center staff who have demonstrated unfailing support in giving me positive feedbacks during the initial outline and draft of this paper.

Most importantly, I am indebted to my wife, Ann, and our children Liana, Katherine, and Nico, for their patience, love, and encouragement during this Command and Staff Course that often took me away from them. Your understandings have been inspiring and your presence always reminded me what is most important in life. Last but not the least; I thank God for this opportunity to be here in Quantico, for the unforgettable memories and for always being there for me. To Him I give all the glory, honor, and praise.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Philippines faces an ever-evolving and complex set of security challenges in a highly globalized world. According to its National Security Policy (NSP) 2011-2016, the country "continues to confront internal security threats coming from a protracted communist insurgency and a secessionist rebellion in parts of Mindanao. This is further aggravated by the existence and activities of the terrorist Al Harakatol Al Islamiyah (AHAI) or the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) with its links to international terror networks."<sup>1</sup> Competition for limited resources among nations in the region adds to the complexity of the challenges. This paper will examine the continuing need for robust amphibious capabilities for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in order to respond to these evolving threats and security challenges. To highlight this requirement, the paper will explore the historical case study of Operation Chromite.

### **Background**

The National Defense Act of 1935 was originally called the Commonwealth Act Number 1. This formal legislation was passed by the Philippine National Assembly with the purpose of creating an independent Philippine Army in line with the move towards Philippines' Independence and self-sufficiency. Together with its amendments, this is still the policy that governs most defense matters in the Philippines. This law, although very thorough in its

specifications, deals primarily with the organization and administration of ground forces. This land orientation may be explained by the circumstances of its formulation--the Philippines was then under American rule and relied on the defense umbrella of the United States forces comprised of air and naval forces.

After the Philippines gained its Independence in 1946, the country continued to rely on the US defense umbrella (which in the Pacific was dominated by the US Navy) through the Mutual Defense Treaty and the Military Bases Agreement (MBA). During these years until the termination of the MBA, the Armed Forces of the Philippines remained ground force dominant with counterinsurgency as its major mission. With the US forces and MBA gone, new policies and concepts are needed to fill the gap and address the evolving internal and external security challenges of the country.

### **The Strategic Environment**

During the last decade, positive developments continue to permeate in the Asia-Pacific Region; that speak well for peace and stability. Cooperative interdependence further boosts economic growth among countries, thus reducing suspicion and possibilities for conflict. The use of strategic dialogues as vehicles to achieve consensus in economic and security matters, promote greater peace and economic stability. Unfortunately, economic growth has unleashed powerful political, social, and religious dynamics that now lead to tension and threaten national security.<sup>2</sup>

According to the AFP's Office of Strategic and Special Studies (OSS),<sup>1</sup> threats to the security of the Philippines can either use military or non-military means; and internal or external. Internal threats may come from a variety of threat groups, not only armed rebels, but also terrorists, criminal group syndicates, religious fanatics, and other dissident groups. Government response could potentially involve military and non-military actions. On the other hand, external military threat situations can come in varying natures and degrees—low level, mid level and high level as depicted in Table 1 below:

<i><b>LEVEL</b></i>	<i><b>CHARACTERISTICS</b></i>	<i><b>HOSTILE ACTIONS</b></i>
<b>Low-Level Threat Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives and actions of aggressor are by and large political.</li> <li>• Actions are deliberately contained at low but highly provocative and could cause disproportionate Philippine response.</li> <li>• Armed confrontation with RP military is avoided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incursion into EEZ airspace and territorial waters.</li> <li>• Harassment of commercial shipping and fishing vessel.</li> <li>• Harassment of remote islands or offshore facilities.</li> <li>• Minor show of force.</li> </ul>
<b>Mid-Level Threat Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political objectives and actions are coupled with limited military objectives and actions.</li> <li>• Possible build-up of forces.</li> <li>• Calculated low-level hostile military actions are conducted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major show of force.</li> <li>• Mining of sea-lanes.</li> <li>• Sabotage of defense and civil installations.</li> <li>• Raids on offshore facilities, remote islands and isolated defense and civil facilities.</li> <li>• Attack on civilian and military ships and planes within EEZ, national airspace and territorial waters.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The AFP OSS is a personal staff of the AFP Chief of Staff under the functional supervision of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, J5. The Office is envisioned to be the Think-Tank of the AFP with the mission of conducting research and studies on national, regional, and international strategic issues and communicate the significance and implications of these concerns to various internal and external publics.

<b>High-Level Threat Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military objectives transcend political objectives.</li> <li>• Aim is to gain significant military that would lead to a favorable political settlement or outright occupancy.</li> <li>• Substantial build-up of forces</li> <li>• Declaration of war likely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Escalated terroristic actions.</li> <li>• Attack and occupation of remote islands with strategic value.</li> <li>• Attack and occupation of major islands and population centers.</li> </ul>
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Table 1: Estimate of Future External Threat Situations, Office of Strategic and Special Studies, AFP.

The OSS study also claims that threat can be perceived in a number of ways including traditional military threats or action, environment degradation, illegal intrusion, violations of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), terrorism, drug trafficking, and smuggling.

Relatedly, the NSP identifies various issues and concerns that impinge on national security. Among them is the multilateral dispute over the Spratly Islands (KIG), which is "a source of intermittent tensions due to the build-up of suspected military structures by some claimant countries in the area."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the NSP describes that there have been clear "encroachments into the Philippine EEZ requiring a response involving multilateral as well as bilateral diplomatic measures."<sup>4</sup>

With China's latest rise as the world's second largest economy, attention has focused towards its direction due to its belligerent behavior coupled with its giant population, large territory, and rapid industrial and technological advancements. Given these considerations, the NSP relates that "the rise of China generates policy considerations not only among developed countries such as the US, Japan and Korea, but also among the ASEAN nations due to socio-cultural interactions, significant trade and investments, as well as territorial claims in the West Philippine Sea."<sup>5</sup>

The Philippines has been a natural place for disasters and emergencies over the years. The entire archipelago is constantly exposed to at least 20 typhoons per year. Furthermore, the Philippines lie in intersecting geologic fault lines that threaten earthquakes and tsunamis. Aggravating these natural disasters are man-made catastrophes such as oil spills, and a power supply crisis, among others. These calamities and crises result in the loss of lives, destruction of properties that eventually causes public anxiety and sometimes socio-political instability. In order to confront these disasters and emergencies, it is significant to develop the capability for disaster response and relief operations to deliver those critical basic services in time of need

### **The Internal Environment**

The Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) 2013-2018 is a document that provides directions for conducting the program and budget development process in the Department of Defense. Under the DPG, it was determined that the following core defense and security issues are of greatest concern: Challenges to Territorial Integrity; Maritime Security; Natural Disasters; and Internal Security. While the country's security concerns remain static, the DPG prescribes the levels of priority given to each core concern in light of the recent developments in both the national and regional environment. Accordingly, the DPG stipulates that the AFP needs to enhance its capabilities not only for internal security challenges but also for externally related threats. Paramount is the protection of the country's economic and maritime interests especially in the West Philippines seas through flexible deterrent options. Among the defense initiatives being explored is the development of a capability to respond within 48 hours anywhere in the Philippine territory to a given threat or conduct of military operations other than war.

Considering the strategic environment, maritime interest, and its archipelagic landscape, there is no capability more functional and indispensable than the full spectrum of amphibious operations.

### **The National Maneuver Force (NMF)**

The strategic security challenges discussed necessitate the introduction of an NMF operating concept that would empower the AFP to adapt to changes faster in the internal/regional security environment.

The NMF is the strategic option intended to manage the issue on how the AFP will address its core security challenges. In essence, the rationale for the NMF is to provide the national leadership with the capability to counter its security challenges and respond to current and future security and defense contingencies. This includes "securing offshore territories, denying bases to an enemy posing a direct threat to the sovereignty, moving forces around the archipelago, deploying to overseas operational areas and supporting disaster and humanitarian missions."<sup>6</sup> These are key areas where an amphibious capability is necessary.

Considering that the Philippines is a state composed of more than 7,000 islands, watercraft are indispensable in inland waterways as much as in the internal sea waterways. This is also because of the relative lack of railways, roads, and airfields in remote areas. This premise reinforces the utility of amphibious operations in responding to various intensity levels of conflict. The question then, is how the AFP with its culture of land warfare based around infantry, is going to adapt its organizational culture and methods to operating within a maritime environment. Further, after securing the concept documentation and approval, what program interventions are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the NMF concept?

One of the ways to overcome the cultural gap is to conceptualize the NMF Exercise Concept that will integrate service forces together in order to develop a tradition and culture of amphibious operations. This is no easy step given that the AFP as a whole, places little premium on preserving a stereotypical Marine capability. Nevertheless, historical insights do have the ability to capture appropriate lessons, which can provide insights into a way forward in developing amphibious warfare capability within the AFP.

Accordingly, the NMF Exercise Concept is also a strategic training intervention that becomes the key element to support and influence the concept writing, force structure decisions, and capability development programs of the NMF. Considering that the past is filled with many of the lessons for the future, Operation Chromite will be used as a case study to examine the key factors that are relevant to the Philippines' security challenges. Accordingly, the fundamental operational perspectives of Chromite will also help to conceptualize the NMF Exercise Concept intended to promote the utility of amphibious operations and manage change in the AFP.

## **THE BATTLE OF INCHON: Operation Chromite**

### **Overview**

The history of Korea's post-World War II division is full of intricacies. Both the Cairo and Potsdam Conferences affirmed an agreement for a joint US-Soviet Union occupation force to administer the country and plan for its eventual unification.<sup>7</sup> However, difficulties cropped up when both the United States and the Soviet Union insisted on an independent state ideologically compatible with their own views. This is reflective of the ongoing Cold War in Eastern Europe and the rest of the world.

Eventually, the 38th parallel that had previously been intended to be an administrative demarcation line between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) became a physical barrier that was to have a major political significance. By June 1949, both occupation forces left their respective sector. Unfortunately, they left behind a divided country with two hostile camps in place of what was supposed to be a unified nation.<sup>8</sup> As tensions continued to ensue between the Communist North Korea and the US-supported South Korea, the US was content to leave to the United Nation's commission the problems besetting this Asian peninsula.

Years of reduced defense budgets followed the demobilization after World War II and left US ground forces weak. According to Robert Heinl Jr., “the majority of defense resources were being channelled to strategic air forces in the belief that nuclear weapons would be the main component of US defense policy and force structure.”<sup>9</sup> This is understandable during the given period because of the US monopoly on the atomic bomb. However, the outbreak of the Korean War revealed the need for conventional ground forces to deal with a non-nuclear war. Additionally, bitter rivalries to justify newly assigned component missions and lay claim to scarce resources continued to hamper the unity of the US services.<sup>10</sup> Strategic reserves were almost non-existent, which meant that in case of a Korean War, the initial stages would be conducted with a depleted force. Therefore, the problem was on not only how much support the US could give to South Korea but also on how much was necessary to maintain a capacity to respond against potential communist aggression in the US mainland, Europe, and other areas of strategic importance. In effect, the foreign policy was to minimize flashpoints with the Soviet Union. This gave priority to those risks involved in the US defensive perimeter that unfortunately did not include Korea. In a speech on January 12, 1951, Secretary Dean Acheson

indicated that Korea was not within the "defensive parameter" that the US would be willing to fight and defend.<sup>11</sup> Many people later saw this as an open invitation to communist aggression in Korea.

### **Operation Chromite Strategic Setting**

The Korean War was a complex integration of various conflicts. From the perspective of Koreans on both sides, it was primarily a civil war. For the US and China in relation to each other, it was a regional war. For the US and the USSR, it was a secondary theater of the Cold War.

For the North Koreans, the objective of the war was to reunify the two Koreas. Since it was difficult to accomplish this politically, the North Koreans resorted to military means to gain a political end. It may seem that Secretary Acheson's dismissive public posturing toward the defense of South Korea had convinced Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin that the US would do little to thwart a communist takeover of the entire peninsula.<sup>12</sup> Thus, on June 25, 1950, armed and supported by the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China (PRC), the North Koreans struck and overwhelmed the unprepared South Korea. The invasion was composed of around 135,000 Soviet trained North Korean troops crossing the 38th parallel, accompanied by 150 Soviet tanks. South Korea's 16,000-man constabulary force was ill-equipped to repel the invaders, and Syngman Rhee's government was forced to vacate the capital of Seoul on June 28th.<sup>13</sup> The US initially turned to the United Nations for a response to the Korean crisis. Mr. Bryan Hardesty narrates, "during the initial stage of the crisis, the White House ordered General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of US Armed Forces in the Far East stationed in Tokyo, to coordinate naval and air support for American evacuations from South Korea. The US Seventh

Fleet was also deployed to Formosa, preventing war from erupting between exiled Chinese Nationalists and the communists on mainland China."<sup>14</sup> On June 29, 1950, Task Force Smith composed of approximately 540 US soldiers who posted as clerks and sentries in Japan, were assembled to assist the overwhelmed South Korean forces. With South Koreans fleeing in panic, Task Force Smith faced the communist invaders alone and were quickly defeated.<sup>15</sup>

The backdrop of Operation Chromite exposed a US that was ill prepared to react to a major regional conflict banking on World War III. On June of 1950, its Armed Forces were in a deplorable condition. Clay Blair commented that "in comparison, five years earlier the US had spent \$50 billion on its Army; in 1950, it only projected \$13 billion."<sup>16</sup> He further compared that during the height of World War II, there were 12 million men and women in uniform; in 1950, there were less than 600,000 ground troops.<sup>17</sup> Politics and the economy were President Harry Truman's administrative platform. This would remain so until the Korean War literally forced a change wherein the US had to intervene but with limitations in order to prevent escalation of the conflict into a war with China and the Soviet Union.

As the fighting in Korea escalated, the United Nations put out a call to arms from its members to defend South Korea. In an astonishing act of humanity and selflessness, the Philippines sent 7,500 soldiers to defend Pusan against the massive communist invasion despite its having to contend with a communist rebellion of its own and the painful challenge of rebuilding an economy crippled by World War II. The Philippines was the first Asian country to send combat troops to the Korean War and kept its military position there until 1955.

By August of 1950, the US and UN forces in South Korea found themselves reeling back into a tight perimeter defense at the south eastern tip of the peninsula called Pusan. Amidst the determined onslaught of the North Koreans, the country faced the grim possibility of succumbing

to global communism. It was at this critical point that one of the most daring and successful amphibious operations of modern warfare reversed the tide of war completely.

Operations Plan 100 B, with code name Chromite, was conceptualized as a bold amphibious envelopment through Seoul's western coastal port of Inchon on September 15, 1950. From the beginning, General Douglas MacArthur, who was designated as Commander of the UN Forces in Korea, already visualized a Marine Division assault force with a follow-on Army Division to strike behind the enemy, sever its lines of communication, and end the war. America's wartime objectives were simple: dislodge the enemy out of South Korea; and re-establish peace on US terms by ending the war as quickly as possible while keeping casualties to a minimum.

### **The Amphibious Operation**

Although completely victorious during the initial stages of their invasion, the North Koreans encountered a standoff around the Pusan perimeter when the US Eighth Army and UN forces gallantly made a determined stand against the communists' onslaught. The weakness of the enemy's extended lines of communication became apparent to MacArthur very early on as the North Koreans stalled and exposed its vulnerable rear to a decisive counterblow.

The operational art employed by General MacArthur capitalized on a coordinated amphibious maneuver and interdiction to attack the enemy's centers of gravity. To accomplish the mission, US and Allied forces would have to establish and maintain naval and air superiority in the area of operations; conduct an amphibious assault on Inchon; secure a beachhead line and seizure of Kimpo airfield; cross the Han River and recapture the capital; and establish blocking

positions around Seoul to provide the anvil against which the Eighth Army, advancing from the south as the hammer, would crush the North Koreans.

The actual landing on September 15, 1950 was a masterstroke. According to intelligence reports and MacArthur's intuition, Inchon proved lightly defended, resulting to the effective execution of the landing and breakout phase. Thereafter, the recapturing of Seoul and the linkup with the Eighth Army that had broken out from the southern defense perimeter was completed. Operation Chromite was over, the mission accomplished.

In retrospect, despite various challenges and doubts from peers and superiors, MacArthur remained undeterred in pursuing his war in Korea. As such, the preconditions for victory were somehow in place early on the conceptualization and planning stages. The combination of US and UN naval and air supremacy ensured that the outcome was a foregone conclusion. However, the most critical element of the operation was General MacArthur's resolve to conduct an amphibious operation at Inchon instead of the locations preferred by the Joint Chiefs and other service leaders, which all seemed more prudent than Inchon. Indeed, reinforcing more troops into the Pusan Perimeter, or envelopment from Kunsan, would not have ended up with the results achieved: the complete disruption of the enemy's lines of communication and the liberation of Seoul.

As a center of gravity, Seoul was the hub of all movement in the South and became the most critical node in the supply line of the communist attack. MacArthur knew that the city had immense symbolic value and retaking it would be psychologically demoralizing to the enemy. Thus, instead of simply pushing the North Koreans to back off from Pusan, Operation Chromite was designed to completely unhinge the enemy forces by hitting them from the rear.

MacArthur's timing and decision ensured a quick victory without resorting to a slow and bloody engagement.

### **Assessment of Operation Chromite**

Operation Chromite was brilliant in its concept and execution with complete adherence to the principles of war. The hastily organized 1st Marine Division and US Army forces that took on and defeated the North Koreans were just a fraction of their size during World War II, but were equipped and organized in the same way employing the same doctrines. Massive firepower and superior leadership remained the centerpieces of US forces that checked the North Koreans. On the other hand, the operation serves to reinforce lessons and illustrates various dynamics of a military campaign that are relevant to the AFP's security challenges. The immediate results highlight the need to maintain a trained and ready force for amphibious operations. It also demonstrates the strengths of inter-service collaboration and multinational forces cooperation. These assessments are to be considered into the NMF Exercise Concept in order to ensure the effective utility of the intended amphibious capability proposal.

#### **1. Maintaining Trained And Ready Forces For Amphibious Operations**

The demands and success of Chromite demonstrated the need for US readiness and capability to conduct amphibious operations. Prior to the landing in Inchon, there had been pronouncements among many US military and political leaders that amphibious operations were outdated. Critics judged that airpower was making this conventional operation obsolete. In contrast, the Battle of Inchon demonstrates how decisive a force-in-readiness can be and highlights the significance of amphibious warfare even in the advent of airpower. The Inchon

landing had a very high operational tempo as the 1st Marine Division advanced directly and rapidly on to Seoul in order to ease the pressure from the Pusan defense perimeter. In ten days, the North Koreans were broken and defeated whereby the Battle of Inchon was won.

Perceptions after the fact showed that even the Marine Corps was not ready during the time when General MacArthur requested them for the Inchon landing. It was only through the mobilization of many World War II combat veterans in the Marine Corps Reserve that the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division was manned, thereby making the Inchon assault possible.<sup>18</sup> The US realized it could no longer rely on wartime mobilization and expansion for national security. The crucial determinant was not on the time, place, or method of Operation Chromite. What counted most was the availability of highly skilled amphibious specialists and the rapidity by which they were employed at a time when majority of US forces were unprepared for war.<sup>19</sup> Given that the immediate military impact of Chromite was so dramatic, it further demonstrated that a requirement still existed for the US to be capable of conducting amphibious operations and that the Fleet-Marine tandem was the best trained and constituted for this mission. The implications of these lessons draw inspiration for the resurgence of the amphibious philosophy in the AFP to examine the methods, means, and applications of this capability and to consider the factors (both men and materiel) to promote a force-in-readiness that is able to respond to crises and national emergencies.

## 2. Joint Requirement of Amphibious Operations

During the initial stages of the Korean conflict, senior officers constantly battled colleagues among and within the different services over command and control. As the Army advocated for close air support to forces in contact with the enemy, it was disputed by the Air

Force's position to first establish air superiority. Navy admirals also did not want to tie down their forces to amphibious commanders and had their own understanding of how to use forces to best effect.<sup>20</sup> However, MacArthur's dominance was able to provide the vision for staff and component action to work. By effectively balancing centralized planning and decentralized execution, the maxim of current joint operations was being practiced. MacArthur authored the concept development and then established supported commanders in their areas of operation—Lt. General Walton Walker within the Pusan Perimeter, Lt. General George Stratemeyer in overall air support operations, and Vice Admiral Arthur Struble in the amphibious objective.

Operation Chromite highlights that joint requirements and doctrine through inter-service collaboration may in fact be unquestionably successful. Theoretically, a concept normally misunderstood even today, is the thought that amphibious operation is a Navy-Marine fight. However, Chromite has depicted that the range of amphibious operations might in fact be the most joint of all military operations. There is an inherent interplay of the Fleet-Marine tandem, but the Air Force, and the Army all had roles in the successful execution of MacArthur's masterstroke. Additionally, the military operation in Inchon was not done in isolation. At the high end of the intensity spectrum, the synchronization of air, sea, and land operations was important in the theater in order to accomplish the strategic objective. In the final analysis, Chromite was successful because the US Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps conducted it jointly. This realization underscores the need for the AFP to employ a joint force to create synergies among the services and yield greater combat power and capabilities to respond to contingencies and aggressions.

### 3. Coalition Forces

Twenty-two countries worldwide contributed coalition military forces to the Korean War under the United Nations command. As mentioned, the United States was woefully unprepared to confront the communist aggression. On July 1950, the coalition of democratic nations drew the line and fought a military aggression for their collective security.

From the prospect of the United Nations, the Korean War was a success story how an organization of multinational military forces led by the US, exercised its command, and successfully reversed territorial incursions of an aggressor state. Although U.S. military power remains supreme, it cannot be a substitute for coalitions and the effective use of local and international forces. The critical readiness factor learned from Chromite is on the recognition of the limits of US military power. Therefore, it is essential to leverage other capabilities from partner-nations in order to achieve the desired end states. As Winston Churchill said, "the only thing worse than having allies is not having them at all."<sup>21</sup> Former US Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, additionally stated that multinational partners provide balance, credibility, and legitimacy in the eyes of much of the world. Therefore, the effective ability of the AFP and multinational partners to collaborate and cooperate will have a profound impact on joint force readiness and sustainability in the future.

### **DISCUSSION**

The NMF operating concept looks sound on paper but does not always prove effective in the real world of moving parts. The synchronization of the joint/combined maneuver does not come out naturally even for a small organization such as the AFP. Many problems and challenges arise during amphibious operations especially in the areas of command relationships

and logistics. It is an accepted truism that forces fight as they have trained. Thus, conceptualization of the NMF Exercise Concept will permit greater coordination, efficiency, and availability of effects.

Traditionally, joint or combined exercises are generally a "cut and paste" endeavor from planning to execution. It has not deviated from the traditional training areas nor traditional schemes. In fact, AFP exercises have never been joint and bilateral engagements with foreign counterparts remained as "self-service" or "intra-service" exercises. The NMF Exercise Concept can now incorporate and institutionalize responsive annual implementing schemes that will maintain unit readiness. As the master construct, NMF Exercise Concept would more clearly guide the individual services in training and equipping forces for the joint fight.

As the AFP struggles to adjust its force structure to the demands of national security, the time for jointness has never been greater as depicted from Chromite. The need for jointness based on the proven military theory and history, prescribes that the NMF concept employ of a brigade-size contingent composed of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Special Operations Units, to deliver the balanced naval, land and air forces requirement.

Consequently, the NMF Exercise Concept can take the lead in ending some inter-service rivalry and competition for roles and missions in the AFP. Each service will now be guided to focus on developing its unique capabilities rather than continuously shifting gears in response to perceived threats. If this is done, then each service will then be better prepared when called on for joint missions—truly reflecting unique force capability mix to the detriment of the enemy.

Lastly, based on the pragmatic assessment of the key considerations for the success of Operation Chromite, the NMF Exercise Concept becomes a vehicle to harness interoperability and strengthen camaraderie with the US and allies as part of the coalition tenets of Chromite.

## **The NMF Exercise Concept Proposal**

The definition and evaluation of the NMF capability will continue based on the relative merits of whether two or three different types of quick reaction forces (ground and air elements) best serve its purpose. The proposal's intent is to gain informed insights that will enable the rationalization and, if necessary, realignment of future force structure and modernization planning. The medium term decision is to acquire the capability to deploy two (2) National Maneuver Forces strategically located—one in Luzon and another in Mindanao to be able to address major contingencies in any part of the archipelago at the same time. Based on the assessment from Operation Chromite and the policies of national government, an ideal NMF force shall consist of the following force mix:

- 1 Infantry Battalion (airmobile operations capable)
- 1 Infantry Battalion (mechanized)
- 1 Marine Battalion (amphibious operations capable)
- 1 Squadron Tactical Helicopters
- 1 Squadron Close Air Support Aircraft
- 1 Heavy Airlift Aircraft
- 1 Strategic Sealift Vessel

In the long term, the stationing of an NMF in each major island group is the desired solution.

As the need for exercise remains relevant to the readiness of the AFP, other lessons-learned from Operation Chromite helped in the conceptualization of the NMF Exercise Concept Framework (Annex A)

## **CONCLUSION:**

Operation Chromite succeeded because of several reasons. First, Gen. MacArthur's dynamic experience and leadership understood the need to have highly skilled amphibious forces ready to undertake the Inchon landing. Readiness refers to more than manning and equipment. It also centers on unit leadership and the proficiency of the men in the operational art. Second, joint forces were employed, creating synergies among the services and yielded greater combat power to respond to the North Korean threat. Finally, the conflict brought to the fore a demand for coalition forces to respond to the crisis. UN forces allowed for a better understanding of the conflict and provided novel ways and resources to approach and win in conjunction with military capabilities.

Operation Chromite draws inspiration for the resurgence of the amphibious philosophy in the AFP to examine the methods, means, and applications of this capability and the factors for consideration amidst the nation's security environment. As the security challenges in the environment continue to become complex and uncertain, the AFP cannot merely remain as a national defense force designed for internal and ground-dominant operations. It needs transformation into a national security force capable of protecting the sovereignty over its territories and provide protection to its maritime and other strategic interests.

By reviewing the historical case study of Chromite, important lessons on maintaining readiness, joint operations and coalition forces were considered into the NMF Exercise Concept, thus, ensuring the effective utility of amphibious operations within the strategic framework in which NMF has been conceived. This will also serve as the AFP's contribution to the joint/combined force of the PH-US Theater Security Cooperation Strategy deemed essential in achieving or facilitating the achievement of both US and Philippines' strategic and policy goals.

Perhaps more than anything else, Operation Chromite demonstrated that amphibious capabilities have to be available to the AFP at the time of national crisis and emergency.

## Appendix A

### Framework of the NMF Exercise Concept

1. The NMF Exercise Concept
  - a. The Need to Exercise
    - i. Achieve “Near-Real-Time “ Operational Requirement as the National Leadership may direct:
      1. Respond to a Local Conflict Incident
      2. Respond to Territorial Dispute Incident
      3. Respond to Disaster Afflicted Area/s
    - ii. Achieve Unit Training & Key Force METL (Force Level and below)
      1. Task Organize Forces
      2. Deploy the Force
      3. Sustain the Force
      4. Redeploy the Force
  - b. Elements of NMF Deployment Exercise
    - i. Directed From National Seat of Power
    - ii. Extends to Two or more Unified Command Area
    - iii. Use the sea as the maneuver space
    - iv. “Temporary in nature / duration...”
  - c. NMF Structure & Capabilities
    - i. Organization
      1. Ground Component
      2. Surface Component
      3. Air Component
    - ii. Capabilities
      1. Ground Combat
      2. Special Operations
      3. Surface Action
      4. Air interdiction
      5. Sea Lift

d. Exercise Construct

i. Conduct Leadership exercise

1. Conduct Military Decision Making Process (Force Level to BN Level)
2. Conduct Troop Leading Procedure (Company Level & Below)

ii. Conduct C2

1. Execute Missions
2. Achieve Situational Awareness
3. Respond to Situation

iii. Conduct Maneuver

1. Conduct Amphibious Landing
2. Conduct Boat Operation
3. Conduct Helobourne Operation
4. Conduct Armor-Infantry Operation
5. Conduct Special Operation

iv. Conduct Fires

1. Conduct Small Arms Fire & Maneuver
2. Conduct Indirect Fire
3. Conduct Close Air Support
4. Conduct NGFS

v. Conduct CMO

1. Conduct Civil Affairs
2. Conduct Public Affairs
3. Conduct PSYOPS

vi. Provide Intelligence Support

1. Conduct Intelligence Collection Operation
  - a. HUMINT
  - b. IMINT
  - c. SIGINT
2. Conduct IPB

vii. Provide Logistics Support

1. Conduct Combat Service Support
  - a. Provide Field Medical
  - b. Provide Field Mess
  - c. Provide Field Supply
  - d. Provide Field Transportation

e. Implementing Schemes

- i. Fleet-Marine Exercise
- ii. Joint Exercise
- iii. Combined Exercise

f. Benefits

- i. Unit Training – Service / Joint / Combined
- ii. Train as We Fight
- iii. Bring the training to where it is needed most
- iv. An exercise for External Defense Posturing
- v. An opportunity for the National Leadership to reach-out to far-flung areas.

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Philippine National Security Policy 2011-2016.

<sup>2</sup> Philippine NSP, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Philippine NSP, p. 30

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Peter J. Dean. Amphibious Warfare: Lessons from the Past for the ADF's Future. *Security Challenges Journal* (Autumn 2011). p 18.

<http://www.securitychallenges.org.au/ArticlePages/vol8no1Dean.html>

<sup>7</sup> James F. Schnabel. Policy and Direction: *The First Year*. Washington D.C.: 1972. p 12-14.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Robert D. Heintz Jr. Victory at High Tide: *The Inchon-Seoul Campaign*. New York: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company, 1982. p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Schnabel, p. 246.

<sup>11</sup> William Stuech. *The Korean War: An International History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1995. p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Bryan Hardesty. *The Cold War Years: The American Testimony, Book 7*. Texas: 2007.

[http://www.history2u.com/book7\\_cold\\_war.htm](http://www.history2u.com/book7_cold_war.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Warren Hickey. *The Korean War: West Confronts Communism*. New York: The Overlook Press, 1999. p. 85

<sup>16</sup> Clay Blair. *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953*. New York: Times Books, 1987.

<sup>17</sup> Blair, p. 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> Montross, Lynn and Capt Nicholas A. Canzona, USMC. *US Marine Operations in Korea Vol. 1*. Washington D.C.: 1955. p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>20</sup> Jacob Neufeld. *Coalition Air Warfare in the Korean War 1950-1953*. Maryland: 2002. p. 44-45.

<sup>21</sup> Piers Brendon. *Sir Winston Churchill: Biographical History*. Cambridge, U.K: 1984.  
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