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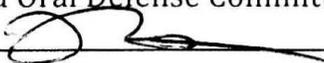
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Amphibious Capability in an Era of Maritime Focus**

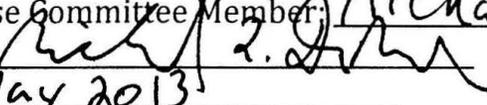
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AUTHOR:

**Major Benjamin W. Grant
USMC**

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Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Paul D. Graps
Approved: 
Date: 2 May 2013

Oral Defense Committee Member: Richard L. DiNardo
Approved: 
Date: 2 May 2013

Executive Summary

Title: The Need for the United States of America's Amphibious Capability in an Era of Maritime Focus

Author: Major Benjamin W. Grant, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: Comparing events in Operation CORPORATE as a cautionary tale for the United States current strategic, economic, and military conditions will demonstrate the United States is on a course similar to the United Kingdom, and could face similar hardships and potentially adverse results should there be a military challenge to the United States in the western Pacific or another maritime region.

Discussion: The British execution of the recapture of the Falkland islands in 1982, Operation CORPORATE, illustrates the difficulties a maritime nation may face conducting long range expeditionary military operations with a force ill prepared for such measures. Decades of significant military cuts in their naval, air, and expeditionary land forces, coupled with a strategy focused on the land defense of Europe against the Soviet threat, left the British military woefully unprepared for the degree of immediate expeditionary operations required to accomplish national aims. Shortfalls in amphibious shipping, the lack of a properly trained and equipped landing force of the size required, lack of joint doctrine, aviation shortfalls, and a strained support/logistics establishment set the conditions for an operation that had no guarantee for success, despite British national prestige being in the balance. Only through the resourceful actions of the military, the unity of national cause due to the nature of the crisis, and the professionalism of the military was the operation a success. It encountered numerous areas of friction and potential failure, any of which the Argentine forces could have exploited with decisive results. Had the campaign lasted even just weeks longer, the South Atlantic weather would have placed the British expeditionary force in jeopardy of logistic isolation. The Argentine forces experienced their share of adversity in the campaign, tipping the balance ever so slightly towards the British. This U.S. is unlikely to enjoy this circumstance in the western Pacific if challenged by a major regional competitor. The British success is underscored by numerous lessons learned that are appropriate for consideration by contemporary United States military planners as the U.S. accepts reductions in current amphibious capability in an era of the nationally declared shift of focus to the Pacific region.

Conclusion: U.S. must maintain an amphibious force as it expresses strategic interest in the maritime region of the western Pacific. The operational environment in the western Pacific is the ideal operational domain for an amphibious force. Ensuring the U.S. maintains this capability to not only project force with immediacy in time of crisis, but also maintain and provide for that force should be an apolitical priority for the nation to ensure the U.S. can protect its interests, support international trade and growth, and maintain stability in distant strategic regions of potential turmoil.

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Preface

The United States of America is on the verge of limiting its most flexible military response capability. Changes in strategic priorities and fiscal limitations are shaping decisions to reduce its ability to conduct large-scale amphibious operations. After more than a decade of large-scale combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Long Warⁱ and the domestic fiscal crisis place the United States military in an era of mandated reductions and mission redefinition. The Long War has dominated military operations for an entire generation of military and political planners. This has thrust issues such as counter-insurgency, irregular warfare, and recently, Air-Sea battle to the forefront of U.S. military priorities for consideration. Defense of the homeland has become a stated priority to ensure events such as the September 11, 2001 do not happen again. These changes in priorities are being weighed against finite fiscal resources for funding prioritization.

These changes reflect recent U.S. military campaigns against non-state actors and offer solutions for these aspects of future warfare. The habit of a nation to use the last conflict as the template for future planning is evident. To counter this, the U.S. must confront the fact its current strategic and defense rhetoric against China is outpacing its ability to back it with action. Against this, it is in the best interests of the U.S. to maintain a meaningful ready amphibious power projection capability as insurance against crisis. This is relevant given the President's direction to refocus national attention to the Western Pacific region. The U.S. must retain superiority in the maritime regions to ensure the nation's first line of response is in keeping with its stated strategic position.

The United Kingdom's experience during Operation CORPORATE provides a case study of a nation that attempted to maintain global interests while experiencing significant military force reductions and strategic refocus. Domestic economic issues coupled with shifts in national strategy reduced the United Kingdom's ability to maintain its distant interests, culminating with the 1982 Falkland's war. The Argentine invasion triggered a hastily composed British military amphibious response, Operation CORPORATE, which achieved a rapid military victory at a surprising cost of men and material. Operation CORPORATE revealed the shortcomings and limitations of the British military establishment in result of the preceding years of fiscal restraints, force and mission realignments, and a strategic shift of focus. A brief study of the British military reductions in the decades preceding the conflict, and a brief examination of aspects of the operation itself will reveal similarities to, and the inherent risks of, the course the U.S. is charting.

The British nearly lost Operation CORPORATE due to a lack of amphibious shipping and adequate forces trained in expeditionary and amphibious operations. The United States finds itself on the verge of an identical scenario as it shifts its focus to the Western Pacific. There are notable dissimilarities in each nation's respective circumstances; however, there are more than enough striking similarities that they are due investigation. Comparing events in Operation CORPORATE as a cautionary tale for the United States current strategic, economic, and military conditions will demonstrate the United States is on a course similar to the United Kingdom, and could face similar hardships and potentially adverse results should there be a military challenge to the United States in the Western Pacific or other maritime region.

British conditions before April 1982

The British military experienced a series of budget and force reductions beginning in the late 1950's. Driven by a progressive realignment of forces in response to their European NATO mission against the Soviets, and further aggravated by declining domestic economic conditions, these reductions shaped the force in a direction that had unforeseen consequences.

Post-1945, due to their entry into NATO and the Korean War, the British entered an era of significant increased defense spending motivated by the desire to protect interests in the Middle East, support European defense against the Soviet Union, and in pursuit of their nuclear capability. Specifically, the "three-pillars strategy" dictated British defense doctrine, comprised of "defence of the UK, maintaining vital sea communications and securing the Middle East as a defensive and striking base against the Soviet Union".ⁱⁱ This resulted in increased military spending to approximately 10% of GDP from 1950 through 1952.ⁱⁱⁱ British involvement in the Korean War demonstrated the need to reequip and modernize the armed forces and Britain's membership in NATO focused its position against Soviet aggression in Europe, specifically the defense of Germany. Service parochialism ensured the army, navy, and air force each maintained an entrenched role in the emerging nuclear environment, inducing competition for resources, instead of a cooperative joint approach.

Defense spending in 1954 was up 47% compared to 1947. Ten of eleven standing divisions were posted overseas, four of which were maintaining colonial interests. At the current forecast rate of modernization and commitments, expenditures forecast to increase another third by the end of the decade. The United Kingdom faced a "fundamental challenge, the mismatch between its imperial responsibilities and ambitions and its financial and economic resources."^{iv}

The momentum was short lived and by 1955, it was clear that "unless defense spending was brought under firmer control, the country faced economic disaster".^v The sustained financial requirements of building and maintaining such a force critically strained the post-World War II British economy. The government initiated a series of "Defense Reviews", similar to the U.S. Quadrennial Defense Reviews, aimed at revising and aligning the requirements of the military with national strategy under the premise of fiscal responsibility.

The 1957 Defense Review stated Britain's economy was the center of gravity of its position in the world and that a successful economy was the only foundation on which to build the defense establishment. It foresaw that future conflicts would be similar to the character of the Korean conflict (smaller proxy wars versus large conventional super-power clashes), expressed the importance of possessing a nuclear deterrent separate from the United States, and proposed that advances in technology justified reductions in equipment and manpower.^{vi} It additionally emphasized the role of allied powers to support regional defense, therefore, justifying the reduction in overseas garrisons. It further noted the role of the aircraft carrier as a means to project force.^{vii}

Thus began a series of force realignments and reductions, all emphasizing the ability to respond and support national strategy, but ultimately driven by economic conditions. Defense spending incrementally reduced from 8.2% GDP in 1955 to 4.8 % by 1970, where it remained through 1979.^{viii} The British did not encounter a serious military crisis during this period, encouraging further reductions throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the conflict in Northern Ireland that resulted in local deployments of manpower and material, this did not require extensive involvement by air or maritime forces. Meanwhile, despite growing costs, sustaining the nuclear deterrent was a national priority.

The British recognized by the late 1960's that the cuts were causing overstretch of commitments by a reduced force in need of further modernization. The British withdrew significant presence from the Mediterranean, Asia, and the Persian Gulf, and initiated cuts to conventional military programs, notably the cancelation of aircraft carriers. NATO membership implied that Britain would not take unilateral or otherwise hasty military action alone, especially with the memory of the Suez crisis and the creation of the Warsaw Pact in the mid-1950's, and so the belief of sharing commitment and cost savings were the underlying themes.

The 1970's encountered more of the same cuts as the previous decade. The Defense Review of 1975 stated four priorities for the British military: "The UK's contribution to NATO front-line forces in Germany, anti-submarine forces in the eastern Atlantic, home defence and the UK's nuclear deterrent."^{ix} Thus occurred significant reductions in transport aircraft, amphibious shipping, aircraft carriers, and significant reductions in airborne and specialized forces, all seen as contrary to anticipated conflicts.^x Defense and national strategy still maintained that Britain would sustain her commitments in accordance to national interests, but cost, not requirements, drove policy and force shaping.

The defense cuts on the mid-1970s were severe and raised government debate about the divergence of strategic requirements versus capabilities. "Greater reductions were needed and could be achieved...if only the strategy were revised...[and] unless this were done, the whole exercise [of cuts] would have to be repeated in a few years time."^{xi} Yet, there was no revision of strategy. The conventional NATO first policy was foremost, aggravated by the changing popular sentiment against nuclear arms. National strategy stated a position that required both a conventional capability in Europe backed by a nuclear deterrent, but the cost of sustaining both

was untenable. Domestic economic strain and social unrest took precedence, resulting in further cuts elsewhere across the force to fund these priorities.

Among these were the cancellation of the replacements of the two amphibious assault ships *Fearless* and *Intrepid* and the reduction of Royal Marines by 15%.^{xii} Within the roles and missions of the British forces, Royal Marines 3 Commando would contribute to the defense of northern Norway against the Soviets. The decision to reduce amphibious shipping conflicted with the ability to execute this stated amphibious task. The compromise to convert existing naval auxiliary shipping for amphibious transport was less than ideal, reducing a forcible entry capability to more of a ferry operation. Meanwhile, the cancellation and decommissioning of Britain's remaining aircraft carriers denied the ability for conventional fixed wing aircraft to augment any forward presence, hence the decision to use the Harrier aircraft aboard smaller amphibious attack carriers.^{xiii} These decisions would come back to haunt the United Kingdom in only a few years.

The Thatcher lead government that came to power in 1979 did not immediately hasten a return to a strong defense or thrust Britain back to the global stage as a nationalist military power, despite a political platform on these grounds. The Thatcher government inherited the same domestic and economic issues of preceding governments, and without justification to do otherwise, was bound to continue the realignments and cuts in order to support Britain's NATO commitments.

Germany's subsidies to Britain's NATO treaty agreed defense spending ceased at this time due to the lack of renewal their offset agreement.^{xiv} The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan raised concerns of potential Soviet aggression, adding further impetus to review the military's capabilities against financial requirements. This resulted in the 1981 Defense Review, which

sought further cuts while retaining the focus against the Soviets. It did not look for wholesale cuts across the Ministry of Defense based solely on opportune savings. It looked at capabilities and requirements, emphasizing the need for modernization, but in keeping with preceding reviews, its proposed gains could only be achieved with cuts to perceived lesser priorities. The review stated, "[it has] confronted complex choices, with no easy or painless solutions available."^{xv} Per the trend of the NATO/European focus, the Navy bore 57% of the expected expenditure cuts. Domestic and NATO politics compelled naval and airborne forces to experience the brunt of the cuts in order to preserve the army's ability to support its domestic and European missions. In an unforeseen act of international signaling, the ice patrol ship *HMS Endurance* would be withdrawn from South Atlantic service, and distant garrisons, left over from the imperial legacy, would experience further reduced manning and attention.^{xvi}

By the early 1980's, Britain possessed an army task organized only to perform a series of delaying actions against the Soviets in Europe, supported by a smaller cadre Royal Marine Commandos who would do the same in Norway. Cuts had resulted in intermediate command organizations being stood down due to manpower reorganization, inducing recognized command and control issues. The army, oriented against the Soviet threat, was in dire need of general modernization and its armor capability. The air force was likewise experiencing a period of transition from maintaining aging aircraft while pursuing modern replacements. Despite the significant cuts in amphibious shipping and across the board reductions in other vessels, the Navy still enjoyed protection of its nuclear ballistic missile and attack submarines and of escort surface combatants. These were crucial for their role in the North Atlantic of protecting convoys against the Soviets.

At this time, some in the military were looking with skepticism at the general shortfalls in doctrine, specifically the lack of a centralized doctrine. Lessons learned from other recent conflicts, such as the Israeli experience during the Yom Kippur war, were revealing vulnerabilities in the existing anti-Soviet doctrine.^{xvii} There was little concern for concepts like large-scale operational maneuver from the sea, or even the need for planned power projection into other hemispheres, referred to as "out of area" operations in Ministry of Defense terminology. These were not an issue of consideration, even while the United Kingdom was expressing world power status. All of these issues came to a head in the spring of 1982 at a distant South Atlantic British possession called the Falkland Islands. The long term shifts in strategy and force structure priorities left the United Kingdom unprepared to respond to encroachments on its distant territory.

The "Malvinas Issue"

Over 8,000 miles away to the south lay the Falkland Islands, referred to as the Malvinas by Argentina. Located less than 350 nautical miles east from the southern tip of Argentina, competing territorial claims for the islands between Argentina and Britain had perpetuated for decades, centered on nationalist claims of sovereignty and mineral and fishing rights. Argentina emerged as a regional power of its own after World War II, and the ensuing British post-colonial retreat encouraged Argentine claims. The issue went before the United Nations in the 1960's and British considered measures for succession of the islands back to Argentina. Motivated by the islanders desire to remain under British rule, elements in British government held fast to the islands. Justifying maintaining the possession against the economic and strategic

realities facing the British in the late 1960's and 1970's ensured the issue was constantly present, but never to the degree of seeking a meaningful resolution. The Falklands ranked as a distraction to British foreign policy.

Britain was able to retain its claim to the islands via diplomacy and, up until the late 1970's, the assumption that they would defend it with force. The Argentines, dissatisfied with the status quo, engaged in a series of belligerent acts that constantly tested British resolve. Argentina had emerged as a powerful industrialized nation and regional conventional competitor. It had a sizable conventional military equipped with a capable navy, aircraft, and armor (to include an amphibious capability built around the American made AAV-7). It also had to straddle a balance of its own economic and domestic issues against the diplomatic concerns within their sphere of influence, specifically maintaining relations with the United States.

Argentina of the 1970's endured its own economic crisis and political turmoil. A military Junta took control of the country in 1976, stirring nationalist emotions and further aggravating claims to the islands. Buenos Aires conveyed clear signals that the potential for action was real. Adding to the mixed signals sent by the British, the Sovereignty Act of 1981 placed many Falkland Islanders as second-class British citizens. The further reduction of the Royal Marine garrison to a token force and the withdrawal of the *Endurance* indicated to Argentina that the British were not serious on holding the islands indefinitely.^{xviii}

Argentine General Leopoldo Galtieri took office as the president and head of the Junta, and in early 1982, he claimed to Argentine newspapers that it would be the "Year of the Malvinas".^{xix} Fueled by nationalism, mixed signals from Washington's luke-warm involvement in negotiating the dispute, the need to bolster domestic resolve for the Junta due to the

unresolved Beagle islands issue with Chile, and the interpretation of British intentions to acquiesce if the islands were seized, Argentine forces invaded the islands on 2 April, 1982.

Operation CORPORATE

The Argentine invasion was not without warnings. One of the greatest intelligence failings of the era was that the invasion was a surprise to the British. Despite the Argentina's enduring claims and occasional overt acts of hostility, the British perpetually failed to resolve the issue due to perceived greater issues elsewhere. As indications mounted and tensions rose during the series of events before the invasion, the British still believed invasion was the most remote possibility.

The British were woefully unprepared to respond. They did not have a pre-existing contingency plan, nor a mechanism within the senior leadership to express unified joint recommendations to the civil leadership in crisis.^{xx} It is telling that in the first cabinet meeting Prime Minister Thatcher held to discuss a response the cabinet did not invite the available service chiefs to provide recommendations. The most senior British military chiefs were out of the country on official business. Only through personal initiative did the Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sir Henry Leach attend the meeting.^{xxi} He proposed a Royal Marine Commando brigade sail immediately, and this was agreed. It is clear that in an era of cuts to the Navy, Admiral Leach ensured immediate naval involvement not only for practical reasons, but also for parochial relevancy in the crisis.

The British response consisted of two naval task forces, the initial response that got under way in a matter of days, and a second large force that sailed weeks later once men and material

were as ready as they could be. The nation had engineered a military machine intended for continental warfare against Soviet armor and mechanized forces. The idea of sending a task force to the other side of the world, void of land based support, was unprecedented. Critical shortfalls in shipping were the first order of business. Existing amphibious shipping supported only the Royal Marine mission in Norway, which assumed permissive unopposed landing sites with allied host nation assistance.^{xxii} This was more appropriately a planned maritime deployment, not an amphibious forcible entry capability into Europe. In order to transport the initial Falklands bound Royal Marine and Paratroop contingent, and the subsequent army and support forces, every naval amphibious transport and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel on hand was required, along with over 45 commercially owned Ships Taken Up From Trade (STUFT), which augmented the Naval forces. STUFT vessels ranged from large ocean liners such as the *R.M.S. Queen Elizabeth II* and *S.S. Canberra* as large troop transports, and the liner *S.S. Uganda* as a hospital ship. Called into service was every commercial roll on-roll off transport ferry, container ship, stores and tanker ships, tugs, and recovery shipping. The Navy did not possess the existing capability to support the mission now assigned by the government.

The Navy had only two Landing Platform Dock (LPD) amphibious assault ships, the *H.M.S. Fearless* and *Intrepid*. Nearly identical in configuration and capability to U.S. Navy LPDs in their class, these ships were purpose build to transport amphibious assault forces. Each carried in its well-deck a total of eight conventional landing craft; the Landing Craft Utility (LCU) and Landing Craft Vehicles and Personnel (LCVP), suitable for rapid ship to shore movement to an unopposed landing. These were inadequate for forcible entry being essentially open-air motorized barges with ramps, identical to U.S. type LCU/LCVP vessels. The British did not possess an armored landing craft such as the AAV-7. Six Landing Ship Logistics (LSL)

provided additional deliberate amphibious shipping. The army required these for a roll-on roll-off capability for rapid transport men and equipment from Britain to the continent in the event of a crisis. Intended to support follow on force delivery to permissive landing sites, these were unsuitable for forcible entry. Two light aircraft carriers, the *H.M.S. Hermes* and *Invincible*, provided air support in the form of the new Harriers. The remainder of the task force was comprised of destroyers and frigates for fleet defense and limited naval gunfire support, and submarines for fleet defense.

The task force faced a myriad of challenges. Among them: initial conflicts in the chain of command, inadequate command and control facilities aboard the ships, incompatible communications equipment among portions of the landing forces, limited artillery, and a lack of armor (this was tactically sound given the Falklands were not ideal for armor due to the soft ground and open featureless terrain). Loading and configuration of the task force was haphazard. The specter of logistics shortfalls in critical items such as ammunition and rations was ever present throughout the campaign. Shortfalls in rotary wing lift and the fact a large portion of the landing force was not prepared for extended operations in the arctic region greatly added to the risk. Only 3 Commando was specifically trained for and had just recently completed cold weather exercises in Norway, conversely, the majority of the landing force was not well prepared for the task before them. The combined army, air force, and naval forces did not have a cohesive joint doctrine. Despite the ultimate success of British land operations, one operational incident stands out that highlights these shortfalls and should be of concern to any modern amphibious planner. This was the movement of the 5th Infantry Brigade to Fitzroy.

Operation CORPORATE: Events at Fitzroy

The British sought to retake the islands swiftly. Any delays could permit world opinion to encourage a diplomatic resolution. The initial taskforce was an immediate response, but it became clear that it would need to reinforcements. The British maintained a sizeable army contingent in Europe, forces in Ireland, and a reserve at home to meet existing requirements. There was not a standing surplus of ready forces. The solution was a brigade comprised of various units from different postings. Speculation is that the army was not initially interested in the response to the Falkland crisis for it did not want to be associated with what might become a military disaster. Once events unfolded, the army not only wanted to get into the fight, it was also now required to do so.

The 5th Brigade was composed hurriedly without a specific mission. With its two organic battalions from 2 Para sent with the initial task-force, its ranks were back-filled with two Guards battalions (one directly from ceremonial guard duty) and a Gurkha battalion. It did not have an artillery contingent until appeals to higher headquarters demonstrated their need. Unlike the Royal Marines who had logistics and other specialties within their organic task organization, 5th Brigade had to cobble together many required support functions from other available units, ultimately relying on the existing Commando Logistics Regiment once on scene on the Falklands.^{xxiii xxiv} The 5th Brigade attempted to conduct pre-deployment exercises in mid-April in an effort to prepare the staffs and men for action as a cohesive unit. It went poorly. "It was hardly the best preparation and there was some debate whether 5th Infantry Brigade was ready for deployment".^{xxv}

On the contrary, the Royal Marine Commandos deployed smoothly and integrated with other commando units and the Paras. The benefit of being a relatively small force as a whole,

Royal Marine officers tended to have some measure of familiarity with each other across different units, especially at the higher ranks which was key for cohesive operations. A shared mind-set, esprit de corps, and training in both cold weather and amphibious operations placed them as the most ready for the task.^{xxvi} The soldiers of the Guards and Gurkhas did not enjoy this circumstance. One thing they did receive because of their later deployment was every conceivable form of cold weather equipment and other materials deemed necessary. In a circumstance that transcend periods in the American military experience, the trained and prepared Marines were steaming towards conflict with what gear they had, while a less than prepared follow on force was to be well equipped by the time they arrived later.

By mid-May, while the 5th Brigade was embarking aboard the *Queen Elizabeth*, the initial amphibious assault group was ready to commence landing operations in San Carlos Bay on the west of East Falkland. This location enabled the task force to establish an unopposed lodgment and beach support area from which to build combat power ashore, far enough from the main Argentine forces in the east holding Port Stanley and the high terrain to the west of Stanley. Operations began 21 May at San Carlos with 3 Commando and the attached Para Battalions landing uneventfully. It was not completely uncontested; the Argentine Air Force commenced attacks on the second day of landings and continued as the weather permitted, sinking three British ships. These losses were from the destroyer and frigate compliment with no amphibious losses, which would have jeopardized the operation. The inability of the British air cover to provide uninterrupted protection of the landing force was immediately evident. All ship to shore operations now had to be conducted at night. The lack of the British capability permitted the Argentine air threat to dictate British actions. Fear of losing either of the light aircraft carriers to

an Exocet compelled the carrier group to remain well east of the area with the consequence that the day capable only Harriers had very limited on station time.

The land assault depended on rotary wing lift for rapid eastward movement across the open terrain of East Falkland. With the majority of the task force's CH-47 heavy lift helicopters lost with the loss of the *Atlantic Conveyor* to an Argentine Exocet, the landing force had to change the scheme of maneuver requiring the Royal Marines to march across the island. This presented a problem for the follow on forces primarily comprised of the 5th Brigade, who were also relying rotary wing lift for rapid transit to the assault once they arrived.

The 5th Brigade arrived in San Carlos and disembarked on 1 June. Gen Moore, overall land force commander, reconfigured the landing forces and placed 2 Para back under the control of 5th Brigade upon their arrival. Meanwhile, the Commandos were now approaching the Argentine positions on East Falkland. In order to mass forces for success, 5th Brigade would need to re-embark aboard amphibious shipping and move along the southern coast to Fitzroy to catch up with the Commandos.

Earlier planning assumptions thought a southerly sea-approach unwise on the belief that the Argentines would anticipate that avenue of approach. Events dictated selecting this route, compounded by pressure from London for action, the Royal Marine Commandos successful march east, and the premature and uncoordinated forward movement of a contingent of paratroopers to Fitzroy.^{xxvii} This move by the Paras, conducted without notification to Gen Moore or the other land and amphibious commanders, drove events. 2 Para was now forward, isolated, not tied into friendly lines, and without any mutual support or adequate command and control communications with the Royal Marines. Commodore Michael Clapp, Amphibious Task Force Commander, called it the "single most irresponsible act that led to subsequent

catastrophe."^{xxviii} Although Commodore Clapp knew land force movements ashore were not of his to dictate, he was bound to be involved in rectifying things.

The rapid amphibious movement of the 5th Brigade's remaining Welsh and Scots Guard Battalions at San Carlos was required to shift forces to support 2 Para. The Welsh Guards had initially attempted their own march east to Stanley, only to return hours later with the grim realization they were physically unprepared for such a trek. Time was running out given the advanced position of the Royal Marines and the unfavorable position of 2 Para, so the southern route was decided. There is the supposition that the decision to reinforce the 5th Brigade's rash move of 2 Para to Fitzroy was a political concession to get the army a share of the fight.

The hastily planned amphibious movement was to occur over two nights, using one LPD under cover of darkness to deny the Argentine air threat. London countered the plan and forbade the use of such a high value vessel for fear of land based Exocets and the proximity of the landing site to the Argentine main forces. The subsequent plan had the LSD ferry its load only half way and transfer the troops and stores aboard LCUs for the remainder of the journey. Injecting this mid-transit transfer made an already complicated movement more so for soldiers unaccustomed to maritime operations. It started slowly. The army was noticeably slow and disorganized in re-embarking aboard the amphibious ships, and the first wave eventually arrived and offloaded with equal disorganization. Commodore Clapp later wrote, "What I did not appreciate...was the lack of understanding of joint operations by the Army Brigade nor the near non-existent communications that were to dog that Brigade."^{xxix} The planned timeline of the move assumed the efficiency of the Royal Marines, but the army units' lack of training in such operations slowed things considerably. This was a maneuver to reposition forces by amphibious means under combat conditions. The 5th Brigade handled it in an administrative manner with

poor coordination and delays. To complicate matters, adverse weather, limited suitable offload beach areas at Bluff Cove (where these actual landings were occurring, near Fitzroy), and a lack of communications compounded the friction. An unfortunate friendly fire incident resulted in a frigate shooting down the helicopter ferrying the 5th Brigade's communication equipment, and subsequent investigation of the incident revealed the frigate acted appropriately given the flight was not properly announced. Further highlighting the failures in communications and planning, 2 Para at Fitzroy trained their guns upon the Scots Guards as they disembarked from the LCUs, initially thinking they were an Argentine amphibious force.^{xxx} These circumstances illustrated the risks of disparate units thrust into unfamiliar operations in actual combat conditions. It was not to be the last of such incidents.

The first movement of the Scots Guards was successful despite themselves and the miserable weather conditions, but the Welsh Guards remained. Their initial LPD movement went smoothly out of San Carlos, but the rendezvous with the LCUs (who had remained at Fitzroy from the previous movement) failed when the LCU's could not get under way due to weather conditions (and some were also commandeered for a local movement by 2 Para, further highlighting coordination issues!)^{xxxi}. The two LCUs with the LDP continued to Fitzroy, unloading what they had, and the LPD returned to the safety of San Carlos. With no other alternative, the remaining Welsh Guards would embark aboard the LSL *Sir Galahad*, which was preparing to move Rapier surface to air missile batteries and a field hospital to Fitzroy. The field hospital took significantly longer to load and additional delays pushed the departure until well into the night, prompting the Captain of the *Sir Galahad* to request a delay to the following night. He did not want to risk exposure in the landing site during the day, even with the bad weather. Denied this request under the pressing sense of urgency for forces to be in place for the

pending final assault, the Captain was permitted to go only as far as Fitzroy (Bluff Cove was further inland) to minimize exposure in the area.

The skies cleared as the *Sir Galahad* arrived at Fitzroy just before dawn. Unloading commenced, but the Welsh Guards officers were indignant that they were to land short and have to march to Bluff Cove while leaving their equipment behind (it was to be unloaded later) and they refused to disembark until they had transport to Bluff Cove. Their refusal was to a senior officer, but due to the lack of a singular unified commander conducting the movement or a clear unified plan, no challenge to this refusal occurred since the movement was in their support. Lack of a unified plan executed by a cohesively trained and integrated force was preparing to boil over. Further delays of unloading equipment resulted, and then disaster struck.

Argentine Skyhawks attacked the anchorage bombing both the *Sir Galahad* and her sister-ship the *Sir Tristram*. Over 50 men died and an equivalent number wounded aboard the *Sir Galahad*, with additional casualties incurred on the *Sir Tristram*. Fires fed by fuel stores waiting to be unloaded swept the *Sir Galahad*, which was a total loss. Julian Thompson, Commander of 3 Commando Royal Marines, wrote of this incident that, "it was a sad reminder of the penalties that await those who let their guard drop."^{xxxii} Under fair skies, with the limited Harrier combat air patrol coverage occupied chasing a decoy of Argentine Mirage fighters, the LSLs were caught in the open daylight, precisely as feared would happen. Every foreseen risk came to fruition due to the overall poor preparation and coordination of an ad hoc landing force with insufficient amphibious assets.

Despite this stunning attack and losses, the final preparations for the assault on the Argentine forces progressed and days later were ultimately, culminating in the overall British victory. The army units that finally made it ashore fought well and did their part to carry the

day, but their lack of an initially defined mission and preparation for the unfamiliar nature of operations clearly contributed events at Bluff Cove. Decisions made years prior came back to haunt the operational abilities of the task force.

Falklands Lessons Learned

Among the factors contributing to this and other adverse events experienced by the British Task Force, as noted by Robert S. Bolia in his article "Bluff Cove Disaster," were the lack of an adequate airborne early warning system, systemic failures of communications in equipment and between staffs, decision to use LCUs to transport the 5th Brigade, service parochialism, and absence of a clear overall joint force commander.^{xxxiii} These are accurate, but a further analysis reveals greater conditions for consideration. Overarching causal issues were the lack of amphibious shipping and a well-prepared cohesive landing force (aside from the Royal Marines), the inability to conduct forcible entry operations, and the inability to sustain distant operations in an austere environment, all of which resulted from the progressive Defense Review cuts and should be of concern to a modern amphibious planner.

The British military as a whole was unprepared for this degree of expeditionary warfare. Ideologically prepared to fight in Europe and task organized and trained to do so, Nicholas Van Der Bijl's study of the 5th Brigade in the Falklands accurately summed up the issue as a whole when he wrote, "Half the problem was that the armed forces were inexperienced in amphibious warfare, a far cry from the Second World War. That the country's amphibious capability in 1982 centered on sixteen landing craft and some helicopters, operating from two assault ships each designed to take a tank regiment, illustrates just how weak it was".^{xxxiv}

The preceding 25 years of systematic defense cuts whittled away each military component's core capabilities. The presences of even one conventional British aircraft carrier would have tipped the scales of relative combat power, providing additional air coverage, air attack, and early warning, if not entirely deterring the Argentine invasion. It could have prevented the ship losses by ensuring adequate air coverage. The lack of airborne early warning was not just a causal factor of the strike on Bluff Cove. San Carlos was the logical anchorage in order to be distant from the Argentine land force. The inability to conduct forcible entry operations shaped this, but this location put the lodgment closer to the Argentine air envelope while being at the edge of the British air envelope. Adequate British amphibious shipping and a larger standing ready force of Royal Marines could have enabled rapid massing for forces ashore, versus waiting for the 5th Brigade. The ability to assemble and employ such a force and have it in position for decisive action around the Falklands in less than two months is notable given the condition of the forces, but two months are a long time in a crisis. The flaw was the force was not a cohesive and collectively trained element for the task. All the while, London was pressing decisive action to prevent international diplomacy from finding a compromise resolution to the dispute. The lack of unified command and doctrine outlining its management added to the friction encountered at all stages of the conflict.

Argentine Exocet anti-ship missiles posed a legitimate Anti-Access Area-Denial (A2AD) threat that forced the carrier battle group to remain a safe distance at sea to the east of the conflict. The risk on losing one of the two carriers and their Harrier aircraft would have resulted in calling off the entire operation.^{xxxv} Keeping this safe distance from the shore resulted in limiting Harrier air coverage time on station over the islands. There was no aerial refueling

capability in support of the task force Harriers. The British did not have the capability to find, fix, and destroy the Exocets.

Operating 8,000 miles from home with only Ascension Island as an intermediate staging base, Operation CORPORATE was at the end of a strained support line that would not have been able to sustain combat operations indefinitely. Had the Argentine forces exploited some of the task force's apparent weaknesses or been able to delay until the winter weather turned worse, the outcome would have been unfavorable for the British.

The British government sent its military on a mission it was barely capable of conducting under the best circumstances, due to the extremes of distance, equipment, organization, and doctrine, with the glaring fact they did not have enough ships. The post war Franks Report reads with eerie hindsight as to the intentions of the Argentines, especially in early 1982. There was never a contingency plan created to address the defense or reclamation of the Falklands from Argentine forces but there were two occasions where the military provided specific assessments to address the issue. The first assessment came in 1976, initiated after the British research vessel *R.S.S. Shackleton* was fired upon by an Argentine naval vessel during a period of heightened tensions, and the second in 1981 as tensions became more strained. The 1976 defense paper stated that due to the distance and lack of friendly airfields, airborne operations were not an option. It would have to be an amphibious action with a minimum of a brigade, using all available amphibious shipping, significant logistics shipping, and the *H.M.S Ark Royal* (the last remaining conventional aircraft carrier in operations at that time, subsequently decommissioned in 1979), and that it would be at the limits of sustainability. The 1981 assessment reinforced these previous, with the additional assessment that in order to deter an invasion, maintaining a

sizable naval force in the region was required. These assessments were considered nothing more than military advice on what was believed the least probable Argentine action.

The post-Falkland boost to the military resulted in countering some of the 1981 Defense Review's positions. All of the military services and many in government sought to enhance the ability for "out of area operations". The navy saved its third assault aircraft carrier from the scrap yard, ensuring two were on hand for action, and replacements for losses from the conflict had modernizations to survivability. The army reinstated the 5th Infantry Brigade as an airborne force for contingency operations, and the Royal Air Force refit all of its transport and long-range patrol and tanker aircraft with the capability to aerial refuel. Though the military's primary role remained NATO oriented in Europe, Britain would have the capability to project power to preserve its claims. A more subtle change, but perhaps the most important, was the reorganization within the senior military chiefs that placed the Chief of the Defense staff as the principal military advisor to the government.^{xxxvi}

Significance to the United States in the 21st Century

Comparing the British Falklands experience to the contemporary United States could point out more dissimilarities than similarities. Doctrine exists for both joint operations and within the Department of the Navy for cohesive and defined amphibious operations. The United States possesses the largest standing amphibious naval force in the world and continuously deploys it worldwide. Nuclear powered aircraft carriers provide forward deployed air power and Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) ships provide planned and on-call sea borne follow on logistics support. The United States has a network of bases and friendly host nation alliances

worldwide permitting it to have global freedom of action, and the Marine Corps and army are highly trained within their missions, especially with current experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. What then is the comparison? It is one of priorities and the actual ability of the U.S. military to support the expressed goals of national strategy, which was at the root of the issues that could have wrought failure on the British.

The Quadrennial Defense Reviews since the late 1990's read in a similar fashion to the previously noted British Defense Reviews. Each QDR reveals a distinct shift from a previous defined threat to a more ambiguous capability, with a wandering focus from heavy conventional capability to a light and precise capability. The QDR is a telling document broadcasting the intended character and capability of the force to come.

The 1997 QDR stated the ability to fight two major theater wars simultaneously while maintaining an overseas presence, among other capabilities.^{xxxvii} It further stated that if the U.S. was not capable of two wars at once, its standing in the world would come into question.^{xxxviii} Among the five stated roles of the Navy, power projection from sea to land and the ability for some amphibious ready group forces to move between theaters as needed supported required shipping via the prescribed 12 standing amphibious ready groups.^{xxxix} Operational Maneuver from the Sea, in conjunction with new planned capabilities such as the MV-22 and the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, was discussed. Korea and the Middle East were seen as crisis areas, but China was identified to be an emerging competitor by 2015. Fiscal responsibility was a concern, but the budget had already experienced steep post cold war cuts. In 1985, 28% of the budget and 7% of GDP went toward defense, by 1997, it was 15% and 3.2% respectively.^{xl} The priority was maintaining the stated capabilities while looking to modernize the force. This was the last QDR to read as if the U.S. was a super-power oriented against potential adversaries.

The 2001 QDR, released shortly after the 9/11 attacks, still maintained a somewhat distilled two-theater construct but now referred to an adversary's capability based planning.^{xli} It also introduced a new strategy based on dissuasion, deterrence, assuring allies, and if those fail, decisive defeat of the enemy. It also directed the shift of carrier based and amphibious forces to the western pacific region and identified the Asian littorals as a future interest. The U.S. indentified the Asian littorals as a strategic interest, but the following years would keep the focus of the nation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 2006 QDR revealed significant changes in priorities and strategy. The two-theater construct was replaced by a less concise ability to wage two conventional campaigns, or one conventional campaign if already involved in a drawn out irregular campaign while selectively reinforcing deterrence against opportunistic acts of aggression. Defeating terrorist networks and weapons of mass destruction were among the priorities. Coalitions and interagency operations were required. China returns as a defined competitor among the otherwise ambiguous described threats and hostile capabilities. Seabasing and the need for the proposed new Maritime Prepositioning Force of the Future (MPF(F)) were expressed as the way forward for amphibious expeditionary operations.^{xlii} The focus was now to shift "from dependence on large, permanent overseas garrisons towards expeditionary operations..."^{xliii} Seabasing was determined to be an essential element in our maritime strategy, validating the need for a standing amphibious force and the required support.^{xliiv} Despite the clear identification of Seabasing as a requirement, it became one of the first capabilities to experience subsequent cuts once the fiscal reality of the following years became known. The primary capability that will enable the U.S. to maintain its position in the western Pacific was reduced before it could mature.

The 2010 QDR continues the trend in declining capabilities. The U.S. had been at war for much of the decade, the economic crisis was at its height, and resources were becoming scarce. Fully engaged in The Long War, the priorities were to prevail in the current conflicts and prevent or deter future ones.^{xlv} The stated capability is now only against two capable nation-state aggressors, which mirrors what was occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan to some extent. The past 8 years have been ground focused and that future conflicts may be air or maritime focused is identified, but the planned reduction to around 30 amphibious ships from the previous 36 reduces the maritime capability. China is again on the list of competitors.

These brief portions of the last four QDRs show the shift in U.S. strategy from an assertive capability to a posture against uncertainty. The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have shaped the focus of U.S. planning, and with the economic crisis, have induced a reduction of amphibious capability. Meanwhile, our identified potential enemies are on the other side of the world's largest ocean and are maritime nations. This is similar to the British trend of reducing its capabilities while focusing only on the most likely threat, while weakening the ability to respond to threats against clearly stated interests.

U.S. National Security Strategy states it must start with rebuilding the economy.^{xlvi} It further states, "Effective strategic communications are essential to sustaining global legitimacy and supporting our policy aims".^{xlvii} The U.S. does not want to find itself in a position like the British; they repeatedly expressed disinterest in the Falklands, emboldening Argentina, only to unify against their hostile encroachment after the fact. Nor can the U.S. be perceived like the British were by Argentina, or more so, how the U.S. was perceived by the Japanese just prior to World War two: a hollow force that would withdraw from aggression given the degraded state of the military in the late 1930's as a result of the economic depression. Nor can the U.S. only

prepare against aggression after to an event, such as the World Trade Center attack of 11 Sep 2001. The U.S. has to demonstrate not just the willingness, but also the clear ability to back its claims. It must be able to respond with immediacy.

The 2011 National Military Strategy (NMS) of the United States of America further states that among many defined interests, the global commons, the Asia/Pacific region, and China are significant. Every NMS since 2008 has identified China. Mitigation of future A2AD capabilities will shape our access to the global commons, in this case maritime freedom of movement. Some argue the best way to do so is to ensure cooperative nations, tied via trade and alliances, dominate the littorals. This cooperation will only come from a demonstrated U.S. ability to support them in crisis. The best means for this is sustaining an amphibious force capable of large-scale operations in the region. This will provide assurance to our allies while maintaining flexibility for the U.S. to project maritime power on its terms. This will also encourage economic prosperity in these regions, of which the U.S. will enjoy the shared benefits.

NMS states, "We remain concerned about the extend and strategic intent of China's military modernization, and its assertiveness in...the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and the South China Sea."^{xlviii} The U.S. has clearly identified another sovereign nation as a specific competitor. To do so would be folly without organizing and equipping forces to counter any potential threat. NMS further states, "we will be prepared to demonstrate the will and commit the necessary resources needed to oppose any nations' actions that jeopardize access to...the global commons...or that threaten the security of our allies."^{xlix} The U.S. has a stated commitment within its national defense strategy to defend its allies. National and defense strategic communications state the U.S. will protect its interests and posses the will and capability to do so. Unfortunately, the economic situation is driving further reductions,

realignment, and reviews of capabilities in the wake of sequestration and austerity. This is reducing the ability of the U.S. to back its claims. Certainly, competitors to the U.S. note the widening gap between stated intent and real ability.

The U.S. is at a crossroads requiring serious decisions for its military capability as a whole. Economic decline is at the forefront of the issue. The national debt has tripled since 2000, from \$5.6 trillion to over \$16 trillion dollars.¹ Meanwhile, severe recession and reduced revenue in the past decade have placed the nation in crisis. Military spending bears its share of the bill with the past decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is one among many other domestic causes. How the U.S. plots its course forward from the economic crisis will take into account strategic prioritization of missions to ensure the force can fulfill its stated obligations. With sequestration a reality, the Department of Defense is seeking cost savings across all areas. The future of amphibious shipping is among them.

The United States Navy and Marine Corps ideally require an amphibious force of 38 ships to fully support two Marine Expeditionary Brigades conducting forcible entry operations. This is the service stated capability required to support national aims. Yet, the final agreement has been for a 33-ship, risk compromise total for force planning and funding.ⁱⁱ These numbers do not include Maritime Positioning Force vessels but are of actual amphibious combatants. Among the newest amphibious vessels procured are the America class LHA, designed around supporting the MV-22 and F-35. Of note is its absence of a well deck, which reduces a commander's capability options, despite the increased air-power capability. This makes it more a light attack aircraft carrier similar to the *H.M.S Hermes* and *Invincible*, capable of aviation power projection, but not amphibious landing operations. Additionally, the USMC's AAV-7 fleet is still the subject of future replacement with the cancelation of the Expeditionary Fighting

Vehicle program. Amphibious naval shipping is only part of the solution. A modern ship to shore or ship to objective connector is just as critical an issue yet to be resolved.

Air-Sea Battle (ASB), as a way forward to assure success in the Pacific's future littoral environment, does not define a complete concept. Relying on coordinated intelligence, integration, and precision strikes against A2AD threats delivered from USAF and USN air dominance, the unstated assumption makes this capability a shaping effort to enable ground force access once A2AD mitigation is accomplished. Aside from two brief passages describing how Air-Sea Battle will enhance the "expeditionary capability of ground forces" and allow "access to contested areas", nothing further is defined concerning the integration and employment of ground forces in a conflict.^{lii} For what other reason will such air and sea based dominance be used for if the U.S. is challenged and all other means of dissuasion fail? Air-Sea Battle in conjunction with Seabasing strikes the strategic balance of dissuasion and deterrence with a ready capability, but there is an absence of the mention of the maritime ground component.

There is no mention of the U.S. Marine Corps in the concept, only sailors and airmen. This is not by chance, for this would validate the need to fund amphibious shipping, which is not happening. MPF(F) has been tabled and other amphibious vessel procurement has been jeopardized.^{liii} In fact, despite the 33-ship compromise, the U.S. Navy predicts having only 28 amphibious warfare vessels in service for FY15 in result of fiscally motivated ship building deferments and retirements of current ships. Considering that at any one time, at least three ships are out of service for major overhaul, this leaves 25 ships to support the U.S. maritime commitments during the period. It will be FY24 when the numbers increase to 33 ships according to projected force levels.^{liv}

The U.S. cannot casually downplay the need for amphibious operations, even with a nation weary from a decade of war. With the focus on the Pacific, an amphibious force capable of supporting U.S. strategic communications must stand ready, forward deployed with reinforcements ready to embark. The lessons learned from the Falklands experience show that it is crucial for the U.S. to preserve its amphibious capability in order to support national security goals, even at the cost of thoughtful reductions of other aspects of the force. In his article on restructuring the fleet, Captain Jeff Porter proposes a reduction in the nuclear aircraft carrier force to not only provide funding for additional amphibious shipping, but savings over time in overall manpower and support costs.^{lv} This proposal, although attractive to any proponent of amphibious shipping, will find hard challenges. The U.S. carrier fleet is the symbolic embodiment of U.S. global power projection. Additionally, the current existing reduction below congressionally mandated carrier strength is only a temporary authorization to accommodate the time lag between the retirements of vessels while building replacements. There is no similar congressional codification for U.S. amphibious shipping.

Reductions of the national nuclear arsenal are attractive given the staggering costs of maintaining that force. Similar to the British experience of conventional cuts to fund the nuclear deterrent, U.S. naval surface vessel construction is competing for funding against the planned replacement of the Ohio class nuclear ballistic missile submarines. The United States Air Force's going-in position on determining the size of their nuclear arsenal is similar to all branches: what is the requirement to support? This is one area where it seems hard to fathom the need for over a thousand nuclear warheads, or even five hundred. The plausibility of a nuclear exchange between legitimate nations is remote, and it is even less plausible that the rogue use of a nuclear weapon against the U.S. would result in a nuclear reply against a state. At the same time, a

deterrent of some degree is clearly required. Nevertheless, the consistent probability of maritime amphibious operations is a demonstrated reality and combatant commander support requests for amphibious support has been steadily on the rise.^{lvi} No one has requested the employment of a nuclear weapon.

One departure from the British experience is that the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) is an active component of U.S. maritime strategy. MPF provides follow on force sustainment to augment an already capable amphibious force. Only in an existential crisis could one foresee U.S. commercial shipping pressed into service in order to fill shortfalls in existing military shipping. The British had the Naval Auxiliary, but it was not to the degree of the global force support network that MPS provides. However, much like the STUFT, MPF shipping is not built to the survivability standards of amphibious warfare ships, nor possesses armament or any degree of countermeasures. Pressing commercial shipping into service in a crisis assumes dreadful risk. With the cancelation of the MPF(F) modernization, contrary to the 2003 Seabasing initiative, the future of MPF is unresolved. Reducing the overall ability to conduct amphibious operations jeopardizes the need for MPS for budget cutting opportunists, as demonstrated by the navy's reversal on MPF(F).

The Falklands further reinforce the need for the nation to maintain its ready amphibious forces, the United States Marine Corps, in a state of readiness that supports such maritime operations. The USMC has recognized that a decade of land war in Iraq and Afghanistan has shifted its focus away from the primary mission of expeditionary operations. The senior leadership of the Marine Corps has released formal publications to remind the current generation of desert warfare savvy Marines that it is an “inherently naval force”, though this may also service specific strategic communications to posture for the coming defense cuts.^{lvii} Significant

cuts to Marine Corps' manpower will require that it ensures the standing force is as aggressively prepared as possible. While the Marine Corps makes a concerted effort to return to its ethos, the U.S. Navy is partnering in this effort supporting recent large force amphibious exercises, such as Bold Alligator. These efforts are a good start to ensure the nation retains this flexible force capability so that it is ready to respond to crisis, not ready to prepare for a crisis.

What remains constant between the Falklands and U.S. interests today is distance and time of response. The distance is the vast expanse of ocean in the Pacific. The British conducted Operation CORPORATE over 8,000 miles from the United Kingdom, with only Ascension Island as an intermediate marshalling location. Should the U.S. find the need to conduct military operations on a large scale in the Pacific, they will be maritime based. Although the U.S. maintains a series of bases and territorial possessions in the central and western Pacific, potential areas of dispute are still far enough away to require amphibious movement and follow on support. The proposal that airlift could provide for troop movements makes the assumptions that airspace and airfields near the objective are uncontested or permissive enough to permit such operations. With China as the primary competitor in the region, it is doubtful such a permissive environment would be easily achieved. Amphibious forces would enable options for forcible entry into contested areas without relying exclusively on land-based field of operations. Similar to the British example, the U.S. Army has reduced its airborne forces over the past two decades. What remains relies on United States Air force lift, which is always in high demand even in peacetime operations.

With fiscal austerity forcing U.S. force reductions, the U.S. military is actively involved with continuous Theater Security and Cooperation efforts in the western Pacific. These partnerships with host nation militaries serve multiple purposes. Among them, nations that help

each other are inclined to trade with each other, which supports the economic interests of both. Training forces to operate with U.S. forces and handle their own regional issues may reduce the need for large-scale U.S. involvement. While the latter two points are based on sound reasoning, neither are substitutes for the U.S. ability to project power in a crisis. Events in Libya and continuing instability in North and East Africa indicate that crisis can erupt unexpectedly. Libya demonstrated a ready amphibious force provides the most flexible response. Friendly relations in all regions will facilitate the ability to use airfields and port operations, something the British did not enjoy. Void of a host nation and coalition support, sea basing is the answer.

Conclusion

The lessons learned from the Falklands illustrate that as a maritime global power, the U.S. must maintain a viable amphibious force as it expresses strategic interest in the maritime region of the western Pacific. One may argue that the chances of a large-scale amphibious forcible entry operation are remote, but the operational environment in the western Pacific is the domain of the amphibious force. Ensuring the U.S. maintains the capability to not only project force, but also maintain and provide for that force should be an apolitical priority for the nation to ensure it remains postured to protect its interests, support international trade and growth, and maintain stability in regions of potential turmoil.

Underlying all of these issues is the nation needs to sustain a force that can support the tasks required of it through national strategy and policy. Messaging needs to match actual might. Otherwise, the U.S. will find itself in a position of retreat and deterioration. "Britain fought a war in the Falklands for islands it had spent the better part of 20 years suggesting it did not want"

and in doing so came close to losing not only just that campaign, but also subsequent global standing had they lost.^{lviii} The United States firmly states it wants to influence events in the Pacific. It cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the British.

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