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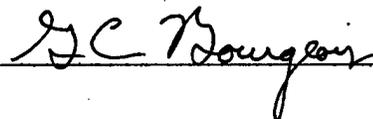
**The Marine Corps Operational
Maneuver Group: A Critical Look**

by

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

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

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15. Abstract: Proponents of the Marine Corps Operational Maneuver Group (OMG) concept state that the Marine Corps is uniquely suited to provide unified commanders with a ground force that possesses sufficient range, mobility, lethality, and survivability to function at operational depth and threaten or engage operationally significant centers of gravity. The OMG is based on the Marine Corps' unique LAV-25, wheeled, light armored vehicle. However, despite its initial appeal and the potential promise to exploit certain operational elements, various aspects of the OMG raise concerns that challenge the viability of this concept. Specifically, organizational and tactical opportunity costs and tradeoffs, vulnerability, applicability, and command and control difficulties of the OMG render its utility questionable and cast doubt as to its efficacy. This paper provides a critical examination of the OMG and concludes that until the aforementioned shortcomings, requirements, and vulnerabilities are thoroughly considered, adequately addressed, or satisfactorily resolved, the efficacy of the concept as currently proposed, is questionable. Further, until these issues are pursued and effectively answered, the OMG constitutes a substantial risk.			
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Abstract

Proponents of the Marine Corps Operational Maneuver Group (OMG) concept state that the Marine Corps is uniquely suited to provide unified commanders with a ground force that possesses sufficient range, mobility, lethality, and survivability to function at operational depth and threaten or engage operationally significant centers of gravity. However, despite its initial appeal and the potential promise to exploit certain operational elements, various aspects of the OMG raise concerns that challenge the viability of this concept. Specifically, organizational and tactical opportunity costs and tradeoffs, vulnerability, applicability, and command and control difficulties of the OMG render its utility questionable and cast doubt as to its efficacy. This paper provides a critical examination of the OMG.

The OMG is based on an asset unique to the Marine Corps throughout the Department of Defense: the LAV-25 wheeled, light armored vehicle (LAV). Generally the Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (LAR), as it currently exists, is considered already better suited to operational employment in most military environments than practically any other system in the US ground combat arsenal. But before the OMG is accepted with undiscerning optimism on good faith alone, a critical look is warranted.

There are several problems with the OMG. An OMG will require a new organization to be established in the Marine Corps, possibly at the expense of depriving the divisions of their LAR battalions. Further, when employed, an OMG requires constant, disproportionately heavy air support, in addition to a full-time, organic aviation component. As it operates well beyond the FSCL in the enemy's rear areas, the OMG may significantly inhibit friendly air's ability to operate freely beyond the FSCL.

Against a capable opponent the OMG is quite vulnerable. Virtually perfect situational awareness is required at all times in order for the OMG to survive. The OMG's concept of safe havens is specious. The OMG's geographic utility seems limited to Southwest Asia and North Africa, and employment seems best suited to the lower end of the spectrum of conflict. Additionally, command and control difficulties regarding for whom the OMG works and who exercises tactical control of the unit are yet to be resolved.

Because several requirements, shortcomings, and vulnerabilities of the OMG concept have not been thoroughly considered, adequately addressed, or satisfactorily resolved, the efficacy of the concept as currently proposed, is questionable. Until these issues are pursued and effectively answered, the OMG constitutes a substantial risk.

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THE MARINE CORPS OPERATIONAL MANEUVER GROUP: A CRITICAL LOOK

Introduction

Proponents of the Marine Corps' Operational Maneuver Group concept state that the Marine Corps is uniquely suited to provide unified commanders with a ground force that possesses sufficient range, mobility, lethality, and survivability to function at operational depth and threaten or engage operationally significant enemy centers of gravity. It is envisioned that this highly mobile, long range Operational Maneuver Group (OMG) will operate several hundred miles beyond the front lines and the main battle area. The OMG will be capable of operational maneuver and, very importantly, capable of discriminately attacking operationally significant targets that might otherwise be inappropriate or inaccessible to attack by air, precision guided munitions, or other means. By virtue of its ability to maneuver and operate at operational depth, the OMG provides a unified commander with a force that can be instrumental in achieving a decision at the operational level of war.

However, despite its initial appeal and the potential promise to exploit certain operational elements, various aspects of the OMG raise concerns that challenge the viability of this concept. Specifically, organizational and tactical opportunity costs and trade-offs, vulnerability, applicability, and command and control difficulties of the OMG render its utility questionable and cast doubt as to its efficacy. The OMG concept is fraught with potentially serious problems.

This paper provides a critical examination of the OMG. First, the definition of operational maneuver will be examined and the criteria for determining what constitutes an operational target will be discussed. Second, the purpose and composition of the Marine Corps' OMG concept will be explained. Next, specific aspects of the OMG that are cause for concern will be critiqued.

Finally, conclusions from the critique will be provided with a recommendation for a course of action that should be pursued by the Marine Corps.

Operational Maneuver

Understanding the meaning of operational maneuver is fundamental to any critique of the OMG. Dr. Milan Vego considers maneuver “a single most important feature of operational warfare.”¹ Because operational maneuver has been considered both an art and a science, a precise definition is important. However, frequently maneuver and the related terms movement and mobility have been used interchangeably or synonymously so as to blur their exact meaning.

Movement is motion in any direction, for any purpose, by a force of any size. Movement may or may not be influenced by the enemy. Further, movement is the foundation of mobility.²

Mobility is the ability to shift forces and dispositions in response to changing conditions and situations. It transcends the more general nature of movement and builds on movement to produce the flexibility required for successful maneuver.³

Maneuver combines movement and mobility in relation to the enemy.⁴ US Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations, defines maneuver as the movement of forces in relation to the enemy to gain positional advantage.⁵ The principal purpose of maneuver is to gain positional advantage relative to enemy centers of gravity.⁶ The concept of obtaining an advantage is not limited only to physical, spatial position but can also refer to the element of time. Maneuver also means moving and acting consistently more rapidly than an enemy does.⁷ The advantage of not only outthinking your enemy, but also “beating him to the draw” is obvious. All of the above serves to define maneuver. How do we distinguish operational maneuver?

Certainly maneuver is qualitatively different at each level of war. Distinctions are drawn between tactical, operational, and strategic maneuver by the difference of purposes to be

accomplished, size of forces employed, and the time and space factors involved.⁸ It is, for example, reasonable to expect at the operational level that objectives are more significant and larger, the forces involved are greater, and the distances and duration over which operations are conducted significantly exceed those at the tactical level.

The ability to distinguish among the levels of war through the use of scale on the three categories of objective, force size, and space/time generally holds true. However, exceptions to this rule do occur. There are historical examples of a very small, decidedly tactical force(s) having an impact on events well beyond the force's normal tactical sphere of influence. Also, combat events have occurred quickly and decisively and very close to main battle areas, rather than over great distances or over long periods of time that are typical of campaigns and the operational level of war. A single plane with a single bomb, the Enola Gay, had enormous impact, and arguably obviated the need for the US invasion of Japan in 1945. A single Ranger platoon and two Army helicopters were lost less than three kilometers from the main UN headquarters in Mogadishu in 1993. Their tactical loss changed the United States' national policy regarding Somalia. It seems then, that the single most enduring criteria in discriminating the levels of war and maneuver appears to be that of objective, specifically the significance thereof and/or the impact of its loss or destruction.

Therefore, although operational maneuver is generally conducted with forces commensurate in scale to the operational level of war and at operational depths, it is the level of importance of the objective of the maneuver that characteristically defines maneuver as operational.

Operational maneuver can be complex. It is directed against an operationally significant objective, which forces the enemy to react operationally.⁹ The aim of operational maneuver could

be to seize or obtain control of some significant critical vulnerability in the opponent's operational depth, one that could force him to react operationally or even strategically.¹⁰ Operational maneuver is also a means by which Joint Force Commanders set the terms of battle by time and location, decline battle, or exploit existing situations.¹¹

How does the Marine Corps OMG propose to use operational maneuver? What does the OMG offer to a warfighting Commander-in-Chief (CINC) as an operational maneuver element? The next section explains the OMG concept.

The Marine Corps OMG Concept

A former Commanding General of the First Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) broached the following proposition. If the United States military can "see" deep in combat, communicate deep, and has weapons that can strike deep, could we maneuver a force deep and sustain it?¹² The term deep referred to operational depth.

This line of thinking was completely consistent with the U.S. Marine Corps concept of Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS). OMFTS is the Marine Corps capstone operational warfighting concept for the 21st century.¹³ While OMFTS does capitalize on naval forces' ability to use the sea as a maneuver space, the intent in employing this concept is to deliver a decisive blow against an enemy's center of gravity.¹⁴ OMFTS is a blending of maneuver and naval warfare enabling swift strikes against critical enemy vulnerabilities, which avoid his strengths.¹⁵ OMFTS provides a conceptual underpinning for the OMG.

The value of a force that is capable of deep maneuver is obvious and widely desired, and always has been. Striking to the center of gravity of the enemy, or by mere presence and capability posing an unacceptable risk and causing the enemy commander to alter his plan, commit operational reserves, or otherwise leave himself vulnerable to a "killing blow" by the

main force, can be decisive at the operational level.¹⁶ Additionally, throughout the spectrum of war many instances can be envisioned where “seeing” and striking deep (with either missiles or air) may simply not be the solution. If the enemy’s center of gravity cannot be attacked through technology oriented means, or if joint fires are politically unfeasible, then a force that can maneuver deep and use discretionary direct fires may be the answer.¹⁷ The Marine Corps OMG provides a highly maneuverable, combined arms, joint capable, air sustainable force that can be instrumental in achieving a decision at the operational level of war.¹⁸

The OMG is based on an asset unique to the Marine Corps throughout the Department of Defense; the LAV-25 wheeled, light armored vehicle (LAV). The LAV-25 is a high speed, all terrain, eight-wheeled, light armored reconnaissance vehicle that mounts a turreted, 25 millimeter chain gun and carries a three man crew plus four infantry Marines. The LAV family of vehicles includes several variants of the basic turreted LAV-25: command and control, anti-tank, mortar, logistics, and recovery. The Marine Corps LAVs are currently organized in three Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) battalions, each consisting of approximately 900 Marines and 110 LAVs.

Generally the LAR battalion, as it currently exists, is considered already better suited to operational employment in most military environments than practically any other system in the US ground combat arsenal.¹⁹ This is primarily a function of its strategic and operational mobility and range. The LAV’s cruising range, high-speed road mobility, and automotive reliability are far superior to any current or envisioned tracked vehicle. By current standards the LAV is considered to have extraordinary tactical mobility and is renowned for its reliability. It is this theme of mobility and reliability, when coupled with such concepts as deep maneuver, strategic insertion, maneuver warfare, aerial sustainment, and enemy operational centers of gravity/critical vulnerabilities that give the OMG its foundation and impetus.

The OMG proponents envision a battalion-sized or greater, LAV mounted, combined arms force being strategically inserted at operational depth into an area of operations. Possessing superior agility and maintaining a high tactical and operational tempo, the OMG will focus on enemy operational centers of gravity or critical vulnerabilities and present an enemy commander with an unacceptable risk or loss. With the OMG, the warfighting CINC now has a viable, deep maneuver, *ground* force with size, strength, speed and range.

Further, Marine planners argue that emerging technology and the principle features of the current RMA serve to make mobile, light mechanized (in this case wheeled) forces more useful and powerful, rather than obsolete as some authors have theorized.²⁰ Specifically, enhanced communications and navigation, battlefield tactical information management systems, precision targeting and targeting linking systems, along with precision munitions are making units such as the OMG extremely agile, lethal, and viable. Proponents additionally offer that the psychological effect of a ground force operating in the enemy's rear is quite unlike that of air and missile strikes alone.

Critique of the OMG

This paper does not dispute nor denigrate the concept of maneuver warfare or its tenets. Nor is the benefit derived from attacking an enemy's operational center of gravity questioned. This paper is concerned that the OMG is being offered by its proponents in the Marine Corps as a be-all panacea for most of a CINC's operational concerns, both in mid-to-high intensity regional conflicts or theater war, and in lesser MOOTW scenarios. Before the OMG is accepted with undiscerning optimism on good faith alone, a critical look is warranted to ascertain the efficacy of the OMG concept.

Organizational and Tactical Opportunity Costs and Tradeoffs

Organizational requirement. To form an OMG a new organization would need to be established. The LAR battalions are currently part of the Marine Divisions, which fulfill the role as the ground combat elements (GCE) in Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTF). The commanding generals of the Marine Divisions need the LAR battalions to conduct their close battle, especially against an evenly matched competitor. E.g. all three LAR battalions participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. If not against a peer competitor the GCE could (should) extend its own area of influence much deeper with organic GCE units, and the weaker opponent could not mass sufficient power to stop this.²¹ But, if the CINC desires to engage in operational deep maneuver against a respectable enemy, the CINC will need his own force to do so. Since any change in organization in manpower constrained times must have something to commend it, the basis for the OMG's mission must be considered versus the costs to the currently extremely capable Marine Divisions. Ad hocery should not be considered for such critical, potentially dangerous missions.

Aviation requirement. The OMG concept simply will not work in most circumstances without a strong aviation component. Deep maneuver is an air-ground mission rather than a purely LAR mission. Hence the OMG is not "just an OMG," but an OMG MAGTF.²² More accurately, it is a special purpose MAGTF (SPMAGTF), e.g. SPMAGTF Deep Strike.

The OMG should have a task organized (permanent?) aviation combat element (ACE) assigned to it for the duration of its operation. This is necessary to ensure immediately responsive, closely coordinated air support, which is essential to the success of this type of mission. This ACE should consist primarily of attack and utility helicopters, which would move with the force and operate from forward arming and refueling points (FARPs) run by the SPMAGTF. This ACE would therefore include a small aviation support detachment. These helicopters would provide

fire support, C², and scouting and reconnaissance. Overall, aviation's importance in this concept is exemplified by its provision of: primary and irreplaceable means of fire support—both fixed wing and rotary wing CAS, primary means of sustainment—transport helicopters and cargo aircraft, and a primary source of combat information. This immense level of committed aviation assets significantly detracts from the level of support that would otherwise be provided to the GCE, and diminishes the overall synergistic effect of the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF).

FSCL inhibition. One fire support coordination measure habitually used by US forces to exploit the lethality and reach of our tactical air forces is a Fire Support Coordination Line (FSCL). This permissive measure allows our aircraft the freedom to attack beyond the FSCL without coordination. Desert Storm is the most recent example of the devastating results of this concept. An OMG operating well beyond the FSCL in the enemy rear would likely inhibit our air forces freedom to attack (to avoid fratricide). Certainly other fire support coordination measures such as airspace coordination areas, restricted fire areas, or no fire areas (ACA, RFA, NFA) can be employed to ensure the OMG's survival. But the inherent speed, range and mobility of the OMG that make it so survivable would concurrently make the use of such measures extraordinarily difficult, if not completely ineffective. Further, is the cost of inhibiting our very capable air forces' free rein worth what the OMG will accomplish?

Vulnerability

A weakness of the OMG concept is that, while potentially dazzlingly effective against an inept opponent,²³ the OMG is vulnerable to ambushes, armored/mechanized counterattacks, and above all, enemy air. Against a peer or near-peer competitor the OMG is a very high-risk operation. An enemy OMG could not survive in our rear area. Upon detection our air and other supporting arms would immediately isolate it. Presumably it would be electronically isolated as

well. Once fixed, and/or crippled, we would destroy the force with strikes and supporting arms until it was ineffective or it surrendered. Another option would be to “surround” it with a “ring of fire” and then wait for its surrender once its sustainment expired.

Situational awareness. It is recognized that the OMG is grounded on maneuver warfare and its tenets of psychological dislocation, relational maneuver, deception, avoidance, and intangible momentum.²⁴ The OMG is supposed to unnerve, unhinge, and discombobulate the enemy commander. However, the paradox is that the theory of maneuver warfare does not recognize the primacy of destruction.²⁵ And importantly, this works both ways; i.e. the enemy can be fully expected to attempt to destroy our OMG. The apparent detachment or indifference of some of the disciples and proponents of the OMG to the very real vulnerability of the OMG is disconcerting. Deep operations by an OMG against a tough enemy appear historically questionable.

The OMG concept addresses force protection through communications, made perfect by technology, and by the maintenance of virtually perfect battlefield situational awareness. OMGs need to know where to go and where not to go; information is therefore critical to avoiding enemy strengths and operational reserves and firepower.²⁶ Should somehow the practical, mechanical obstacles to providing such a Herculean requirement be overcome, the broader lessons of war do not support achieving and maintaining such a “perfect picture” amidst the fog and friction of war. Any lapse of situational awareness on the part of the OMG could be catastrophic.

Air cover. Coupled with the staggering communications and intelligence requirements of the OMG is an additional requirement for essentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, fixed wing combat air patrols, close air support, and deep air support (CAP, CAS, DAS) for the OMG. This is over and above the previously discussed rotary wing element that would be organic to the

OMG. Although the author endorses the need for such a robust aviation commitment to the OMG to ensure its survivability, he also recognizes that aviation support, while powerful, may lack the continuity required for such a zero defects mission. Or does the OMG concept automatically presuppose US air superiority? If that were the case, it would not be presumptuous to assume that the usual, robust level of US military strength committed to a conventional conflict situation would certainly be sufficient to achieve victory without the attendant difficulties and vulnerabilities of an OMG employment.

Safe havens. Another aspect of the OMG related to vulnerability is the concept of safe havens. Proponents envision that, after conducting raids and attacks on enemy operational targets, the OMG would move to a “safe haven over safe routes to refit and rest until the next opportunity to strike again.”²⁷ One proponent labels safe havens as concealed attack positions in hostile territory.²⁸ Speed, concealment, darkness, and reconnaissance (up to and including national level imagery) are all elements of this concept. At best this concept is naïve. Our Joint Publication 3-0 dictates that “Joint Force Commanders should not allow an enemy sanctuary or respite.”²⁹ Why would an enemy allow us the same?

Loss of initiative. Placing our units too deep can surrender the initiative to the enemy. A US strategic center of gravity will for some time include aversion to casualties in most conflicts.

As the British Airborne learned at Arnhem and the Soviet Spetsnaz in Afghanistan, when deeply inserted units confront a determined enemy, all friendly efforts may necessarily be subordinated to breaking through to the endangered units or alleviating their dilemma as rapidly as possible prior to their destruction.³⁰ If we go “a bridge too far” with the OMG, the results could be decidedly negative. The reverse of the OMG’s operational utility is its strategic vulnerability.

Applicability

Geographic utility. The OMG is ideally suited for wide, open terrain that enables the OMG to exploit its high-speed mobility and tremendous range. The advocates of the OMG are quick to assert that restricted terrain such as mountains and hills, densely populated areas, thick vegetation, and abundant river areas, precludes the OMG's use. This eliminates such potential crisis areas such as China, Korea, the Balkans, Columbia (practically all of Central and South America), and Taiwan. The two areas most suited for OMG employment are Southwest Asia (SWA)/the Mid East and North Africa. Not surprisingly, these two locations also magnify the capabilities of the OMG's two most lethal nemeses, armor/mechanized units and tactical air forces. How realistic is it to expect the Marine Corps to undertake such a proportionately great restructuring and/or reorientation to standup OMGs when their utility is so geographically restricted? The Marine Corps prides itself, and has done so for decades, on its near-universal relevance and global expeditionary utility.

Levels of conflict. Employment of the OMG seems more suited to the lower end of the spectrum of conflict rather than at the mid or high-level end. In fact, several proponents agree, citing that it is envisioned that the concept will most likely have utility in smaller-scale contingencies rather than in major theater wars against first-rate enemies.³¹ The scenario for the first full scale deep maneuver exercise, conducted by I MEF in August 1997, using three LAR battalions across three southwestern states, placed LAV forces in "a sub-Saharan country facing disorganized insurgent factions sponsored by a bordering aggressor state."³²

If this is the case, it seems that the original reason for the OMG, to strike deep in order to distract/weaken the enemy and enable our main effort to be more effective and execute the "killing blow," becomes blurred. If the enemy is so comparatively weak, and the parameters and conditions of a particular MOOTW allow an OMG to operate relatively freely, then the scale of all

the air, lift, support, and sustainment required for operating the OMG effectively, essentially makes the OMG *the main effort*. A fast, highly mobile main effort force capable of long range operations over operational distances may be exactly what is required in some scenarios. LAVs have been impressive in proving their worth in MOOTW recently: Panama, Somalia, Haiti. Interestingly, this is remarkably similar to the SPMAGTF Deep Strike that was alluded to previously.

The author certainly agrees with the application of properly configured and equipped, task organized forces employed specifically to accomplish certain missions in particular circumstances. This exact concept has been a fundamental underpinning of the MAGTF concept for decades. But any attempt to pass this idea off as a “new operational concept” is suspect. Under this pretext every unit or element assigned an operational level mission would become an operational maneuver element (OME). The 1st Marine Division, the US Army 7th Infantry Division, and the naval forces that conducted the Inchon landing, arguably one of the most brilliant operational attacks in history, would qualify as an OME. Or were they simply correctly task-organized forces who superbly executed their assigned operational mission?

If US forces are pitted against a large, well-equipped enemy in a mid to high-level conflict, the concept of attacking deep against operational targets and centers of gravity makes complete sense. But what enemy, high payoff target requires an OMG to take it out vice our increasingly capable Marine or joint air combat elements? If precise, pinpoint accuracy is required of the air forces and is seemingly only obtainable by ground based terminal guidance or designation, then small, highly skilled special operations forces (SOF) seem much more appropriate to the task. Should, as has been suggested, ground direct fires be required to eliminate a target, slightly larger (and highly mobile) SOF could conduct a destruction raid. When

contrasted to a huge, aviation-dependent, logistically ravenous, unstealthy OMG, even a relatively large (by SOF standards) company-sized SOF element seems more prudent, lethal and likely to succeed. Even the usual SOF raid requirement for extract after target destruction, does not appear to make the OMG a more attractive option.

Command and control (C²)

An OMG commander must possess the utmost in decision-making authority and command flexibility in order for his force to remain agile and dictate the tempo of operations to the enemy. The reality of sea-air-ground command is that it must be vested in a single commander who will always be “forward into the fray” and at the point of decision.³³ But who controls the OMG commander? Into what headquarters, command post or combat operations center (CP, COC) do the OMG’s tactical radio nets terminate?

Obviously the OMG is a CINC-level asset in pursuit of operational level objectives. But the CINC's headquarters is not configured nor has it the ability to oversee or conduct an OMG’s tactical operations. The CINC might delegate the control of the OMG to one of his functional components, presumably the land component commander (LCC), who could further delegate the responsibility to a tactical level commander. The LCC, or his designated subordinate corps/MEF commander, must first guard against the temptation to “synchronize” the efforts of the OMG and the land component or corps/MEF. Such an attempt would be difficult without slowing both units. Conversely, the OMG’s controlling headquarters must also avoid the “J.E.B. Stuart at Gettysburg” trap, i.e. employing the OMG at too much distance to positively impact the main effort or achieve any tangible operational objective.³⁴

In the Marine Corps the Division is the command that conducts the use of the GCE’s LAR battalions behind the enemy’s front line units. Based on current weapons, communications,

mobility, and fire support capabilities, it is the Division CP/COC, with its focus on rapid decision-making in the close battle, with heavy elements at its immediate disposal, and with the communications to command and control the entire GCE, that is equipped to orchestrate the total close battle.³⁵ Even the MEF is not as capable of coalescing its total efforts on a microcosm of its larger battle. The OMG would occupy little of the MEF's focus if the MEF, as the MAGTF command element, was carrying out its larger (corps level, ACE battlefield shaping) functions.³⁶

Additionally, the risk associated with deep employment and providing C² to the OMG must be recognized. Due to friction, time-distance factors, and C² functional integration difficulties, other US forces may not be in a position or posture to respond to an OMG crisis even if called by the headquarters to respond.

History shows that operational success requires a blend of tactical sagacity and operational vision. Even Rommel, whose tactical use of agility, depth and synchronization in battles and engagements is legendary, failed in North Africa to display the same adroitness in the use of these principles at the operational level.³⁷ Currently the OMG concept offers no solution to OMG command and control. To date, all proposals and exercises have focused simply on the procedures and hardware for C³, and have had a downward (within the OMG) emphasis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The Marine Corps, with the OMG concept, does have the ability to offer a unified commander a unique force. A LAV-based maneuver element could possess the agility, lethality, and overall capability to operate well beyond the enemy's front lines. However, because several requirements, shortcomings, and vulnerabilities of the OMG concept have not been thoroughly considered, adequately addressed, or satisfactorily resolved, the efficacy of the concept, as

currently proposed, is questionable. Until these issues are pursued and effectively answered, the OMG constitutes a substantial risk, and is not a decisive operational tool.

Proponents of the OMG tout the OMG's seemingly universal, potential operational utility at the high and mid level of the conflict spectrum. But the OMG requirement for disproportionate air support (of all kinds) is glossed over or omitted, as are the OMG's vulnerability, opportunity costs, tactical tradeoffs, and C² difficulties. The OMG's more appropriate applicability to the lower end of the spectrum and to MOOTW is currently only alluded to by OMG proponents incidentally. Hardly mentioned is the substantial risk incurred with the employment of the OMG against a credible foe. Further, the OMG is a MAGTF and needs to be offered and advertised as such. The sooner the proponents of the OMG admit this and start articulating this fact, the better.

Recommendations

The Marine Corps should continue to pursue and develop the OMG concept. Certainly the Marine Divisions, the LAR battalions, fire support units, fire support coordinators, and the aviation community should continue to hone and refine the tactical techniques of deep maneuver, command and control, long haul communications, aviation support of all kinds, fires, fire support coordination, and mission-type orders execution. The Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), while attempting to exploit every possible facet of technology, should continue to explore, experiment, and exercise the OMG concept, placing particular emphasis on upwardly focused (from the OMG to HHQ) command and control, and the overall applicability and utility of the OMG itself.

Additionally, proponents should desist misrepresenting the OMG concept. Proponents must be candid and clear regarding limitations, vulnerabilities, and tradeoffs. And all concerned must recognize that the fog and friction of war will never be completely overcome.

Merely possessing the means to execute operational maneuver will not ensure the realization of its potential intent.³⁸ Marine Corps planners must not fall into a trap. The temptation to achieve operational aims that are beyond operational means cannot be bridged by a reliance on tactical short cuts unless we can assume a cooperative enemy—surely one of the most dangerous assumptions a military planner can make.³⁹

NOTES

¹ Milan Vego, "Operational Maneuver," in On Operational Art 2nd draft (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, Copyright March 1998), 130.

² Joseph Schroedel, "The Art and Science of Operational Maneuver," (Unpublished Research Paper, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: May 4, 1988), 2.

³ Ibid., 3.

⁴ Vego, 130.

⁵ Department of the Army, Operations (Field Manual 100-5) (Washington, D.C.: June 14, 1993), 2-5.

⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Pub 3-0) (Washington, D.C.: February 1, 1995), IV-8.

⁷ Patrick Collins, "A Proposed Strategic and Doctrinal Concept for Naval Forces During the Conduct of a Naval Campaign in Expeditionary Warfare," (Unpublished Paper, Commandants Warfighting Laboratory, MCCDC, Quantico, VA: March 1, 1997), V-5.

⁸ Vego, 130.

⁹ Schroedel, 17.

¹⁰ Vego, 130.

¹¹ Joint Pub 3-0, IV-9.

¹² Anthony C. Zinni, Comments to I MEF Deep Maneuver Working Group, Headquarters I MEF, Camp Pendleton, CA, 1996.

¹³ United States Marine Corps, Concepts and Issues '98, Building a Corps for the 21st Century (Washington, D.C., 1998), 32.

¹⁴ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Thomas B. Sward, "Marine Light Armor and Deep Maneuver," Unpublished Article, Camp Pendleton, CA, April 28, 1997, 1.

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²⁰ Chris Yunker, "Comments on 'Light Armor and Operational Maneuver From The Sea,'" Unpublished Article, MCCDC, Quantico, VA, July 16, 1997, 2.

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²³ Steven L. Canby, "Light Armor and Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFS) Marine Light Armor Reconnaissance," Draft Unpublished Paper, April 1, 1995, 10.

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²⁷ Sward, "Deep Maneuver Concept and Proposal," 6.

²⁸ Schmitt, 2.

²⁹ Joint Pub 3-0, III-12.

³⁰ Mattis.

³¹ Schmitt, 1.

³² Sward, "Marine Light Armor and Deep Maneuver," 2.

³³ Collins, VI-2.

³⁴ Mattis.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Donald E. Kirkland, "Rommel's Desert Campaigns, February 1941 – September 1942: A Study in Operational Weakness," (Unpublished Research Paper, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: May 21, 1986), 22-23.

³⁸ Schroedel, 34.

³⁹ Kirkland, 30.

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