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**AMPHIBIOUS FORCED-ENTRY: A VIABLE CAPABILITY FOR THE NAVAL
SERVICE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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 view and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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16 May 2003

ABSTRACT
AMPHIBIOUS FORCED-ENTRY: A VIABLE CAPABILITY FOR THE NAVAL SERVICE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The break-up of the former Soviet Union left the United States as the sole super power. With only one super power remaining, many believed the world would enjoy a more peaceful international environment. In actuality, the opposite occurred. The United States increasingly finds itself involved militarily in regional conflicts to protect its vital interests. Reductions in both force structure and forward-deployed units require the United States to maintain a strong power projection and forcible entry capability. The ability of the U.S. Naval Service to successfully conduct amphibious forcible entry operations is as vital today as it was at its inception during World War II.

The United States remains a maritime nation with the majority of its interests closely linked to the sea. U.S. military operations of the past fifty years swayed U.S. planners into growing dependent upon allies and coalitions for forward support and bases in order to conduct military operations. Due to this dependence on foreign assistance, the U.S. Naval Service's present ability to conduct large-scale amphibious forcible entry is questionable. Currently, the Department of the Navy (DON) is not conducting the requisite planning, procurement, direction, staff work and coordination required for such an amphibious assault.

It is critically important for the U.S. Naval Service to maintain a robust forcible entry capability as a viable military option to overwhelm the country's enemies and achieve U.S. national security objectives. Amphibious warfare requires very close, detailed cooperation in planning and execution. The most effective method to ensure that capability exists is through the regional combatant commanders. The unified commanders must develop war plans and exercises to ensure the Naval Service is ready and able to provide large-scale amphibious forcible entry when and where needed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

PREFACE iv

INTRODUCTION 1

ANALYSIS 3

 Past Amphibious Forcible Entry 3

 Present Capabilities 4

 Future Direction 8

SOLUTION 10

 Naval Service Commitment to Implementation 10

 The Solution Process 12

 A Viable Option Added 15

CONCLUSION 16

NOTES 18

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 20

PREFACE

This paper discusses the capability of the United States as a maritime nation to project large-scale military power and extend forcible entry operations from the sea onto foreign shores. This paper defines large-scale as a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) with requisite Navy forces (surface, sub-surface, and air) or larger operation. It addresses the worst case scenario where there are no friends or allies who will allow basing rights in theater.

The U.S. military has three primary forms of forcible entry capability: amphibious assault, airborne assault, and air assault.¹ Forcible entry operations are normally joint in nature and a combatant commander may use all or a combination of the three forms of forcible entry. Acknowledging that fact, this paper does not discuss U.S. Army or U.S. Special Forces forcible entry capabilities or U.S. Air Force capabilities in support of those operations. There are significant problems with forcible entry capabilities in these areas as well, but the scope of this paper is limited to the forcible entry capability provided by U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps amphibious assault. Additionally, it is duly noted that U.S. joint doctrine states amphibious operations are normally joint in nature and no separate service alone is strong enough to execute this most difficult of missions.² Finally, the term sea control as used in this paper refers to the operational level of war and control of the maritime theater to include the littorals.³

INTRODUCTION

When you can't go where you want to, when you want to, you haven't got command of the sea. And command of the sea is a rock-bottom foundation for all our war plans.

Admiral Forrest P. Sherman⁴

Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, spoke the above words during the Korean War just before the amphibious assault at Wonsan. Admiral Sherman's statement is as applicable today as it was fifty years ago. The United States is the world's only remaining super power and possesses a Naval Service that is second to none. The United States must maintain sea control to protect American interests throughout the world. It must not allow other nations to limit its freedom to go wherever it desires at a time of its choosing. Inherent in sea control is the ability of naval forces to rapidly project power from the sea to influence events ashore in the littoral regions of the world across the operational spectrum of war.⁵ The most difficult aspect of power projection is the ability to conduct a forcible entry against an opposing enemy across a hostile shore. The definition of forcible entry is "the seizing and holding of a lodgment in hostile or potentially hostile territory that, when seized and held, will enable continuous landing of troops and materiel and provide maneuver space for subsequent actions."⁶

The last time the U.S. military conducted a large-scale amphibious assault was September 15, 1950. The landing at Inchon, OPERATION CHROMITE, was the vision of General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur. It was the largest forcible entry operation of U.S. forces since World War II.⁷ This classic amphibious operation demonstrated all the advantages provided by forcible entry from the sea. The landing force used operational maneuver from the sea to exploit the principles of speed and surprise to turn the enemy by landing deep in his rear area. General MacArthur accepted great risk in conducting this operation and despite

vigorous dissension and predictions of disaster from many other senior military officers, he conducted the amphibious assault and achieved decisive results. A key reason General MacArthur was able to accomplish the Inchon landing was the existence of the required naval platforms as well as significant expertise in amphibious operations remaining as a result of World War II. Even at Inchon, the U.S. Navy had to borrow most of the Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) from Japan along with former Imperial Japanese Naval officers and men to crew them. The United States sold these LSTs to Japan shortly after World War II.

Over one hundred years ago, Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan argued that maritime nations such as the United States require naval forces built around capital ships that can concentrate power to defeat the enemy fleets and achieve sea control. Today and for the foreseeable future, aircraft carriers are those capital ships for the U.S. Navy. The Navy's plan to maintain naval supremacy in any environment centers on the potent and flexible capabilities of nuclear powered aircraft carriers.⁸ It is erroneous to assume domination of the open ocean will lead to success in the littoral. During the Cold War, the U.S. Naval Service strategy focused on nuclear confrontation with the other super power, the Soviet Union. The primary direction of the Navy at that time was a Mahanian type strategy. In 1992, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps published *From the Sea*. This White Paper was a dramatic doctrinal change for the Naval Service. *From the Sea* and the update which followed in 1994 *Forward from the Sea* abandoned the Cold War Mahanian strategy to focus on littoral operations in order to influence major land operations. The revolutionary nature of the changes required to achieve the goals of *From the Sea* created a significant level of risk within the Navy. Risk is inherent with all change and the magnitude of risk is in direct proportion to the scope and nature of the change.⁹ Navy leadership fears the denigration of their traditional open ocean

sea control mission. They believe focusing on the littoral mission will mean the loss of the blue-water capital ship Navy, degrading it to a second rate maritime power.

The predominant focus Navy leadership places on blue-water over brown-water capability puts the U.S. military in an extremely vulnerable position. A large-scale amphibious forcible entry operation is America's most effective method to quickly project and sustain combat power absent a forward land base network with secure ports and airfields. Current U.S. strategy heavily relies on allies for these forward bases, however an uncertain strategic environment is rapidly making this option untenable. The DON must provide the critical core capability of amphibious forcible entry to policy makers and military commanders to adequately address threats to U.S. vital interests in the twenty-first century. Without this capability, nations opposed to the United States can exploit this critical vulnerability and prevent the United States from commanding the sea.

ANALYSIS

Past Amphibious Forcible Entry

Large-scale amphibious operations will never occur again.

General Omar N. Bradley¹⁰

General of the Army and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Omar Bradley, strongly believed the above statement when he spoke it while testifying before the House Armed Services Committee in 1949. The landing at Inchon proved him wrong less than a year later. General MacArthur's decisive amphibious landing cut North Korean lines of communication and caused the rapid collapse of the North Korean offensive. General MacArthur did not heed the prediction of General Bradley and many other senior officers of that time. They believed amphibious operations were too risky, improvements in enemy weapon technology

would defeat an amphibious forcible entry attempt at the high water mark, and feared any large concentration of forces whether at sea or ashore would make a lucrative target for nuclear weapons. General MacArthur understood the level of risk but felt it was outweighed by the advantages of using the sea as maneuver space in terms of speed, surprise, and shock effect upon an enemy force. His will and vision combined with an amphibious forcible entry capability that still resided within the Naval Service from World War II allowed General MacArthur to land at Inchon with a decisive impact. This highly successful operation clearly demonstrated the continued viability of amphibious assault.

Present Capabilities

Today, policy makers as well as military commanders are making the same prediction about large-scale amphibious operations as General Bradley did in 1949. Many senior officers believe the current world political situation and advancing technology render large-scale amphibious assault obsolete. Additionally, most U.S. military planners have wrongfully come to accept as fact that friendly nations will always allow forces in theater and therefore the U.S. military will always have a benign environment for the Reception, Staging, Onward movement, and Integration (RSO&I) of combat power. OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM recently reinforced this belief when Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia provided critical forward bases allowing U.S. forces to methodically build up virtually all of the supplies and land combat equipment over the period of June 2002 to February 2003.¹¹ The United States may not always have this luxury in future conflicts and must prepare for such an eventuality. What happened in the recent past does not predict nor dictate what will happen in the future.

Throughout the world today, there are potential flash points where the lack of large-scale amphibious forcible entry capability could lead to failure for the United States in defense of

its key allies and vital interests. Many of these potential conflict locations reside in the Pacific Theater. Two examples are Korea and Taiwan. In both countries, similar potential scenarios exist. Either North Korea (NK) or the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) could attempt to unify its country through massive preemptive military invasion. Both NK and PRC would attempt rapid seizure of their land objectives - South Korea and Taiwan, respectively. Assuming that either NK or PRC was successful in its initial land grab, the only viable response for the United States would be to force its way back onto the Korean Peninsula or Taiwan. Unfortunately, the United States does not currently possess this response capability. If it did, it could intervene much earlier in an attempt to defeat NK or PRC before either was able to achieve its objective. If the United States failed in early intervention, only forcible amphibious entry would provide the means to retake the Korean Peninsula or Taiwan.

The Pacific Theater is not the only potential trouble spot where amphibious forcible entry could be a critically important option and capability for the United States. The Persian Gulf still harbors several nations hostile to the United States. The largest such nation, Iran, lies on the northeastern bank of the critical Strait of Hormuz. Even relationships with Arab nations currently friendly to the United States are on tenuous footing. None are free democracies, all share an Arab brotherhood, and all fear western colonialism. Bombing from afar can shape the battlefield, but eventually ground troops must rout out invading forces. The nation must have a means of projecting troops quickly to protect its interests and allies.

Those against large-scale littoral operations believe the proliferation of advanced weapons such as surface-to-surface missiles, shallow and deep-water mines, and diesel submarines have made amphibious assault far too dangerous and thus obsolete. They make the same argument today as General Bradley made in 1949. They incorrectly believe the potential to

exploit the element of surprise and capitalize decisively on an enemy weakness is greatly outweighed by the risks presented by amphibious assault. Regrettably, there is no four or five star flag officer today with the will and vision of General MacArthur strongly promoting amphibious forcible entry and supporting its viability in today's environment. Senior Navy officers give only cursory acknowledgment to operational use of the sea for the conduct of amphibious operations. They wrongfully cling to the Mahanian tradition of a blue-water Navy to defeat a non-existent enemy fleet. They are not focusing effort on how the DON can best support vital American interests throughout the littoral regions of the world.

Today, senior Naval Service officers are quick to describe in pain staking detail the enemy threat to amphibious operations. They acknowledge that the U.S. Naval Service must first defeat enemy sea denial efforts in order to employ naval combat power and have decisive impact ashore. Enemy sea denial prevents U.S. maritime superiority, unimpeded use of sea lanes, and most importantly freedom of operation in littoral waters. To defeat enemy sea denial operations, the U.S. Naval Service has two basic courses of action from which to choose. It can move away from the effects of enemy sea denial efforts or it can locate, close with, and destroy the enemy threat. Currently, naval doctrine proposes standoff distance and over-the-horizon operations as a counter action to enemy threats from the shore. To support this concept, the Naval Service is developing expensive vehicles (Landing Craft Air Cushion-LCAC, V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft-Osprey, Advanced Armored Amphibious Vehicle-AAAV) with the capability to transport the landing force over the greatly increased ship-to-shore distance. The intent of over-the-horizon amphibious assault is to avoid enemy detection of the amphibious task force. In essence, the Naval Service seeks the sanctuary of deep-water ocean far away from the enemy threat and far away from any potential amphibious forcible entry site.

Conducting a large-scale over-the-horizon amphibious forcible entry within the operational concept of *Forward from the Sea* would be extremely difficult today. First, amphibious shipping has never been a high priority for the Navy. It competes unsuccessfully with the more popular aircraft carrier and submarine programs. Even while the U.S. Navy has been professing littoral warfare as their operational focus since 1992, amphibious lift fell from 61 ships in 1991 to 49 ships in 2000 to a low of 44 in 2003.¹² Using every amphibious ship currently in its inventory, the U.S. Navy would find it extremely difficult to merely transport a notional Marine Expeditionary Force of 46,000 Marines to a hostile shore much less conduct an amphibious assault with a force anywhere near that size.¹³ Second, the Navy allowed the serious erosion of amphibious naval capabilities in terms of counter mine measures and naval gunfire. The mine sweeping capability of the Avenger-class ship was a step in the right direction, however the Navy counter mine capability is still woefully lacking. The USS Tripoli and USS Princeton clearly demonstrated the U.S. Navy's lack of counter-mine capability when they both struck unsophisticated sea mines in 1991 during the Persian Gulf.¹⁴ With respect to Naval Service fire support, the United States retired all the heavy caliber gunfire support ships. Naval gunfire support will now be done with five-inch guns or missiles. The first does not have sufficient capability or range to neutralize much less destroy coastal defenses while the latter is limited in number and is very expensive. As a result, the Naval Service now tasks aviation with providing the firepower to fill the gap. However, naval aviators are the first to remind amphibious planners of the problems they face from enemy anti-air systems. Third, of the three vehicles designed for over-the-horizon ship-to-shore movement, only the LCAC is currently operational and enemy sea denial actions can easily defeat it.

Forward from the Sea is the DON's first attempt to evolve U.S. naval power from the blue-water war-at-sea focus of the Cold War to a brown-water war-in-the-littoral focus. By any measure, the operational concept is outstanding. It is a modern maritime strategy that answers the challenges of the current world environment. Unfortunately, in real world execution, the Naval Service's performance is unsatisfactory. The Naval Service pays only lip service to this concept. As a result, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps are nowhere near being a unified team in regard to littoral warfare. The Navy continues to invest in long term programs that support their traditionally popular Mahanian deep water Navy. In recent conflicts, the Marine Corps appears less like an expeditionary maneuver warfare organization and more like a decisive land force. In the last two major conflicts, OPERATIONS DESERT STORM and IRAQI FREEDOM, the Marine Corps maintained closer warfighting relationships with both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force than the U.S. Navy.

Future Direction

The newest operational concept designed to transform the Naval Service into a multi-dimensional naval force for the twenty-first century is *Sea Power 21: Vision to Execution*. *Sea Power 21* incorporates three interdependent and synergistic operational concepts known as *Sea Strike*, *Sea Shield*, and *Sea Basing* which are all linked by a network architecture known as *ForceNet*.¹⁵ Without a doubt, this operational concept for naval transformation is extremely forward looking and seeks to take advantage of rapid advances in technology. It describes the particular focus for naval transformation to a networked, sea-based power projection force which will enable operations and access throughout the world.¹⁶ Yet, it is still an inadequate naval strategy to support current and future vital interests of the United States.

Forward from the Sea provides an outstanding doctrinal basis for transformation of the Naval Service from the Mahanian tradition to a power projecting Corbett style force capable of decisive influence within the littoral regions of the world. Yet, when observing the direction and focus of Navy procurement, it is obvious senior Navy leadership has never fully committed to amphibious forcible entry capability. The age-old saying of “talk is cheap” describes the Navy’s attitude. From 1994 to the present, the Navy has essentially ignored large-scale amphibious forcible entry as a viable option for the regional combatant commanders. The Naval Service’s newest vision for the future, *Sea Power 21*, is actually retrograding vice advancing the littoral focus of *Forward from the Sea*. Nowhere within the operational concept of *Sea Power 21* does it mention amphibious forcible entry. *Sea Power 21* wrongfully assumes the U.S. Naval Service already possesses the large-scale amphibious forcible entry capability conceptualized in *Forward from the Sea*. It assumes naval leadership executed the requisite actions to make the concept a reality. The last line of *Sea Power 21* states, “Agile and adaptive by nature, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are fostering the culture of innovation required to achieve transformational operational concepts and capabilities.”¹⁷ This statement begs the question, A naval transformation from what starting point and to what endstate? Naval planners designed *Sea Power 21* to begin where *Forward from Sea* left off. Since the Naval Service never fully implemented the concepts of *Forward from the Sea*, *Sea Power 21* stands on a hollow foundation.

Because of this lack of single battle commitment by the Naval Service towards the littoral and amphibious operations, it would be extremely difficult today for the United States to conduct a large-scale amphibious assault. The last such assault attempted by the United States was at Wonson, Korea. NK implemented sea denial operations by mining the approaches to the harbor. Unable to effectively counter the mine threat, the Navy canceled

the amphibious assault. The amphibious task force commander at Wonson, Rear Admiral Allan Smith, said afterward, “We have lost control of the seas to a nation without a Navy, using pre-World War I weapons laid by vessels that were utilized at the time of the birth of Christ.”¹⁸ The Naval Service took little to no action to improve forcible entry capabilities after Wonson and repeated the debacle in 1991 during Desert Storm when two ships struck mines in the Persian Gulf causing postponement of the amphibious assault.¹⁹ What changes should the Naval Service implement to prevent a repeat of the embarrassment and failure at Wonson Harbor and the Persian Gulf? The current default doctrine for the Naval Service in regard to littoral warfare is to off-load Marines and their equipment administratively in a benign environment and have them conduct a land movement to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy unsupported by the amphibious task force.

Adversaries of the United States have rapidly come to the conclusion that the best way to defeat the U.S. military is to prevent the establishment of a lodgment for the build up of forces and subsequent combat power. Since the Korean War, U.S. Naval Service doctrine in effect relies on cooperative friendly nations to provide a benign port for the off load of forces. In the inevitable case where no such friendly nations exist in the region, the U.S. Naval Service needs to maintain large-scale amphibious forcible entry as a core capability option for theater commanders during contingency and crisis operations. Drastic rudder changes must occur within the DON to sustain its viability.

SOLUTION

Naval Service Commitment to Implementation

With the reductions in forward deployed forces and unless the United States is willing to adopt a national policy of defending vital interests only within its own borders, the next

conflict will require transportation of forces from the continental United States to the theater of operations. In other words, power projection is an essential task for the U.S. military. *Army Field Manual 0-3, Operations*, defines force projection operations as either opposed entry or unopposed entry operations.²⁰ In recent conflicts, the United States demonstrated its ability to successfully project military forces with the benefit of a permissive environment. But the United States must also be able to successfully project military forces in a hostile environment where there is a requirement for amphibious forcible entry. It is a very complex military operation and requires the highest degree of coordination, planning, and expertise to ensure success. This complexity combined with the high risk of amphibious operations is the main factor why the Naval Service avoids properly preparing for and conducting forcible entry operations. The DON allowed this critical capability to atrophy over the past fifty years.

The solution to this operational quandary lies in the Naval Service's internal commitment to complete implementation and development of its own strategic vision. The guiding principles of amphibious operations were never meant to be static or non-changing. They must remain dynamic and evolutionary in order to adapt to new anti-access technologies and doctrines developed by future adversaries.²¹ For example, *Joint Publication 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, establishes the conditions for amphibious assault and clearly states the tasks of preparing the amphibious objective area in terms of mine sweeping and clearing, establishing dominance over enemy submarines, establishing air superiority as well as anti-theater/anti-ballistic missile defense.²² The basic tenants of this doctrine comprise a solid foundation that needs to evolve to support today's environment. The Naval Service needs to use available modern assets to augment and improve upon current doctrine.

The Solution Process

The remedy to the problem requires a multi-step process tied directly to a single battle foundation. The single battle includes all tenants of both the blue-water and brown-water operations fused together into one battle space doctrine.²³ The first step the Naval Service must take is to go back and master the doctrine and lessons of the past before it can be successful in the future. The Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps must stop the naval leadership from falsely claiming large-scale amphibious forcible entry capability exists when in actuality it does not. The Naval Service needs a real starting point based on fact not fiction from which to move forward. Additionally, the two Service Chiefs need to ensure the Navy/Marine Corps Team is just that; a team working together in the procurement of assets, instruction of officers in the conduct of forcible entry operations, and maintenance of a truly viable large-scale amphibious forcible entry capability based on a combat proven doctrine as outlined in *Joint Publications 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations, 3-02.1, Joint Doctrine for Landing Force Operations*, and *3-18, Joint Doctrine for Forcible Entry Operations*. This will be the first and greatest step toward the solution.

The second step in the solution process is to seamlessly meld the combat proven doctrine mentioned above with the operational concepts of *Forward from the Sea* and *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*. The drafters of these two operational concepts designed them around the core competencies of the Naval Service. Both concepts capitalize on the inherent strengths of the Naval Service: flexibility, operational maneuverability, speed, surprise, and sustainability. When executed properly, these concepts give a combatant commander the ability to maneuver from the sea and obtain the advantage of surprise as well as the flexibility to find or forcibly make an operationally relevant gap in enemy defenses. He could then

penetrate that gap, rapidly exploit the penetration, and move to operational depth ashore in the enemy's flank or rear to indirectly strike at his center of gravity.²⁴ This is the doctrinal roadmap the U.S. Naval Service should follow and actually implement today and in the future. It should not just talk about it in periodicals such as *Proceedings* and the *Marine Corps Gazette*.

The third step is to integrate technological advancements in such a way as to create a solid doctrinal framework on which to build a better amphibious forcible entry capability. Naval leadership can not view advances in technology as the panacea that will solve the lack of a core large-scale amphibious assault capability. They must have this capability fully in place and then select specific technologies that will enhance the Naval Services' ability to conduct amphibious forcible entry. Currently, they are doing the reverse. The Navy is wasting financial resources purchasing technology without sound rationale as to how it applies to the core competency doctrine. Navy leadership believes advanced technologies will compensate for any lack of functional expertise. The four operational concepts of *Sea Power 21* seek technological advancements that will provide the Naval Service with increased stand off ability removing the need to close with and destroy the enemy threat. This school of thought is operationally flawed since it assumes the nation's adversaries will not advance their anti-access technologies as well. If naval leadership stays on this course, they will relegate the Navy to irrelevancy. Technological advances should focus on augmenting and sharpening amphibious forced entry skills and denying the enemy a viable anti-access capability. Instead, the Navy is attempting to use technology as a cheap substitute for actually conducting amphibious assault operations.

The fourth step requires a change in the U.S. Navy culture and warfighting ethos. The U.S. Navy is the premiere maritime force of the only super power in the world. No other Navy

from any other country can compete with it. The U.S. Navy must start conducting itself as the world's number one Navy and stop retreating from the threats of lesser and weaker powers. Unquestionably, the U.S. Navy dominates the oceans of the world. Now it must demonstrate its dominance in all aspects of sea control not just the popular blue-water aspect. The Navy's leadership must be willing to commit to the brown-water aspect of sea control featuring large-scale amphibious forcible entry. Littoral dominance allows the seizure of ports and airfields to facilitate a greater force build-up or the defeat of enemy key forces and capabilities through operational maneuver from the sea. The objective of the amphibious assault is not merely to secure a beachhead.

Amphibious forces will always seek to avoid enemy strength and under optimal conditions will be able to come ashore uncontested. In many conflicts, circumstances may preclude the avoidance of such resistance. The two most recent conflicts in the Persian Gulf are examples where crude sea denial operations deterred U.S. naval forces from conducting amphibious landings. In a hostile region that possesses hundreds of miles of coastline vulnerable to potential amphibious landings, the United States must be able to land at the time and place of its choosing. If the U.S. Naval Service does not develop counter measures for the basic sea denial efforts currently employed by hostile nations, it may suffer catastrophic results when confronting other enemies in the region who use the same sea denial methods. Therefore, U.S. amphibious forces must be ready to fight through a determined enemy to accomplish the overall purpose of their assault. Simply stated, the U.S. Navy must be a fully engaged warfighter not a part-time war watcher. It needs the ability to operate decisively in the brown-water as well as it does in the blue-water.

The fifth step is to obtain the support of the combatant commanders. Once they believe the Navy is critically relevant to their OPLANs/CONPLANs, combatant commanders will

endorse the use of naval forces. This is the key step to ensure follow through to full completion of all previous solution steps. To meet unified commanders' needs, the Navy must develop adaptive concepts that provide the capability for rapid and sustained amphibious forced entry. Regional plans and exercises must reflect today's force capability focused to defeat an enemy determined to thwart the United States in the littoral using a combination of antiquated and high-tech weaponry.²⁵ If the Navy can accomplish this, it once again becomes relevant as an enabling force to ensure access into a theater and to set the conditions for the introduction of follow-on forces.

A Viable Option Added

Without the changes listed in the five steps above, the current amphibious assault capability will remain insufficient to properly support the regional combatant commanders. Not possessing a large-scale amphibious forcible entry capability eliminates a viable warfighting option. Based on the enemy's effectiveness to conduct economy of force sea denial operations in recent conflicts, most potential adversaries of the United States no longer accept the U.S. amphibious assault capability as a credible threat. This has tremendous ramifications on the war planning efforts of the unified commands. A geographic combatant commander with forcible entry capability compels the enemy to think and fight differently, even if these capabilities are never exercised. As long as the potential for a forcible entry exists, the enemy must guard against that potential which results in fewer enemy assets available to other battles.²⁶ The threat of amphibious operations alone may be sufficient to induce enemies to concentrate forces and make them susceptible to fires, or disperse forces and make them susceptible to destruction. The enemy can never be certain that its response to the amphibious threat will be effective. U.S. commanders can then exploit the enemy's uncertainties.²⁷

CONCLUSION

A self-contained and sea-based amphibious force is the best kind of fire extinguisher in response to military crisis—because of its flexibility, reliability, logistics simplicity, and relative economy.

B.H. Liddell Hart²⁸

B.H. Liddell Hart, the respected military theorist, said the above words at the height of the Cold War in 1960. Very few senior Naval Service officers applied his theory during the Cold War and, sadly for the U.S. military, very few are applying it today. The United States has always been and still remains a maritime nation. It conducts an overwhelming majority of its international trade over the ocean. Unfettered access to trade routes and foreign markets are vital to the nation and its interests. When these are challenged or threatened, the United States must maintain the capability to respond. In order to do so in an anti-access and littoral environment, the nation must possess a viable amphibious forcible entry capability.

The State Department's *Global 2000 Report to the President* stated:

Four-fifths of the world's population live in underdeveloped countries and three-quarters of the population live within 500 kilometers of the sea. Many of these distant Third World regions will become maritime theaters and amphibious forces will serve as the military instrument of choice.²⁹

Further, of the one hundred and thirteen cities in the world considered significant in regard to U.S. interests, eighty are within fifty miles of the sea.³⁰ Not all these cities are located in or adjacent to nations friendly to the United States. These geographical facts alone dictate the U.S. Naval Service maintain a large-scale amphibious forcible entry capability. There is no guarantee that friendly nations will remain so in the future. The speed and flexibility provided by robust amphibious forces prevent so-called allied nations, such as Turkey during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, from blackmailing the U.S. Government for money in exchange for basing and transit privileges. Additionally, endless negotiations with such allies greatly impede any chance for surprise or rapid military response.

World War II and the Korean War clearly demonstrated the decisive ability of large-scale amphibious forcible entry operations at the operational level of war. Unfortunately, the U.S. Naval Service failed to maintain that capability over the past fifty years. Through hollow operational concepts, insufficient efforts, and poor prioritization, the leadership of the U.S. Naval Service has continually kicked down the road or by passed completely the decision to possess a superior littoral warfare naval force. The operational decision to increase standoff distance from potential enemy threats is wrong. Naval leadership is relinquishing the initiative to its adversaries. They wrongfully believe they are forever secure in the blue-water. The enemy will continue to improve its sea denial capabilities such as diesel submarines, mines, and anti-ship missiles to extend into the deep seas. At that point, will the U.S. Navy just remain in homeport? The Naval Service must develop a powerful brown-water Navy. More importantly, it must develop a warfighting mind-set that is flexible, bold, and ruthlessly opportunistic. Senior Admirals must expunge the myopic fixation on the blue-water Mahanian Navy and adopt some of Corbett's ideas regarding the Navy's ability to project and sustain power ashore.

Today and in the near future, the threat of global war is minimal. On the other hand as recent events demonstrate, the opportunity for the United States to become involved in regional conflicts is much more likely. The United States is the sole superpower in an interdependent world. It possesses a Naval Service that is without peer in the world today and for the foreseeable future. In order to support the vital interests and political policies of the nation, the senior leadership of the U.S. Naval Service must ensure that, if called upon, the DON is ready and able to force its will upon the enemies of the United States on the sea as well as on the shore.

NOTES

¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-18, Joint Doctrine for Forcible Entry Operations. (Washington DC: GPO, 2001), p. vii.

² Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations. (Washington DC: GPO, 2001), p. I-1.

³ Milan Vego, Operational Warfare Addendum. (Naval War College, 2002), p. 50.

⁴ Tamara Melia Moser, Damn the Torpedoes: A Short History of U.S. Naval Mine Countermeasures. 1777-1991. (Washington DC: Naval History Center, 1992), p. 78.

⁵ Department of the Navy, White Paper, Forward...from the Sea. (Washington DC: GPO, 1994), p. 1.

⁶ Joint Publication 3-18, p. I-2.

⁷ Adam Siegel, The U.S. Experience in Forcible Entry, Sustained Land Operations, and Sustained Land Combat Since World War II. (Center for Naval Analyses, 1995), p. 4.

⁸ William D. Treadway, Implications of the Change Mandated by "From the Sea". (Fort Leavenworth KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), p. 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁰ D. Clayton James, The Years of MacArthur. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985), p. 465.

¹¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, Instant Lessons of the Iraq War. (Washington, DC: 2003), p. 19.

¹² Scott C. Truver, "Tomorrow's Fleet", Proceedings. (July, 1991), p. 52.

¹³ Timothy O. Fanning, "Almanac of Seapower/Marine Corps", Seapower. (January, 2003), p. 187.

¹⁴ Dwight H. Lyons, "The Mine Threat: Show Stoppers or Speed Bumps?", Center for Naval Analyses. (July, 1993), p. 1.

¹⁵ Department of the Navy, Naval Transformation Roadmap. (Naval War College, 2002), p. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

- ¹⁸ Lyons, p. 1.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 4.
- ²⁰ Department of the Army, Operations. FM 0-3, (Washington, DC 2001), p. 3-12.
- ²¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-02.1, Joint Doctrine for Landing Force Operations. (Washington, DC: GPO, 2001), p. I-2.
- ²² Ibid., p. I-6.
- ²³ Department of the Navy, Expeditionary Operations. MCDP-3. (Washington, DC 1998), p. 6-20.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 6-11.
- ²⁵ Joseph J. Streitz, Forcible Entry – A Hard Nut to Crack. (U.S. Naval War College, 1992), p. 19.
- ²⁶ Joint Publication 3-18, p. I-4.
- ²⁷ Joint Publication 3-02, p. I-2.
- ²⁸ B.H. Liddell Hart, “Marines and Strategy”, Marine Corps Gazette, (July, 1960), p. 17.
- ²⁹ Paul F. Pugh, “Operational Art and Amphibious Warfare”, Marine Corps Gazette, (July, 1991), p. 82.
- ³⁰ Ibid.

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