

“Despite its outstanding record as a combat force in the past war [World War II], the Marine Corps’ far greater contribution to victory was doctrinal [new concepts]: that is, the fact that the basic amphibious doctrines which carried Allied troops over every beachhead of World War II had been largely shaped—often in [the] face of uninterested or doubting military orthodoxy—by U.S. Marines, and mainly between 1922 and 1935.”

—General Alexander A. Vandegrift, USMC

“...American history, recent as well as remote, has fully demonstrated the vital need for the existence of a strong force-in-readiness. Such a force, versatile, fast moving, and hard-hitting,... can prevent the growth of potentially large conflagrations by prompt and vigorous action during their incipient stages. The nation’s shock troops must be the most ready when the nation is least ready... to provide a balanced force-in-readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large scale war....”

-82nd Congress (1952)

Since 1775, the United States Marine Corps has served as an expeditionary force organized and trained to act in the national security interest and carry out the national military strategy. The Marine Corps’ contribution to the national defense has successfully evolved throughout its history by virtue of the ability of Marines to identify and adapt to the nation’s national security needs, often before those needs were commonly recognized. Such innovations as the seizure and defense of advanced Naval bases, amphibious operations, close air support, helicopterborne vertical envelopment tactics, maritime pre-positioning forces (MPFs), and task-organized, combined arms forces consisting of aviation, ground, and logistic elements known as Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs) are prime examples of how the Marine Corps has adapted and evolved as an expeditionary force. The Marine Corps continually reviews its roles and missions in the context of an uncertain world, adapting to the changing security needs of the Nation while preserving those core values and professional capabilities that make Marines succeed in war and peace.

The Nation requires an expeditionary force-in-readiness that can respond to a crisis anywhere in the world. The Marine Corps provides self-sustainable, task organized combined arms forces capable of conducting a full spectrum of operations in support of the joint force commander. Missions might include forcible entry operations, peace enforcement, evacuation of American citizens and embassies, humanitarian assistance or operations to reinforce or complement the capabilities of other Services to provide balanced military forces to the joint force commander. The unique capability of the Marine Corps as a sea service and partner with the United States Navy allows the use of the sea as both a maneuver space and a secure base of operations to conduct operations in the littoral areas of the world. The ability to remain at sea for long periods without the requirement of third nation basing rights makes the Marine Corps the force of choice in emerging crises. Marine Corps forces exploit the Total Force concept, employing

combinations of active duty and reserve Marines to ensure that missions are effectively and efficiently executed.

Naval expeditions comprised of Navy and Marine Corps forces have long been the instruments of choice in our Nation's response to global contingencies. From humanitarian assistance, to peacekeeping, to combat, these forces are normally the first on scene and ready to respond. Naval expeditionary forces combine the *complementary but distinct capabilities* of the Navy and Marine Corps. They provide strategic agility and overseas presence without infringing on the sovereignty of other nations and simultaneously enable enhanced force protection. They provide a power projection capability that can be tailored to meet a wide range of crises from a major theater war to military operations other than war (MOOTW). Naval expeditionary forces can be task-organized to provide an array of options to the National Command Authorities and combatant commanders in dealing with a particular situation. Naval expeditionary forces provide the United States the unique capability to conduct and sustain operations from the sea—including continuous forward presence and self-sustainment—in support of our national interests without reliance on pre-positioning ashore, foreign basing or the granting of overflight rights.

HISTORICAL ROLE

Throughout its history, the Marine Corps has lead in developing innovative and successful military concepts. These concepts have helped the Marines and their sister Services to win the Nation's battles and wars. The Marine Corps success in developing into the Nation's premier expeditionary force has its roots in decades of innovative thought, bold experiments, and constant training.

The Marine Corps was established in 1775 to provide landing forces (LFs) for Navy ships. Throughout its first 150 years of existence the Marine Corps provided Marines for ships detachments and temporary battalions and brigades formed from ships detachments and Marine Barracks to provide LFs to the fleet during naval expeditions. These forces conducted expeditionary operations throughout the world such as—

- Seizing New Providence in the Bahamas from the British (1776).
- Raising the United States flag over a foreign city for the first time when Lieutenant O'Bannon and eight Marines, leading a rag-tag force of Arabs and mercenaries, captured the Tripolitan city of Derna (1805).
- Accompanying Commodore Perry as he opened Japan to trade with the world (1854).