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Operational Maneuver from the Sea

In the White Papers **. . .** ***From the Sea*** and ***Forward . . . From the Sea***, the Navy and Marine Corps presented a common vision for a future in which skillfully handled naval forces would enable the United States to exert its influence in the littoral regions of the world. Building upon the foundation laid by those papers, ***Operational Maneuver from the Sea*** deals explicitly with the full spectrum of challenges that we will have to face, the dangers and opportunities created by new technologies, and the very exciting prospect of adapting the tradition of maneuver warfare, not merely to amphibious operations, but to all aspects of warfare in, and around, coastal waters.

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Operational Maneuver From the Sea

A CONCEPT FOR THE PROJECTION OF NAVAL POWER ASHORE

In the white papers, " . . . From the Sea" and "Forward . . . From the Sea," the Secretary of the Navy, with the Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps, began the development of a new approach to naval operations. This approach places unprecedented emphasis on littoral areas, requires more intimate cooperation between forces afloat and forces ashore, introduces the concept of the naval expeditionary force, and provides the foundation for Operational Maneuver from the Sea.

Like its predecessor, the approach to amphibious warfare developed at Quantico during the 1930s, Operational Maneuver from the Sea is a response to both danger and opportunity. The danger, summarized by the phrase "chaos in the littorals," consists of a world characterized by the clash of the myriad forces of national aspiration, religious intolerance, and ethnic hatred. The opportunity comes from significant enhancements in information management, battlefield mobility, and the lethality of conventional weapons.

These two changes to the operational environment, a new series of threats and enhanced tactical capabilities, are significant ones. While they change neither the nature of war nor our fundamental doctrine of maneuver warfare, "chaos in the littorals" and the military applications of new technologies will have a profound effect on where we fight, who we fight, and how we fight. This, in turn, will require considerable alterations in the education of leaders, the organization and equipment of units, and the selection and training of Marines.The details of these alterations are, as yet, unknown. Refocusing the Marine Corps to meet the needs of the next century will, like all successful military innovation, involve a great deal of debate and experimentation. Many ideas will be put forward, discussed, and put to the test in war games, field trials, exer-

cises, and actual operations. And, if history is any guide, the conclusions we draw from this process may well bear little resemblance to the assumptions with which we started.

The purpose of this concept paper is to begin this process of proposal, debate, and experimentation. Building on the foundation laid by " . . . From the Sea" and "Forward . . . From the Sea," it provides our vision of what Operational Maneuver from the Sea is and what naval forces of the near future should be able to do. In doing this, it provides a framework for the actions of many people, Marines, Sailors, civilian employees, and contractors whose work will turn the concept of Operational Maneuver from the Sea into the reality of forces capable of winning decisive victories in littoral areas.

"CHAOS IN THE LITTORALS"
- Challenge and Opportunity

In the future, the United States is likely to face a number of very different threats to its security, interests, and way of life. Many of these will be associated with the littorals, those areas characterized by great cities, well-populated coasts, and the intersection of trade routes where land and sea meet. While representing a relatively small portion of the world's surface, littorals provide homes to over three-quarters of the world's population, locations for over 80 percent of the world's capital cities, and nearly all of the marketplaces for international trade. Because of this, littorals are also the place where most of the world's important conflicts are likely to occur.

Close association with the littorals is one of the few things that conflicts of the near future are likely to have in common. In all other respects—goals, organizations, armament, and tactics—the warfare of the next 20 years will be distinguished by its great variety. For that reason, it is imperative that the Marine Corps resist the temptation to prepare for only one type of conflict. To focus on one threat, greatly increases the danger that we will be surprised, and perhaps defeated, by another.

To influence events overseas, America requires a credible, forwardly deployable, power projection capability. In the absence of an adjacent land

base, a sustainable forcible entry capability that is independent of forward staging bases, friendly borders, overflight rights, and other politically dependent support can come only from the sea. The chaos of the future requires that we maintain the capability to project power ashore against all forces of resistance, ranging from overcoming devastated infrastructure to assisting a friendly people in need of disaster relief to countering the entire spectrum of armed threats.

The Breakdown of Order

The most obvious challenge faced by the United States and its Marine Corps is the worldwide breakdown of order. From the former Soviet Union to the former Yugoslavia, from the Atlas Mountains of North Africa to the Andes of South America, and from the streets of Washington, D.C. to the streets of Algiers, governments are losing their monopoly on organized violence. The result, as Marines have seen in Somalia, Lebanon, and Los Angeles, will be chaotic situations in which ethnic groups, street gangs, clans, and other non-state actors wage the war of "all against all."

In many parts of the world, this trend towards the breakdown of order is likely to continue. Loyalty will shift, as it has for some time, from states to more intimate groupings, and from organizations that can keep the peace to entities that do a far better job at providing people with a sense of purpose and community. The long-term implications of this realignment of allegiances is hard to gauge. In the immediate future, however,

A World of "Fighters"

Though there is much war in the news, there is very little mention of "soldiers," those who belong to the regularly constituted armed forces of the established states. Instead, most of the fighting is done by people in the much broader catagory of "fighters." At a time when most states are reluctant to risk casualties among their well organized and well paid regular forces, there seems to be no shortage of men who are willing to pick up a weapon and, defend the cause of their ethnic group, religion, clan, or tribe usually as an unpaid volunteer.

we can be sure of more of the same sort of chaos—famine, terrorism, crime—that we see in our newspapers every day.

One particularly frightening possibility is the use of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors. States that fail to command the loyalty of significant portions of their population will have difficulty controlling their stockpiles of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

Non-state actors that cannot access traditional means of mass destruction may contemplate such equally destructive expedients as the blowing up of dams and the poisoning of water supplies. Even without weapons of mass destruction, non-state actors wield considerable destructive power. They can disrupt economies to the point of famine and societies to the point of lawlessness.

Regional Powers

The breakdown of order is not a universal phenomenon. Many areas of the world will continue to be dominated by states whose armed forces, while not always armed with the most advanced weaponry, are still formidable opponents. Regional powers that acquire, as many are likely to, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction will become even more powerful.

Regional powers are not necessarily hostile. Indeed, much of America's foreign policy is based upon alliances with regional powers. Nonetheless, a change of regime, a shift in the international balance of power, or even the perception of opportunity can turn a neutral or even friendly regional power into a hostile one. As a result, the Armed Forces in general, and the naval services in particular, must be able to deal not only with those regional powers that are currently at odds with the United States, but also with regional powers that alone or in combination might pose a threat in the future.

The Next Superpower

At present, the United States is the only superpower in the world. If history is any guide, this enviable position is unlikely to be permanent.

At some time in the future, another superpower—whether an existing state, a new state, or an alliance of states—could rise up.

It is unlikely that this new superpower will be a mirror image of the United States. Nonetheless, the advantages so evident in our recent conflicts with regional powers—superior numbers, logistics, wealth, and technology—are likely to be matched by similar advantages in the hands of our rival. It is even possible that the new superpower will possess more of the basic building blocks of military power than we will. In such a situation, the outcome will depend, to a degree unprecedented in recent history, upon the skill with which we fight.

Whether our enemy is a superpower as large and as rich as we are, or a regional power armed with second-hand weapons, or a political entity that has neither a capital city nor coinage, the wars of the near future share a number of important characteristics. Many of these derive from the wide availability of a variety of weapons that are far more lethal than the weapons used for most of the 20th century. These weapons include existing precision-guided munitions; non-line of sight gunner-in-the-loop weapons such as the fiber-optic guided missile; and improved level-of-effort munitions rockets/missiles, artillery, and mortars.

In war against non-state actors, where the proximity of innocents is often the enemy's greatest advantage, and in operations other than war, more

The Rapid Rise of Dominant Powers

In 1480, Spain was a collection of little kingdoms, as eager to fight each other as to defend their common interests. Twenty years later, Spain held title to half the globe. In 1850, Germany was little more than a geographical expression, a no-man's land between the territory of the great powers. By 1871, Germany was the dominant force in Europe. In 1935, with no armed forces to speak of and an economy in decline, the United States wanted nothing more than for the world to leave it alone. Within ten years, flush with victory, economically prosperous, and in sole possession of the atomic bomb, the United States became the single most powerful nation on earth.

precise weapons will allow a significantly greater degree of discrimination. A guided missile sent through a window, an armed robot turning a corner, and a directed energy weapon covering an exit will often be useful in situations where the delivery of tons of high explosive would be counter-productive.

In a war against regional powers, more precise weapons, whether precision-guided or level-of-effort, will allow greater effect on the target for far fewer rounds. This translates into additional shipping space available for landing force requirements, reductions in overland transport, and reductions in on-shore storage. The reduced logistics footprint of landing forces armed with more precise weapons will also translate into a significant reduction in the time needed for ship-to-objective and shore-to-ship maneuver.

In a war against a new superpower, new technologies will allow us to compete on equal terms. The infrastructure of 20th century combat power—large dumps of fuel and ammunition, ships waiting for days to unload their cargoes, and crowded assembly areas—will make lucrative targets for the weapons of the 21st century. At the same time, landing forces armed with the C^2, tactical mobility, and fire support capabilities of the present will be hard pressed to decisively engage an enemy who is likely to combine the destructive capability of a conventional force with the elusiveness of a guerrilla.

New technologies, whether organic or in support, will give small units unprecedented combat power. Since small units are easier to move than large ones, these new technologies will permit high tempo operations in and between a wide variety of environments. At the same time, new weapons, which will inevitably be wielded by at least some of our enemies, require that our units be hard to detect, far-ranging, and fast-moving.

RESPONDING
- To the Challenge

There is no single answer to the many challenges that will present themselves in the future, naval forces will have to adapt as they have done throughout history to changing circumstances. For that reason, it is important that naval forces avoid a narrow definition of their capabilities. At the same time, the fact that the future is uncertain is no excuse for failing to make adequate preparations.

The centerpiece of our preparations for the future is an approach to expeditionary, littoral, and amphibious warfare known as Operational Maneuver from the Sea. While Operational Maneuver from the Sea will not define all Navy/Marine operations, the attitudes, skills, techniques and equipment associated with it will provide naval forces with a solid foundation for future improvisation.

The heart of Operational Maneuver from the Sea is the maneuver of naval forces at the operational level, a bold bid for victory that aims at exploiting a significant enemy weakness in order to deal a decisive blow. Mere movement, which may lead to indecisive results or even be counterproductive, does not qualify as operational maneuver. That is to say, operational maneuver should be directed against an enemy center of gravity—something that is *essential* to the enemy's ability to effectively continue the struggle.

Decisive Action

Decisive action is that which leads directly to the imposition of our will upon the enemy. In situations where a great deal is at stake, this will often require depriving the enemy of all means of effective resistance. Where less is at stake, depriving the enemy of a well-defined portion of his armed forces, territory, revenue, alliance structure, or prestige may be sufficient. Thus, action that is decisive in a strictly limited conflict, such as the taking of the Falkland Islands by British forces during the South Atlantic War of 1982, might not be decisive in a war, such as the Second World War, where the belligerents were fighting for critical national interests.

The center of gravity may be a physical object (a military force, a city, a region) or a source of supplies or money. More often than not, the center of gravity will be an intangible, essential element of the political and moral forces that keep our enemies in the fight against us. The purpose of the legitimate use of force, is to convince our enemies that it is unwise and, in the final analysis, wrong to make war against us.

The search for decisive effect is common to all forms of operational maneuver, whether on land, at sea, or in the littorals where land and sea meet. What distinguishes Operational Maneuver from the Sea from all other species of operational maneuver is the extensive use of the sea as a means of gaining advantage, an avenue for friendly movement that is simultaneously a barrier to the enemy and a means of avoiding disadvantageous engagements. This aspect of Operational Maneuver from the Sea may make use of, but is not limited to, such techniques as sea-based logistics, sea-based fire support and the use of the sea as a medium for tactical and operational movement.

For most of the 20th century, the usefulness of sea-based logistics was limited by the voracious appetite of modern landing forces for such items as fuel, large caliber ammunition, and aviation ordnance. As a result, the options available to landing forces were greatly reduced by the need to establish, protect, and make use of supply dumps. Concerted efforts were delayed and opportunities for decisive action missed while the necessary supplies accumulated on shore.

In the near future, improvements in the precision of long-range weapons, greater reliance on sea-based fire support, and, quite possibly, a decrease in the fuel requirements of military land vehicles promise to eliminate, or at least greatly reduce, the need to establish supply facilities ashore. As a result, the logistics tail of landing forces will be smaller, ship-to-shore movement will take less time, and what were previously known as "subsequent operations ashore" will be able to start without the traditional "build up phase." In other words, landing forces will move directly from their ships to their objectives, whether those objectives are located on the shoreline or far inland.

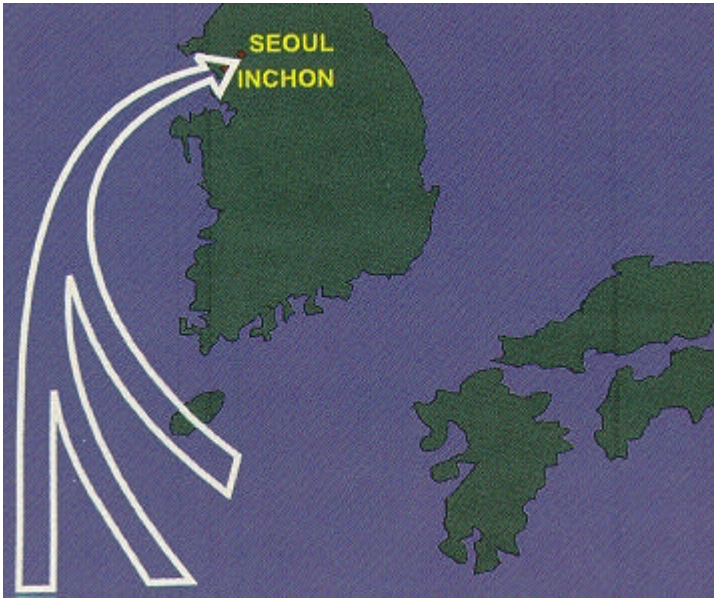
The significant reduction of logistics infrastructure ashore will also facilitate the rapid re-embarkation of the landing force. This will enable the

landing force to avoid combat offered on unfavorable terms, to avoid obstacles that stand in the way of decisive action, and to make use of the inevitably perishable advantage of surprise. In effect, powerful landing forces will be able to do what had hitherto been the exclusive province of lightly armed landing parties.

When combined with a command and control system oriented towards rapid decision-making at all levels of command, the additional speed and flexibility offered by these new techniques translates into a high tempo of operations. Vulnerabilities can be exploited before they are reduced, opportunities seized before the they vanish, and traps sprung before they are discovered. In short, we will be able to act so quickly that the enemy will not be able to react effectively until it is too late.

OMFTS: A Classic from the Past

The capture of Seoul in 1950 was a classic example of an Operational Maneuver from the Sea. It was a completely focused operation, unified under a single commander, that flowed coherently from San Diego, Sasebo, and Pusan, through an amphibious power projection at Inchon, to key objectives well inland.



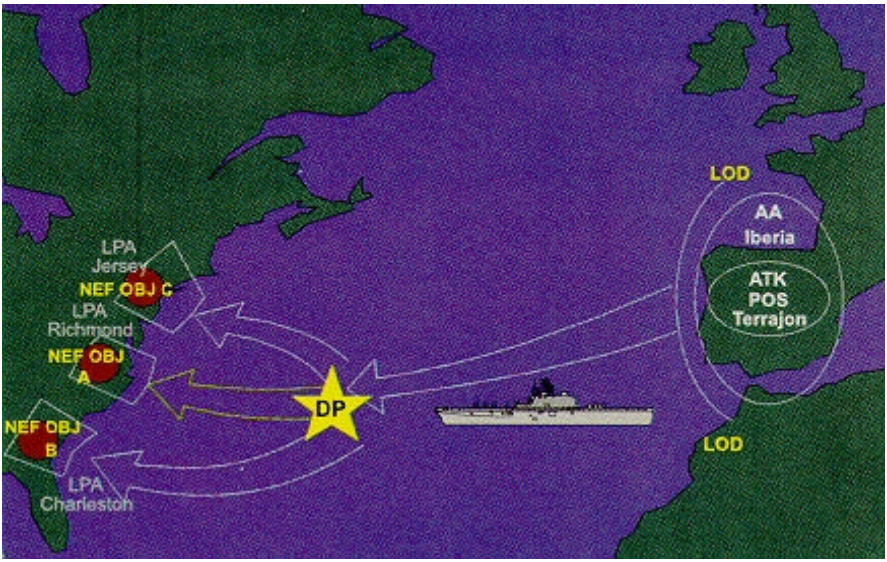
The Seoul operation was focused on a critical North Korean vulnerability, the lines of support (and withdrawal) through the Han River Valley at Seoul. It maintained that focus and with it an unmatched tempo of aggressive action. As a result, it was crushingly successful, leading to the destruction of the North Korean Army and the liberation of South Korea.

If the operation had lost its focus, however, and been planned and executed as merely an amphibious lodgment at Inchon, it would have generated only an operationally insignificant tactical "victory".

OMFTS: A Path to the Future

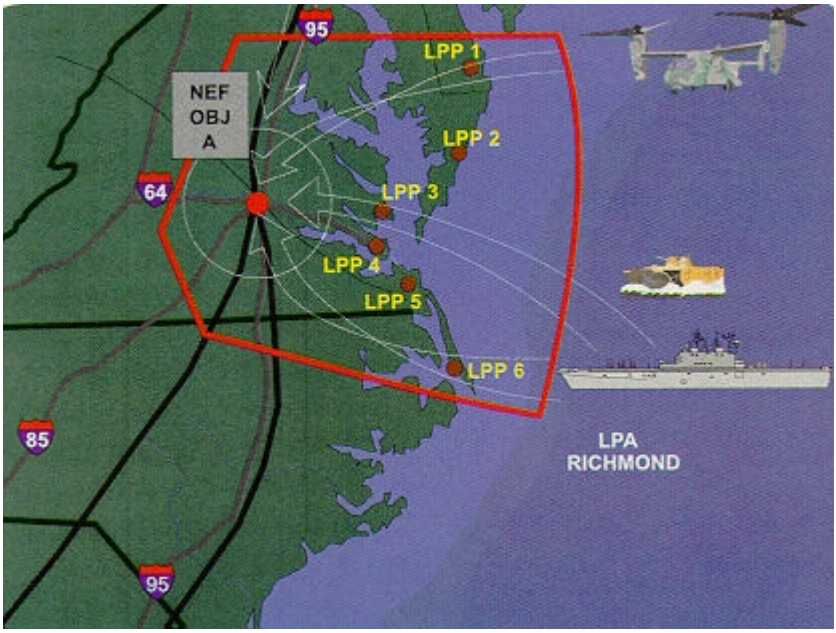
The sea offers, strategic, operational, and tactical mobility to those who control it. For most of the 20th century, however, the options created by control of the sea have been severely constrained by the requirements to transition to war on land. In 1944, for example, Anglo-American control of the seas was sufficient to permit landings anywhere along the extensive Atlantic coast of France. However, the requirements to ferry a massive, relatively immobile force ashore, and then provide the support necessary to create maneuverability within that force, restricted the choice of landing areas to those large beaches and open drop zones that could easily be supported from Great Britain. Thus, the landings could only take place on selected portions of the northwest coast of France.

In the future, a naval expeditionary force will be able to make full use of the options provided by control of the sea. A naval expeditionary force attacking from Spain, for example, would have the ability to fight a campaign on the western side of the Atlantic without having to establish a base at some intermediate point. The ability to operate at long distance, would give a force trained and equipped for future Operational Maneuver from the Sea the freedom to land powerful forces through nearly any point along the east coast of the North American continent.



The forces in this example have been given the option of choosing any one of three Littoral Penetration Areas (LPA). In this case, intelligence pulls the operation toward LPA Richmond, this allows LPA Charleston or LPA Jersey to be used for deception operations if the commander chooses. The enemy is forced to attempt to be strong everywhere until the moment when he is sure that our main landing force has landed.

As the attack on Richmond (NEF Objective A) relentlessly continues, advance operations and real-time reconnaissance identify highly exploitable Littoral Penetration Points (LPP) through which the attacking forces swarm by air and surface means to overwhelm enemy defenses. The attack progresses from ship to objective with no large or lengthy buildup on the initial beaches. (In many cases, the assaulting Marines will simply pass through the penetration points, leaving no residual forces at all.) An MPF landing reinforces this attack, while other Marines are the seaward flank for an overland southern advance of combined Army, Air Force, and allied forces.

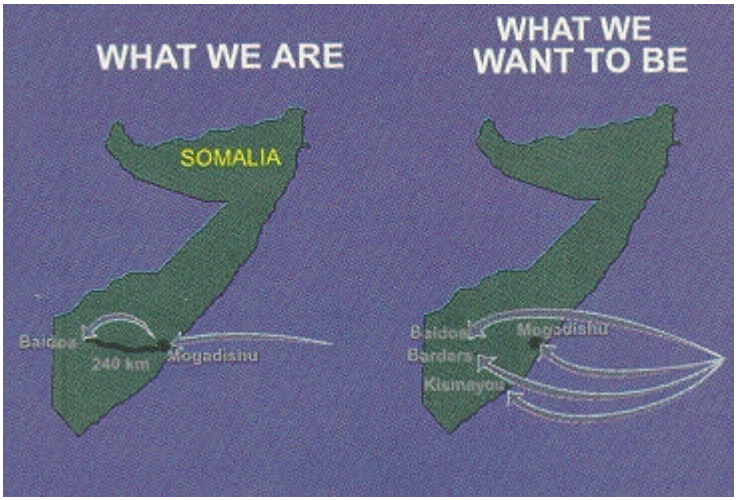


Maneuver Warfare to. . .

. . . Maneuver Welfare

Though their definitive task is always to prepare for and fight the nation's wars, deployed naval forces are often called upon to do such things as evacuate noncombatants, assist disaster victims, and protect the delivery of relief supplies. Like today's Navy-Marine team, naval expeditionary forces of the future will not be designed specifically for such tasks. Nonetheless, future naval expeditionary forces will, thanks to the equipment and training associated with Operational Maneuver from the Sea, have a significantly enhanced ability to conduct operations other than war.

Seabasing will free Marines from the need to set up facilities ashore prior to devoting their full energies to relief efforts. Improvements in ship-to-objective mobility will allow help to be delivered directly to areas where it is needed most, including places far from ports and airfields. The highly accurate and rapidly responsive weapons on board the ships of the naval expeditionary force—weapons that can be quickly employed to support Marines on the ground—will allow a landing party to present a less-threatening appearance while not depriving it of a powerful means of protection.



The value of these capabilities can be seen by comparing what happened in the 1992 relief effort in Somalia with what could have been done by a naval expeditionary force trained and equipped for future Operational Maneuver from the Sea. During the 1992 relief effort, the MAGTF could not proceed inland to its objective until it had established a lodgment to support and sustain the advance of convoys and limited range helicopters.

For the next generation of naval power projection forces, the 240 kilometers that separate Baidoa from Mogadishu and the shoreline would have been less of an obstacle. Indeed, the landing of a force in Mogadishu (ship-to-coastal objective) and a detachment at Baidoa (ship-to-inland objective) could be carried out simultaneously, speeding relief to those in need and depriving potentially hostile forces of the ability to prepare and effectively react.

SETTING THE COURSE
- TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Operational Maneuver from the Sea requires that we focus our efforts on those areas which afford us the greatest return. Specifically, we must improve our operations, modernize our capabilities, and strengthen our intellectual underpinnings.

Directions

OMFTS requires significant changes in the way we are organized, in the way we move between the sea and the objective, and the way we deal with the wide variety of missions we will be called upon to support.

Organization. OMFTS treats the littoral as a single environment in which the cooperation of units on land, at sea, and in the air is based on a shared vision of what must be done, intimate knowledge of the capabilities and weaknesses of each type of unit, and an *esprit de corps* that transcends service identity or occupational specialty. This can only be achieved if the naval expeditionary force is organized and trained as a highly cohesive team.

Movement Between Land and Sea. OMFTS requires rapid movement, not merely from ship to shore, but from ship to objectives that may be miles away from blue water and from inland positions back to offshore vessels. While some operations may require the establishment of bases ashore, the practice of separating ship-to-shore movement from the tactical and operational maneuver of units ashore will be replaced by maneuvers in which units move, without interruption, from ships at sea to their inland objectives.

The Spectrum of Conflict. In contrast to previous approaches to amphibious warfare, OMFTS is not limited to the high end of the spectrum of conflict. Indeed, in a world where war will be made in many different ways, the very notion of "conventional" warfare is likely to fall out of use. For that reason, the techniques of OMFTS must be of use in a wide variety of situations, ranging from humanitarian relief to a high-stakes struggle against a rising superpower.

Capabilities

Operational Maneuver from the Sea will require us to overcome challenges in the areas of battlefield mobility, intelligence, command and control, fire support, aviation, mine countermeasures, and sustainment. In evolving OMFTS, we will meet these challenges and find solutions using both technology and new approaches in doctrine, organization,
Mobility. To move units from ships lying over the horizon to objectives lying far from the shore, we will require the capability to cross great distances, reduce the limitations imposed by terrain and weather, and, most importantly, to seamlessly transition from maneuvering at sea to maneuvering ashore and vice-versa.

Intelligence. The high tempo of operations essential to successful OMFTS requires that intelligence be provided to decision makers with a minimum of delay. Technology that permits the rapid dissemination of intelligence products will play an important role in this effort. However, the key to effective intelligence support of OMFTS, lies in the orientation of intelligence specialists. In particular, intelligence specialists must be capable of rapidly making educated judgments about what the enemy is likely to do.

Command and Control. The command and control system best suited to OMFTS will be very different from those developed to deal with previous approaches to amphibious warfare. Techniques previously employed to compensate for the inability of fire support units to see the battlefield will give way to techniques that exploit the fact that combatant units will be better informed than ever before. Communications systems designed to provide a few headquarters with an overall view of the situation will have to be replaced by those that provide units with control over the information they need. The equipment to make this transition from communications nets to information networks has already been developed. Making this new technology work will require fundamental changes to the skills and attitudes possessed by Marines involved with the command and control system. The key to this capability lies more in the realm of education and doctrine than it does in the realm of hardware.

Fires. Successful execution of OMFTS will drive changes in fire support. To improve our mobility ashore, we will increasingly take advantage of sea-based fires and seek shore-based fire support systems with improved tactical mobility. To support rapidly maneuvering forces, we must streamline our fire support coordination procedures to improve respon-

siveness. To provide effective fires, forces afloat and ashore require the ability to deliver fires with increased range and improved accuracy and lethality. Finally, we will use fires to exploit maneuver just as we use maneuver to exploit the effects of fires.

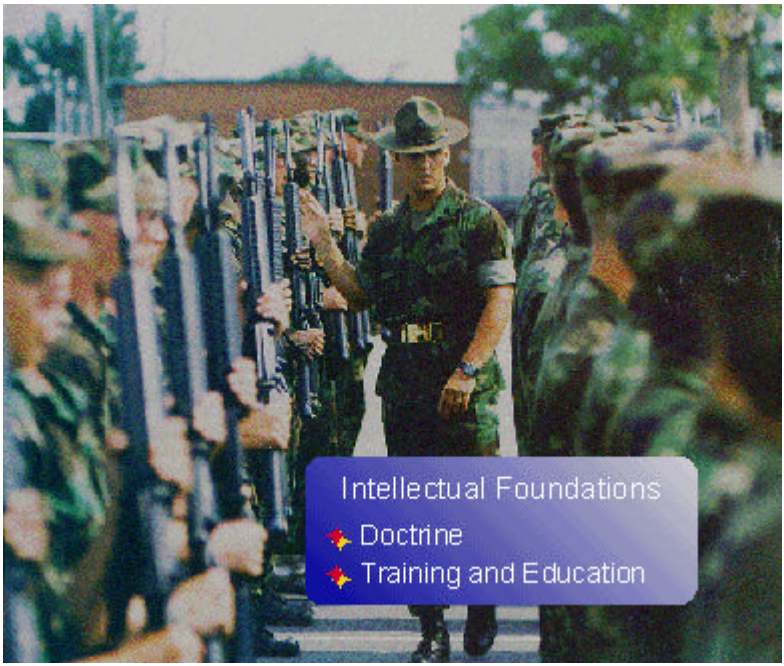
Aviation. Our combat aircraft must be capable of operating from a variety of ships and austere bases ashore, perform a variety of missions, and land on a wide variety of surfaces. Our aviation units must be organized, trained, and employed as integral parts of a naval expeditionary force.

Mine Countermeasures. Because of their relative low cost and pervasiveness, mines have become a cheap means of limiting the mobility of ships and landing craft in the contested littoral regions. For that reason, we must develop and enhance our counter-mine/obstacle reconnaissance, mine marking and clearing capabilities, precision navigation, and in-stride breaching to support maneuver at sea, ashore, and during the transition from sea to land.

Combat Service Support (CSS). The requirement to sustain fast-moving, powerful, combined arms forces conducting ship-to-objective maneuver will strain the best logistics system. Speed and mobility comparable to the assault forces' will be necessary for CSS elements responding to the dynamic demands of OMFTS. CSS flow must be efficient, secure, and timely, with the option to remain sea-based or to buildup support areas ashore. Delivery means and material handling demands are great, as is the need for a command and control system capable of rapidly communicating requirements and flexibly managing "right time, right place" support.

Foundations

Doctrine. The doctrine of maneuver warfare is fully compatible with the concept of Operational Maneuver from the Sea. On the other hand, many of the techniques and procedures currently used by Fleet and Fleet Marine Force units must be replaced by techniques that are more in accord with OMFTS. This is particularly true in the areas of fire support, logistics, command and control, and ship-to-objective maneuver.



Training and Education. The effective employment of OMFTS will necessitate changes in Marine Corps training and education programs. The operational environment for OMFTS is characterized by a dynamic, fluid situation. In such a chaotic situation, we require leaders and staffs who can tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty and make rapid decisions under stress. Producing leaders, from the small unit level to the MAGTF commander, who have the *experience* to judge what needs to be done and *know how* to do it can be accomplished only with an extensive amount of training and exposure to operational problems. We must have leaders who can operate effectively in spite of risks and uncertainty; we can develop these leaders by improving their capacity to identify patterns, seek and select critical information, and make decisions quickly on an intuitive basis. This intuitive-based decisionmaking cycle will be enhanced by extensive investments in education, wargaming and combat simulation activities, and battlefield visualization techniques. These investments will produce leaders who can make informed judgments, take decisive action, and thus ensure that OMFTS can be successfully executed.

CONCLUSION
- THE FUTURE of Naval Warfare

Just as a littoral is formed by the meeting of land and sea, Operational Maneuver from the Sea is a marriage between maneuver warfare and naval warfare. From maneuver warfare comes an understanding of the dynamic nature of conflict, the imperative of decisive objectives, and the requirement for skillful operations executed at a high tempo. From naval warfare are derived a deep appreciation for the strategic level of war, the advantages inherent in sea-borne movement, and the flexibility provided by sea-based logistics. Operational Maneuver from the Sea will couple doctrine with technological advances in speed, mobility, fire support, communications, and navigation to seamlessly and rapidly identify and exploit enemy weaknesses across the entire spectrum of conflict. When properly united, these elements of Operational Maneuver from the Sea provide the United States with a naval expeditionary force that, while deployed unobtrusively in international waters, is instantly ready to help any friend, defeat any foe, and convince potential enemies of the wisdom of keeping the peace.