



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
 MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEVELOPMENT COMMAND
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
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INITIAL OBSERVATIONS REPORT

Enduring Freedom Combat Assessment

The Marine Corps' capstone concept of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare is built on our core competencies and prepares the Marine Corps to meet the challenges of 21st Century conflicts and crises. The foundational capabilities of Joint and Multi-national Enabling, Strategic Agility, Operational Reach, Tactical Flexibility, and Support and Sustainment have all been demonstrated in some form during our ongoing participation in Operation Enduring Freedom. The seizure of Forward Operating Base Rhino by Marines launched from three separate staging areas and from Amphibious Ready Group shipping over 400 miles away was one of the more dramatic displays of expeditionary force projection. Yet, there were also many less ostentatious but equally important manifestations of these capabilities, such as the successful, repeated re-organization of units and detachments to comply with operational restrictions. The common denominator in all of these is an expeditionary mindset that pervades all aspects of our training, organizing, planning, and execution.

On September 11th, Marine units were forward deployed in multiple locations around the globe, conducting operations as they normally do in execution of our cooperative engagement strategy. With combat-ready MEU(SOC)s readily available and the core of TF-58 staff in Egypt, it was not surprising that the force of choice was a Marine Corps that is capable of bringing all these globally dispersed units together quickly.

In November, the Commandant tasked MCCDC to establish an organization that would capture the lessons learned from our participation in Operation Enduring Freedom and get them into the hands of those who need them, both units getting ready to deploy and the Headquarters Marine Corps, MCCDC, and other staffs whose mission it is to support them. The Enduring Freedom Combat Assessment Team's (EFCAT) mission is to collect, process, and disseminate information to help the Commandant to better execute his Title X responsibilities to organize, train, and equip America's premier force in readiness.

We are still collecting a great deal of information that must be processed and analyzed. However, this report provides some preliminary observations on the Marine Corps' experience in Operation Enduring Freedom and sets the stage for follow-on reports that will more fully develop these issues. As we continue to assemble information, the EFCAT staff will pass on more detailed information to those who are working on resolving the issues identified in our effort.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Hanson, Jr."

Edward Hanson, Jr.
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MAJOR CHALLENGES

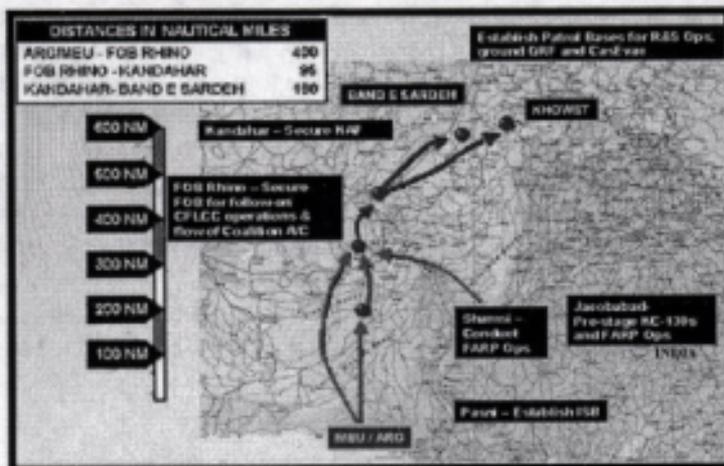
By most standards, OEF was a success for the Marine Corps. Marine forces accomplished every mission assigned to them with resourcefulness and professionalism, while rising to a new level of joint cooperation. During its operations in Afghanistan, the Marine Corps established an important relationship with Special Operations Forces (SOF) that promises to carry forward into the future. OEF also marked the first time a Marine Corps general commanded a naval task force during wartime. The Corps' accomplishments during OEF confirmed the relevance of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare (EMW) and the soundness of the Marine Corps' approach to DoD's transformation initiatives. Casualties, although tragic, were fewer than they might have been.

Yet, despite these measures of success, there were many areas where the Marine Corps' experience highlighted areas for improvement. In order to put the lessons learned in their proper context, it is necessary to understand the unique characteristics and challenges of the conflict.

More than any operation in recent history, OEF presented unprecedented challenges to the commanders, intelligence collectors, operational planners, logisticians, communicators, and other operating forces who participated. Operational planning and execution had to be conducted for near-simultaneous, non-contiguous operations requiring precise coordination of different types of units and shared weapons systems, across widely distributed locations by numerous joint and interagency organizations. MARCENT deployed to the theater to be closer to the other component commanders, who were themselves remote from the CINC, who was in Tampa, Florida.

Operations were conducted in a land-locked country with poor infrastructure, alongside national and sub-national coalition partners who were often indistinguishable from an elusive enemy who avoided many of the trappings and practices of conventional armies. In addition, political sensitivities and other factors resulted in other restrictions that complicated the mission for those in theater. These characteristics of OEF led to many challenges for the Marine Corps forces. Three of the more significant were distance, a force cap, and operational risk.

THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE



Afghanistan's harsh climate, high altitudes, and vast, dusty, rugged terrain, exacerbated the challenge of simple geographic distance presented by its land-locked isolation. The country's poor infrastructure, especially the dearth of good airfields, presented a significant problem to widely dispersed ground units wholly dependent on aerial resupply and support. The tyranny of distance consumed lift resources and reduced the speed of force build-up and resupply. Had the operation been more intense and continuous, this could have resulted in the loss of operational momentum. Additionally, the distance between suitable aviation operating bases naturally resulted in the creation of small enclaves of U.S. and coalition forces during buildup phases and operational pauses. In addition to

potentially complicating coordination of supporting fires, these forward operating bases (FOBs) generated force protection challenges that could have been exploited by another enemy.

The exceptional distances between the U.S. forces' fixed wing air bases and the ground forces they supported and targets they serviced extended fixed wing operations well beyond their normal operating limits. One result was a dramatic increase in the value of refueling aircraft. Hence, the Marine KC-130s proved a linchpin for fixed wing operations as well as supporting ground operations with fuel and supplies.

Fixed and rotary wing aircraft filled a critical gap in fire support caused by the absence of artillery and most other ground supporting fires. Had the surrounding countries not opened their airspace and, more importantly, their air bases, to U.S. fixed wing support aircraft, it would have made it exceptionally difficult—even problematic—to provide the level of support that was required to achieve the success that U.S. Forces achieved in OEF. Even if the U.S. were granted overflight permission, without nearby air bases, carrier-based air and seabased organic MEU(SOC) AV-8B Harriers, would be practically the only responsive close air support for U.S. ground forces.

Countervailing these challenges, the Marine Corps had several advantages over Army forces that flowed in later. One of these was that the forward deployed MEU(SOC)s were on the scene and ready to respond much sooner, providing the ability to capitalize on emerging intelligence before the enemy could prepare extensive defenses. Another advantage provided by Marine forces was their ability to task organize down to the smallest unit level and still remain a viable fighting force,

BACKGROUND

On November 28, 2001, the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed the Commanding General of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) to establish an organization to document, collect data, and analyze Marine efforts in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in order to enhance his ability to execute his Title X responsibilities. The members of this group, called the Enduring Freedom Combat Assessment Team (EFCAT), were drawn from organizations throughout the Marine Corps and were divided into two smaller teams. The MARCENT Combat Assessment Team (MCAT) was based in theater to conduct on-site interviews, collect data, perform preliminary assessments, and send information back to MCCDC. There in Quantico, it would be appropriately processed and published by approximately 40 Marines and contractors who formed the Support, Collection, Assessment, and Reporting (SCAR) Team.

While the MCAT gathered information directly from those in OEF, the SCAR Team built classified and unclassified archiving systems for the data, and began to collect information from other Services collection efforts, various commands' web sites, and other sources. When urgent requirements were reported by the MCAT or submitted through other channels, the SCAR Team coordinated with Marine Corps Systems Command and MCCDC's Warfighting Development and Integration Directorate (WDID) to ensure that the requests were input to the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Force Development System (EFDS) or the responsible Advocate was provided appropriate information to take any necessary immediate action.

To date, the EFCAT has identified over 250 issues that demand near, mid, or long-term solutions. During May and June, 2002, the EFCAT is scheduling meetings with each of the Advocates, as well as WDID, members of the DOTMLPF (formerly DOTES) Working Group, and other interested agencies, to brief the issues in detail, solicit feedback on issue priority, and to turn over the assessment details as they currently stand. However, because many of the issues are still "immature," the EFCAT will continue to support the Advocates by gathering additional supporting data and exploiting the information already in its archives as it prepares more detailed reports on USMC operations in OEF. In addition, the SCAR Team is developing a web site that will give the Advocates access to the EFCAT's dynamic reports and supporting documentation.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The EFCAT divided OEF topical areas into Cross-cutting issues and Advocate Specific issues. This "Initial Observations Report" covers Marine Corps activities through the end of Operation Anaconda and provides an overview of EFCAT issues. After a discussion of the unique character and challenges of the OEF conflict, the Report provides a short report on several major issues, followed by shorter synopses of other important subjects in each of the major topical areas. The appendices contain a more complete listing of the issue titles identified within each Advocate area.

Because of the ongoing nature of the War on Terrorism, this report captures only a top-level "snapshot" of some current issues. As the conflict unfolds and additional feedback and data are collected, the EFCAT will publish follow-on reports with more detailed assessments on these and other emerging issues.

Although this report often refers to operational interaction among USMC units and other commands, it is not intended to be an evaluation of operational or tactical decisions of the commanders who fought the war. The primary purpose of this report is to help the CMC and his deputies better organize, train, and equip Marine forces to make them a more effective tool to joint force commanders and to forge the Corps into every CINC's "force of choice."

permitting commanders to more precisely tailor the size of their units and reduce the amount of lift required to support them. A critical advantage provided by the ACE was that Marine commanders had organic lift assets in the CH-53Es and KC-130s, which were responsive to their immediate critical needs. Even though not all of these advantages were fully exploited in OEF, they remain an intrinsic trait of Marine forces.

Finally, the un-sung hero of OEF, as with many operations, was logistics. As the Task Force 58 (TF-58) Command Chronology reported, "Military operations in Pakistan and southern Afghanistan surpassed the logistical complexity normally associated with amphibious operations. Extended distances from Amphibious Ready Group ships, theater and CONUS based resources were alone enough to severely tax the capabilities of logistics personnel and equipment." The tyranny of distance required a Herculean effort on the part of U.S. logisticians. The self-sustainment capabilities of the MEU(SOC)s were the foundation for supporting Marine and co-located U.S. and coalition forces, and helped bridge the gaps that occasionally opened during the operation.

the political constraints limiting the footprint of operations in Pakistan and restricting them to nighttime are clear, the factors driving the limits on Navy and Marine Corps personnel in Afghanistan are not yet fully understood. Regardless of the rationale for the force cap, it resulted in substantial disruption and delay in operations at FOB Rhino and elsewhere.

The unexpected imposition of the force cap during the initial buildup at FOB Rhino necessitated a rapid and continuous reorganization of units. This included the withdrawal of some units, detachments, and individual Marines who were already on the ground, and replacement with others with different skills that were needed during the ensuing operational pause. The personnel cap was not high enough to cover the "overhead" requirement for force protection and logistics support to Marines, other theater forces, coalition partners and other government agencies, while still conducting aggressive patrolling and offensive operations beyond FOB Rhino. Therefore, although the MAGTF commanders were prepared to aggressively pursue the strategic and operational goals of the combatant commander, the force cap restricted the MAGTFs from building up sufficient

were successful in meeting the warfighting requirements of the combatant commander. They did so at a level of operational risk that was deemed acceptable to the Marine commanders in theater, given the significant stakes involved and the need to act quickly and with resolution. In many respects, the tempo, characteristics, and nature of the operation allowed these risks to be taken, and the resulting successes are testaments to the wisdom of those decisions.

But reports from the frontlines are cautionary as to what lessons to draw from our experiences. In many cases, success often hung by a thread that was only as strong as the determination, commitment, hard work, and resourcefulness of the Marines and sailors. Without their efforts, the execution of some missions may have turned out much worse, or even failed. In other cases, the mission succeeded because of the particular circumstances of this war such as:

- There was little active resistance during buildups, which enabled Marines to focus on force protection issues and requirements vice combat operations issues.
- The Marines did not remain too long and were relieved by other Service forces before sea based support became a critical issue. The Navy's ability to provide C2 assets that far inland was limited, as well.
- The lack of a credible threat to C-17 and other USAF transport, which would have otherwise made it nearly impossible to support FOB at the level that was achieved. As a result, the Marines were able to use joint air, C-17s specifically, to support operations vashore to move large equipment beyond the normal range of organic transport helicopters.

Americans have the peculiar tendency to see unfavorable outcomes as entirely preventable but military successes as historical inevitabilities. However, a close unbiased examination of these issues and a rigorous analysis of the supporting data are clearly warranted if we are to draw the right lessons from our experiences.

On 29 November, as the buildup of personnel and equipment continued at Rhino, CINCCENT and NAVCENT notified the TF-58 staff that a force cap was being placed on the number of Marines and Sailors allowed at FOB Rhino. Initially set at 1,000, then 1078, the cap was later increased back to 1100, and then 1400. This contrasted sharply with TF-58's original concept for operations at Rhino, which called for the 26th MEU to arrive shortly after the 15th MEU secured the FOB and move quickly against Kandahar's LOCs. It also created additional force protection issues by hindering the Marines' ability to quickly reinforce forces currently ashore in southern Afghanistan. With the ships 350 miles away, a ship borne reserve was not capable of intervening in a timely manner. The emplacement of the force cap denied the commander the ability to maintain an operational shock absorber.

— TF-58 Command Chronology

THE FORCE CAP

On the fourth day of the operation to seize FOB Rhino, TF-58 received notification of a force cap that limited the number of Marines and sailors in Afghanistan. The force cap played a significant role in restricting the operational and logistical efforts of Marine forces in the theater. Although

mass and mobility to deliver on this capability. As a result, the Marine Corps may have lost the chance to demonstrate the decisive, aggressive combat power and shock effect of the MAGTF on Al Qaeda forces in the area.

OPERATIONAL RISK

In spite of the restrictions placed on naval forces and the punishing distances over which they operated, the Marines

CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

Cross cutting issues address those aspects of OEF that apply to more than one Advocate area of responsibility. As Marines have discovered in the past, in order to be successful in the modern battlespace, certain aspects of our operations will cut across functional areas and across elements of the MAGTF. These crosscutting issues need to be viewed by each Advocate with his specific area of responsibility in mind, as well as an understanding of the implications for the other Advocates. In many instances, the following crosscutting issues will require coordinated solutions across the Advocates.

EMW AND TRANSFORMATION IMPLICATIONS

OEF clearly demonstrated the enormous value of Expeditionary forces to the CINC. The first Marine Corps units were embarked and moving towards the AO within 24 hours of the 9/11 attacks. Marines were also among the first to strike the Taliban on the first day of the war, with carrier-based squadrons that flew in support of SOF operations and CFAAC targets. The Marine Corps' global responsiveness in moving toward the area of operations and integrating MAGTFs into early OEF operations showcased the Strategic Agility of Marine forces.

Our naval heritage as Marines and our MAGTF's Joint/Multinational Enabling capabilities were also displayed with the establishment of TF-58, led by Brigadier General Mattis, who commanded and controlled, not only two subordinate MAGTFs sourced from different supporting CINCs, but also their associated Amphibious Ready Groups, and a SEABEE Detachment. In addition to U.S. forces, he also exercised tactical control of an Australian coalition SOF Task Group.

The seizure of FOB Rhino was an unprecedented demonstration of force projection that highlighted the transformational implications of the

Marine Corps' Operational Reach, another pillar of EMW. Deploying from ships and three other separate sites to an objective approximately 400 miles inland, TF-58 Marines and sailors remained deployed in austere conditions for over six weeks, and showed both the sustainability and the tactical flexibility of Marine forces in their move from FOB Rhino to Kandahar. Marine forces were rapidly re-organized to adapt to changing operational restrictions, changing missions, supportability, and other factors. Marine Corps flexibility to task organize down to the smallest unit level, and still fight and win as a combined arms team in non-contiguous, simultaneous operations within an extended battlespace provided the combatant commander with a strategic tool no other service could provide.

Finally, the ability to interoperate effectively with U.S. and coalition SOF provided a force multiplier for the CINC to leverage their respective operational strengths and aggressively take the battle to the enemy.

During the course of OEF, the MAGTFs assigned to TF-58 executed 17 of the 23 MEU(SOC) missions, and planned for two others. TF-58 supported TF 11 during Special Site Exploitation (SSE) operations, the Department of State with a security detachment at the embassy compound in Kabul, CSAR South operations from Shamsi and Jacobabad, and CFMCC, CFLCC, and CFACC operations.

In addition to logistic support airlift, the Marines provided support to maritime and littoral interdiction operations for CFMCC. CFLCC was supported through several interdiction operations, the airfield seizure and management of FOB Rhino and Kandahar airfield, the operation and security of a detainee holding facility, the use of CH53E aircraft in assault support operations with TF K-BAR, and CH-53E, AH-1W, and KC-130 support for Operation Anaconda. AV-8Bs and USMC carrier-based air provided

Offensive Air Support to the CFACC, and Marines conducted Joint, Interagency, and Combined Operations throughout the course of OEF. Elements of the 4th MEB(AT) provided support for the re-opening of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, as well as other force protection and homeland defense missions in theater and in CONUS.

Marine forces at FOB Rhino and Kandahar were supported from a variety of sources, including TF-58 ships, and C-17s and KC-130s flying from rear support areas. The support from the sea bases was critical in the success of Marine operations in Afghanistan, and was made possible by the organic lift of CH-53Es and KC-130s. The EFCAT is studying the extent to which each of the sources supported the deployment and sustainment of the Marine force.

Even where equipment capability limitations, such as lack of MV-22, or operational constraints, such as the force cap, made it impossible to fully exploit the concepts of EMW, OEF demonstrated the tremendous value that the Marine Corps brings to the fight by virtue of its strategic agility, operational reach, tactical flexibility, support and sustainment, and joint and multi-national enabling capabilities.

COMPONENCY

The CINC exercises his combatant command authority through his service component commanders. However, componency continues to be a contentious, complicating, and widely misunderstood issue within the Marine Corps, the other Services, and even the joint community. Many Marine officers, both within the MAGTFs and those serving in joint commands, are not familiar with the requirements associated with componency, including the role of the service component commander within a joint command or task force, and componency's implications for MAGTF operations.

As a result of this misunderstanding,

Marine interests often are not adequately represented or effectively championed by Marine Corps spokesmen in the joint environment. Our ability to interface with joint systems, including transportation, C2, intelligence, logistics, and others functional areas may be sub-optimal because of misunderstandings about the role of the service component commander.

For example, some of the problems experienced with logistics operations during OEF can be traced to this issue. Though never formally established as a Marine Logistics Command (MLC), TF-58 assumed some of the functions of this role, attempting to coordinate with very limited resources the logistics requirements of two MAGTFs, and supporting other joint and combined forces operating in the area of operations. Other resources were available to assist, but the organizations, systems, responsibilities, and procedures to link to joint logistics support systems were generally not understood nor employed effectively. The EFCAT will more fully document the influence that competency-related issues have had on Marine performance in OEF in subsequent reports.

COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

Command relationships occasionally added to the burden of TF-58's limited staff. On 30 November, TF-58 units ashore in the Joint Operations Area (JOA) shifted Tactical Control (TACON) to the Combined Force Land Component Commander (CFLCC). However, TF-58 remained under the Operational Control (OPCON) of the Combined Force Maritime Component Commander (CFMCC), Vice Admiral Moore, who was dual-hatted as NAVCENT and CFMCC. CFLCC, which had been designated previously by CENTCOM as the sole commander for land forces in Afghanistan, was based in Kuwait and staffed primarily by elements from the U.S. Third Army, as well as a small number of Marines.

This TACON relationship required the small TF-58 staff to provide information

to two higher headquarters, CFMCC and CFLCC. The CFLCC staff was quite large and levied increased reporting requirements on the TF-58 staff, eventually requiring CONOPS briefs in advance of even small-scale operations. Working with the CFLCC staff through two Marine liaison officers, the TF-58 staff was able to adapt to the new information requirements while continuing to develop a solid working relationship with the CFLCC staff. The positive relationship lasted throughout the operation as CFLCC buttressed and represented CTF-58's interests, but the cumbersome nature of the arrangement could have adversely affected the TF-58 staff's ability to accomplish its other tasks, without the assistance of the Marine liaison officers on the CFLCC staff. In the future, both competency and command relationships should be considered in concert with the issue of staffing.

Marine Corps capabilities and responsiveness at some of the commands where there were vacant Marine Corps billets. One observer reported that, at one of the daily VTC's, CCFLCC asked several simple questions about USMC MEU(SOC) capabilities, such as the numbers of aircraft and vehicles, but there was no Marine representative present to respond. More hard data is required before the validity of these impressions can be assessed.

It is essential that the appropriate number of Marines fill augmentation billets to joint staffs and functional component staffs. The grade and experience of the billet holders is important for adequate USMC representation at every level of decision-making. In addition, the officers need to have a thorough understanding of the planning processes that will be used, and the capabilities and doctrinal employment of MAGTFs.

When transitioning from peacetime

TF-58 STAFF: Small by Design

As of 31 October, the core TF-58 staff was composed of three Marines from Camp Pendleton, two from MARCENT, Tampa, and a communicator from CJTF CM, Kuwait. It quickly became clear that, despite the assistance received from the Marine liaison officers and Navy amphibious planners working at NAVCENT, additional staff membership would be required. The CG's guidance on "growing" the staff was simple: he wanted a small staff comprised of aggressive officers who were able to act with initiative, make rapid decisions and recommendations, and exercise good judgment. He emphasized that there would be few enlisted Marines to support the staff, so each member would be required to "fill sandbags."

In initial meetings with Vice Admiral Moore, the Admiral made clear his intent not to have a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) staff in place. Without a command ship, working spaces and communications would not be available to support a robust staff built along traditional lines. If the staff were to fall in on the ARG ships, space would be restricted. Although never formally stated, it was understood that the size of the staff would remain small. The limited infrastructure available at NSA Bahrain impacted the space available for working, billeting, and establishing a command post. The size of the staff also reflected General Mattis' desire for a small planning-focused staff with staff officers making rapid decisions on their own authority, not working on route sheets. The initial concept was for the staff to operate as an N-5 planning staff, however as the operation progressed the need for an N-3 operations section was realized.

—TF-58 Command Chronology

STAFFING

There was a broad perception that the Marine Corps was not appropriately represented on some joint staffs involved in OEF. That perception was fed by several observations, which are largely anecdotal, but suggest a possible underlying problem. Less than two thirds of Marine Corps billets on the CFLCC staff were filled, with staffing shortages at some other commands as well. There were indications that planners may not have fully understood

operations to wartime or contingency operations, the staffing levels and numbers of qualified personnel to fill critical joint billets will be at issue. Normally the same officers that meet the high qualification standards for joint staffs will be the same officers that are needed on Marine Corps staffs. Between 1 September and the middle of December 2001, the G-3 of I MEF expanded from 22 to 63 officers. During the same period, the staffs for TF-58, and JTF-Consequence Management were

filled, along with nearly 100 additional billets for joint staffs throughout the theater. Simply stated, when all the billet requirements for functional component headquarters, liaisons on joint and coalition staffs, and various in-country task forces, the numbers may exceed what can be reasonably provided from throughout the entire Corps.

It is important to send some of our better-educated officers to these staffs, despite the high cost to Marine Corps staffs. For example, School of Advanced Warfighting (SAW) graduates are critical to fill planning billets in order to have an articulate Marine Corps voice on the proper employment of Marine forces at every level of planning.

In addition to the requirement for joint action-officers and SAW graduates, the need for flag level officers is acute. The task organization for the CFLCC staff calls for a Marine brigadier general, and both TF-58 and JTF-CM required brigadier generals as well. Moreover, the requirement to deal with senior representatives from other coalition countries demands rough parity of rank to send the right message of interest and concern on the part of the Marine Corps.

The EFCAT is preparing to conduct an analysis of theater-wide staffing of component commands. The assessment will look at the billets within the component commands, by Service, grade, staff position, primary warfighting function of the command, forces controlled, and other factors. The key to joint command staffing in future operations is identification of the billets that the Marine Corps wants to fill. It is important to clarify the perceptions against reality and get a better understanding of the process for developing each of the tables of organization at the component commands. It will examine questions regarding proportionality of critical and non-critical billets. The study will examine questions such as, "Were opportunities lost by not filling an offered 'key billet?'" "Were there billets that the Corps would like to staff that were not proffered?", and "What internal and external processes are important to

adequate USMC representation in the future?"

MOBILITY

Reports from the Marine forces involved in OEF consistently identified the lack of ground mobility afforded by the current equipment mix deployed with the MEU(SOC). Air transportability of equipment was questionable both in quality and quantity. In one LOC interdiction operation, reconnaissance elements led a 120-kilometer 19-hour motor march across uncharted desert, followed by LAVs from the 15th MEU. For numerous reasons, this motor march proved to be difficult and time consuming. Some vehicles had 80,000 tactical miles on them before beginning the journey and had to be "coaxed" throughout the trip. Four vehicles simply broke down, requiring towing.

Because of the complexity and time delays, additional fuel-beyond the original estimates-was also required. The interdiction force overcame these obstacles and arrived in position to establish a patrol base west of Kandahar. The potential for operational failure posed by the poor condition of organic equipment would have been greatly magnified if the force had been opposed by a significant threat.

In addition to the problems associated with ground transportation equipment, the inability to transport sufficient ground mobility assets by air, over extended distances, created limitations for Marines in OEF. A medium lift aircraft capable of transporting ground mobility assets may have transformed the operational picture in the early days of the operation.

LOGISTICS

Throughout operations conducted in the region, the forces were operating at the edge of their operational and logistics capabilities. Given the

enormous distances involved in inter-theater movements, theater logistics support was slow to spin up to full capability and the MAGTFs relied heavily on their naval expeditionary capabilities and the on board sustainment within the ARG. The early movement of the KC-130 detachment into the area of operations (AO) was a decision with enormous strategic consequences. Without these self-deploying assets, it was unlikely the mission would have been executable. The subsequent support from USAF C-17s were critical to the ultimate success of the operations, but in the early days before captured airfields were certified for C-17 operations, the KC-130s bore the brunt of the logistics and operational movement requirements.

Because of the distances involved in the operation, the MEU ACE, with the exception of the AV-8B Harrier detachment, ended up based ashore. This shifted the burden of logistical support, in particular basing infrastructure, from the ARG to the MEU Service Support Group. Based ashore, the unit required bed down space, electrical power, sanitation facilities, material handling, fuel, tentage, and transportation support. The burden was particularly heavy for the MSSG in the beginning stages of the evolution, in fact at times exceeding the MSSG's ability to accommodate. The ACE was augmented with additional helicopters for the mission, which added to the required support. The MEU was operating much farther inland from the ships than in the past, which stretched organic assets beyond the planned support capabilities. The distance between the FOB and the beach operation point during operations in Afghanistan was at least 400 miles.

Unlike deployments of the past, connectivity in today's deployed environment is very good due to advances in technology. However, there are issues relevant to access to transmitted information and the speed at

