THE MOBILE SEA BASED AMPHIBIOUS FORCE AND THE NIXON DOCTRINE

Ezra H. Arkland

Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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MONOGRAPH

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BY

COLONEL EZRA H. ARKLAND
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

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Colonel Ezra H. Arkland
United States Marine Corps

US Army War College
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Abstract: The basic hypothesis is that a mobile sea based amphibious force (one totally lifted, supplied, supported, and eventually retracted by an Amphibious Task Force) at sea in, or operating from, international waters is particularly adapted to the Nixon Doctrine. Research centered about studies recently undertaken under the auspices of the US Navy to determine the feasibility of such basing, plus an examination of contemporary professional opinion as related to the objectives set forth in long-range plans. The conclusion is reached that the mobile sea based force is practical now in Marine Amphibious Brigade sized operations, and should be exploited by national planners.

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SECTION I

A REALISTIC DETERRENT

> Our interests must shape our commitments, rather than the other way around.[1]
>
> --Richard M. Nixon, 1970

THE PROBLEM

The United States has collective defense treaties with forty-three other countries--each involving a commitment to assist in the event of armed attack--plus a number of executive agreements and congressional resolutions to the same effect.[2] Two of the three elements of the Nixon Doctrine deal directly with the national commitment to observe all treaty obligations and to furnish military and economic assistance in accordance therewith.[3]

Quite realistically, in his 1971 foreign policy report to the Congress, President Nixon alluded to the dangers and difficulties involved in maintaining the credibility of this policy in the face of reduced military strength, domestic criticism, domestic and international economic considerations, and a reduction in overseas military deployments.[4] Any resulting shortfall in relative military force is to be made up through a total force approach--a greater contribution by the other partners to treaties--with the concommitant U.S. "low profile" of his April 1971 foreign assistance message to Congress.[5] The resultant vector is a ". . . new strategy . . . one of 'realistic deterrence.'"[6]

The credibility of the Nixon Doctrine, and the realism of the realistic deterrent would appear to depend, in large part, upon an extrapolation of President Nixon's statement headlining this section: not only must our interests shape our commitments--these commitments must, in turn, shape our strategy and tactics. It is because of its adaptability to the total spectrum of commitment that the emerging concept of the Mobile Sea Based Amphibious Force (MSBAF) as a part of the balanced fleet holds so much promise.

A SOLUTION

Hanson Baldwin proposes that "An oceanic strategy, modified to permit continental intervention but at times and places of our own choosing, is the concept best suited to America's tomorrows."[7] This concept requires a balanced fleet, the general purpose slice of which includes aircraft carriers, cruisers, missile ships, anti-submarine warfare and escort craft, minecraft, supply ships, amphibious ships, helicopter carriers, and submarines.[8] Accepting the need for overseas land bases for logistical purposes and the projection of air and missile power over maritime areas, Hanson Baldwin points out the increased logistical independence of the fleet from the tether of land, through the use of mobile floating-base techniques.[9] This technique, doctrinally referred to in the U.S. Navy as "Underway Replenishment," is a part of the "Mobile Logistic Support System" whereby ships, specialized service craft and Carrier On-board Delivery (COD) aircraft provide all of the

supplies and services required by a fleet.[10] The Mobile Logistic Support Force operates as an integral part of the numbered fleet, supporting the other task forces subordinate thereto, including its Amphibious Force.[11]

The extension of this mobile logistic support system to the support of totally sea based amphibious force in the 1980's period has been studied. The unclassified statement of a concept investigated follows:

> The Sea-based Expeditionary Force is an integrated organization of expeditionary troops, their supporting aircraft, and a force of specially designed, functional ships. Together, they provide an improved capability for strategic mobility, forward basing, tactical mobility, close air support, and logistic support in future limited war situations. This force is capable of operating independently where land battles take place within two hundred miles of the sea; where an insurgent environment exists and land bases and land lines of communications would be threatened; where at-sea sanctuary exists; and where the opposing force's capability to withstand assault against helicopter lifted forces is limited.[14]

THE COST

A major problem is, of course, the capital investment to fund the shipping and equipment necessary to this concept. Estimated thirty-year life cycle systems cost for a single Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) (one Marine division, one Marine aircraft wing plus supporting units) capability was calculated at 6.4 billion dollars.[13]

By way of contrast, the study used as its model the situation existing in I Corps of South Vietnam where costs of logistic operations alone (not including costs of supplies handled) exceeded 5 billion dollars between 1965 and 1969.[14]

A comparison between the costs of fixed land installations necessary to support operations ashore versus the cost of equivalent seabasing must obviously also consider in the former situation:

--Indirect costs of defense (and losses due to even unsophisticated attacks by sappers or rockets).

--Relocation or compensation costs to prior occupants of the area.

--Costs associated with the shipping required to insert and recover these ashore installations.

The critical cost, however, is the cost of failure, either militarily or psychologically--and the resultant effect on the credibility of the Nixon Doctrine.

It is this cost that the Mobile Sea Based Amphibious Force is calculated to avoid.

SECTION I

FOOTNOTES

1. Richard M. Nixon, U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: Building for Peace (1971), p. 13.

2. John C. Kimball, ed. "Commitments of U.S. Power Abroad," Issues (October 1969), p. 5.

3. Nixon, U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's, pp. 12-14. The third element of the Nixon Doctrine deals with the national commitment to provide assistance in case of nuclear blackmail and conventional aggression backed by nuclear power.

4. Ibid., pp. 4-21, 24-90, 134-154.

5. Richard M. Nixon, For a Generation of Peaceful Development, message to Congress, 21 April 1971, p. 9.

6. Melvin R. Laird, Statement of the Secretary of Defense Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 15 March 1971, pp. 17-21.

7. Hanson W. Baldwin, Strategy for Tomorrow, p. 315.

8. Ibid., p. 305.

9. Ibid., p. 300.

10. Department of the Navy. Naval Warfare Publication 25(A) Mobile Logistic Support Operations, p. 1-1. (Hereafter referred to as NWP 25(A).)

11. Ibid., p. 1-11.

12. D. E. Blumberg, et al., Sea-Based Expeditionary Force (SEF-80) Conceptual Design Study (U) Phase II, 1970, p. I-1. (Hereafter referred to as SEF-80.)

13. Ibid., p. II-2.

14. Ibid., p. I-4.

SECTION II

THE MOBILE SEA BASED AMPHIBIOUS FORCE

> Even though they may welcome the protection, sovereign states do not like the presence of foreign troops within their boundaries, no matter how friendly these forces may be.[1]

THE OVERVIEW

The strategic mobility of the balanced fleet, together with the tactical mobility of a sea based and V/STOL landed and supported Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) obviates the problem headlined above, avoids the tactical, political and economic disadvantages of base construction and defenses, is capable of employment over a wide slice of the spectrum of potential conflict and a wide range of the potential arenas of low to mid intensity conflict, can provide a low profile of involvement, and (in up to MAB-sized operations) is within the 1970's state-of-the-art, and is capable of execution with on-hand material.[2]

The limitation to brigade-sized operations reflects not state-of-the-art limitations, but is rather the derivative of the total one and one-third MAF lift capability of the Navy.[3] In a crisis-control readiness deployment analogous to the current Sixth Fleet operations in the Mediterranean, each of the four numbered fleets (the First and Seventh in the Pacific and the Second and Sixth in the Atlantic) can expect no more than a one-third MAF lift capability. This equates with the size of the landing force contemplated in

the Stanford study previously cited. That MAB consisted of a four infantry battalion ground component; an air component of two fighter/attack squadrons, one reconnaissance squadron, six V/STOL squadrons and an antiaircraft missile battalion; together with combat and combat service support units; for a total of approximately 12,000 Marines and Navy personnel.[4]

The MSBAF concept has been developing over the last decade, through the experience of Battalion Landing Teams (BLT's) deployed as integral landing forces of the Second, Sixth and Seventh Fleets (usually operating as a part of each numbered fleet's Amphibious Task Force), through studies and exercises, and perhaps most importantly, through discussions and feedback among field grade and general officers.

This last source of definition of the concept has not been without its differences of opinion. Much like the elephant being studied by the four blind men--opinions on the shape of the concept are often conditioned by feel rather than vision. As pointed out by one of its most knowledgeable students, the MSBAF concept is viewed by some as a strategy, by others as a tactic, by some as a technique--and as either entirely new or, conversely, as merely an application of new hardware to old systems.[5] It is, of course, all of these.

A STRATEGY

As a strategy, it is a means of effecting forward deployment of military force through the long or short term by sea basing

units up to MAB size in proximity to areas of probable employment--with that degree of visibility desired by the political or psychological situation. At the three-mile limit, the presence of a fleet can hardly be overlooked by residents of a coastal area. At two hundred miles a fleet or Amphibious Task Force is but one night's steaming from a launch position just off shore (and already well within the five hundred mile radius of operation calculated for the 1975-85 period).[6] In July, 1958, Admiral Burke, then Chief of Naval Operations, had informed President Eisenhower that 24 hours notice was required to land the landing force of the Sixth Fleet in Lebanon, since the fleet had been directed to remain out of sight from the Lebanon coast. He was given only 13 hours warning. H-hour was met from a previously very low profile through forward deployment by basing at sea of a relatively small (BLT) crisis control force.[7]

A TACTIC

As a tactic, it is the means of projecting naval power shore in a low to mid intensity conflict situation through a landing force carried to the objective area in fast, (20 knots plus) V/STOL aircraft capable shipping; the deployment, redeployment or retraction of the landing force by V/STOL aircraft up to the limit of their operating radius; the provision of fire support through a combination of naval gunfire, artillery, and Marine attack aircraft organic to the landing force, augmented by Navy aircraft. The salient

point is the mobility, security, and surprise provided by afloat basing of logistical, fire support, and command and control facilities. Individual ships are assigned direct support of troops normally embarked, whether these troops are aboard or deployed ashore; to include the provision of communication, logistic, medical, and air lift support.[8]

A TECHNIQUE

As a technique, the MSBLF concept provides an optimum mix of the capabilities of new hardware of the V/STOL family (including both fixed and rotary wing types), the fast V/STOL-capable amphibious shipping in existence or building, the quantum improvement in remote sensors, and air line of communications operations of the Vietnam war combined with the amphibious doctrine of World War II. It is, in fact, the "true amphibious operation" as described by Lieutenant Colonel Hammond,[9] involving total logistic reliance upon the Navy's umbilical through the underway replenishment system defined by NWP 25(A).[10]

DOCTRINE

Whether this strategy, tactic, or technique is new or old would appear irrelevant to its evolution from concept to doctrine or to its successful employment. The doctrine for amphibious operations is, however, a four-service matter. Its establishment in a single volume published jointly by the U.S. Army, Navy,

Marine Corps, and Air Force may well be unique.[11] Changes in mutual doctrine are subject to the re-opening of old disagreements, since, in terms of today's hardware, MSBAF operations will involve Marine and Navy aircraft operating from aircraft carriers. They may also involve operations similar to those undertaken by the Special Landing Force (SLF) of the Seventh Fleet in Vietnam into areas under complicated command relationships and international agreements, including restrictive ad hoc air command and control relationships. Last, but certainly not least, joint acceptance of a strategy has budgetary implications.

The details of these disagreements exceed the scope and classification of this paper, and will be only touched upon in the next section. A comparison between existing doctrine as defined by NWP 22(B) and the MSBAF concept is pertinent, however, to the proposal offered that neither doctrinal changes nor ad hoc arrangements are necessary to execute operations under the MSBAF concept.

In comparison with what can best be designated "WW II Doctrine," the MSBAF concept is subsumed within the doctrine detailed in NWP 22(B) even in those areas where it appears to differ as a technique:

--Command and Control (C&C): Over-all command for amphibious operations is vested in a Navy officer. Command, or control over sub-systems (fire support or air support, for example), is progressively passed to landing force agencies as they become capable

of executing them. The objective is to incrementally shift C&C responsibilities to the point where both the Commander, Landing Force (CLF) and the Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF) agree that command can shift to the CLF. It is at this point that the amphibious operation normally "terminates." Subsequent command relationships usually are as prescribed in the initiating directive.[12]

The MSBAF concept does not contemplate "termination." However, the CATF could (and should) pass control of subsystems, as appropriate, to the CLF. The location of the CLF or the location of the specific landing force control agency (fire support coordination center, for example) is immaterial to the doctrine. In practice, these agencies will remain afloat.

The coordination, parallelism and mutual consultation between CATF and CLF and their staff presupposes co-location on board a command ship prior to command being passed to the CLF.[13] In the MSFAB concept the CLF, his staff and control agencies would remain afloat. In practice this will allow several economies to be practiced. Control of air support operations through the CATF's tactical air support center, for example, may obviate establishment of a separate direct air support center by the landing force.

--Logistics. NWP 25(B) defines two general periods of the ship-to-shore movement: ". . . the initial unloading period, which is primarily tactical in character, and must be instantly responsive to landing force requirements; and the general unloading period, which is primarily logistic and quantitative in character and emphasizes

speed and vollume of unloading."[14] Logistical support to units ashore during the initial unloading period is usually scheduled on the basis of expectations, with out-of-sequence items and critical resupply handled through the use of TACLOG teams (representatives of the S-3 and S-4 sections of the appropriate troop unit) who are co-located aboard the control ship with the Navy control officer. This team monitors the parent unit's tactical and logistical radio nets, are familiar with the operation plan, and administrative plan, including embarkation and loading plans, and thus are able to arrange for movement ashore of needed items through the appropriate Navy control agency, (e.g. the helicopter logistic support center in the vicinity of the helicopter direction center in the case of a helicopter-borne landing).[15]

In the MSBAF concept, no general unloading period would occur. Remaining in the initial unloading period, TACLOG teams for each BLT would carry out their usual responsibilities throughout the operation. Since supplies will be delivered directly to company sized units ashore, in amounts to be consumed in a short period (probably a 24 hour supply level) plus a carefully calculated safety factor, the TACLOG group will be a responsible organ indeed.

Equipment casualties will be handled through a combination of contact teams, embarked maintenance shops, and a rotating float of components and end items.[16]

"Wholesale" resupply would come to the amphibious task force via underway replenishment, which, even at today's rate, is adequate.[17]

--Landing Force Aviation. Several solutions to the problem of the basing of landing force aviation exist. The SEF-80 study presumes (and designs) variously configured ships to be called AVE's (close air support ships). These ships are to be between 775 and 990 feet long and similar to attack aircraft carriers (CVA's) in capabilities.[18] The logistic feasibility study builds its solution around V/STOL "Harrier" (A-8) aircraft now in Marine Corps' inventory, basing them on existing amphibious shipping, with the acceptance of the concommitment vertical lift-off fuel penalty and inability to land with a full load of ordnance aboard.[19]

NWP 22(B) allows, doctrinally, for the inclusion--as an organic part of the amphibious task force--of a support carrier group: "A task organization of aircraft carriers with embarked aircraft and supporting ships, which provides naval air support to the amphibious task force."[20] This solution will be further discussed in the next section--as an example of "heresy."

LIMITATIONS

To one who has viewed with serious misgivings the increasing reliance upon helicopters by U.S. military forces, the MSBAF concept is a means of protecting naval power ashore--not the means. Contemplating the performance envelope of relatively unsophisticated weapons of the "redeye" type (a shoulder-fired, heat-seeking, surface to air missile) now in the inventory, while watching the heat waves pouring from a helicopter engine's exhaust should give

tacticians pause. Quadruple mounted .50 caliber machine guns with gyroscopic precession sights of World War II vintage or 20 millimeter anti-aircraft guns of the same period could also spoil a helicopter-borne tactician's day.

The current inventory of V/STOL liftable anti-armor weapons is probably inadequate to provide an adequate defense against armor through means organic to the Marine infantry battalion.

The range of the eight inch naval gun, even with rocket assisted projectiles (RAP), is well below reasonable operating depth of the MSBAF. The stepping-stone fire support base (FSB) concept of operations, often used in Vietnam to ensure artillery support of helicopter borne operations, is inimical to the MSGAB concept, in terms of depth, mobility, and resources required for FSB development and defense.

How, then, to go? The brief answer, of course, is to recognize and accept the limitations of the concept, with the concurrent requirement that the ATF possess the ability to conduct surface borne amphibious assault operations. The doctrine for a combination helicopter/surface borne amphibious assault is well developed, allowing for the link-up of both at some point or points within mutually supporting distance. This allows the provision of armor, self-propelled artillery, motor transport, amphibious vehicles, etc. to the helicopter borne force--and results in an operation which differs from the MSBAF concept. The compatible capability to conduct "conventional" assaults, however, is essential to the

strategic, as well as tactical, value of the MSBAF. Credibility is part of the equation, as is the need for flexibility.

In this regard, much needs to be done to exploit the state-of-the-art in ground effect vehicles, hydrofoil craft, ducted-fan VTOL machines and similar means for the surface ship-to-shore movement of heavy lift items at a much more rapid speed. Speed alone is no major virtue, but the derivative--distance of the ATF from the beach at the time of launch--is.

Another purpose in maintaining the ability to conduct "conventional" amphibious assaults falls out from the limited amphibious shipping now available: follow-on forces will, in all probability, require a second trip lift by the same shipping. This presupposes that an escalation of force beyond that which can be initially based at sea will require that initial force to transplace ashore. In addition to the fact that this transplacement will terminate the MSBAF concept, it implies a need in the ATF, even in the MSBAF concept, of provisions for basing landing force aviation ashore, a shore based logistic capability, and means for their defense. While these capabilities are provided for in the current doctrine, the point is that they must also be included in the MSBAF concept--in order to provide the capability and flexibility for escalation, if required. Transplacement ashore, in terms of today's hardware, has been described as "sensitive . . . despite attempts to remedy."[21] Again, we return to the major problem--the capital cost to lift enough capability to match the possibilities. This capability for escalation would appear to require, and justify, the escalation of cost.

SECTION II

FOOTNOTES

1. Charles H. Donnelly, "United States Defense Policies in 1961," in American Defense Policy in Perspective (1965), ed. by Raymond G. O'Connor, p. 347.

2. H. B. Wilder, et al. Systems Analysis of the Seaborne Mobile Logistics System Concept, 1975-85, pp. 7-17.

3. Laird, p. 98.

4. Wilder, pp. 21-29.

5. J. W. Hammond, Jr., LTC, USMC, "Seabase: The True Amphibious Operation," Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. 55, August 1971, pp. 19-20.

6. Wilder, p. 19.

7. Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, Marines in Lebanon (1966), p. 10.

8. Wilder, pp. 7-8 and 19-21.

9. Hammond, p. 18.

10. NWP 25(A), p. 1-1.

11. Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, Field Manual 31-11, Naval Warfare Publication 22(B), Air Force Manual 2-53, Landing Force Manual 01: Doctrine for Amphibious Operations, (1 August 1967, with undated change 1), p. II. (Hereafter referred to as NWP 22(B).)

12. NWP 22(B), pp. 2-3, 2-4, 1-6.

13. Ibid., pp. 2-9, 2-10.

14. Ibid., p. 16-11.

15. Ibid., p. 16-9.

16. Wilder, p. 8

17. Ibid., p. 15.

18. SEF-80, p. III-6.

19. Wilder, p. 156-158.

20. NWP 22(B), p. 2-5.

21. Wilder, p. 195.

SECTION III

HERESIES?

> To give you some examples [,] here are some of the ideas we have come up with. First of all, laundry, there will be no laundry capability ashore.[1]
>
> The plan envisions the assault and resupply by helicopters operated and maintained from the mobile base. . . . It calls for the establishment of a combat base ashore. This minimum facility is about 1,000 by 600 feet in area. . . . The entire concept reflects the philosophy of staying light, no frills, no luxuries.[2]

LOGISTICS

The quotations above, from a series of lessons on the MSBAF given to captain and major students of the Amphibious Warfare School, Education Center, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia, in 1971 indicates the magnitude of the "people" problem.

Logistically, the ATF, including its landing force, is capable of executing the MSBAF concept. Some doubt exists as to whether its logisticians are. "Light, no frills, no luxuries" obviously means something different to the logistician than to the tactician. This "minimum base" will require, by its proponents' own computations, 5,500 man hours for bunker construction, manning by 1,350 troops, and include a mobile medical unit weighing twenty-three tons, ". . . but it [the medical unit] can be broken down into units."[3] Adding 11,000 meters to the dimensions of the

combat base to provide for defense against standard 122 millimeter rockets should keep this 10 percent of the landing force occupied, even if they do not effectively contribute to the mission.

The amphibious logistician, more specifically than any other practitioner, finds heresy in the MSBAF concept. More parochial than without sin, he points out the dangers of weather, helicopter vulnerability, and the inconstancy of the ATF upon uninterrupted supply of the landing force. He proposes to correct this by moving logistic support units ashore. This would not, however, reduce the limitations imposed by the first two considerations, unless a land line of communications is to be opened to tactical units. Where then, is the MSBAF concept? The subject of the fleet's constancy is a less critical one, but one which must be commented upon.

PERSONALITIES

Since the end of WW II, with a few exceptions, the umbilical between the Navy and the Marine Corps has been weakened by the fact that the major military operations undertaken by the Marine Corps have been based primarily on land--and not in support of naval campaigns. While justification can be found for the lack of exploitation of the advantages of amphibious operations during the war in Vietnam, the situation is no less lamentable. The more so, in view of the development of the strategy of interposition so obviously being explored by the USSR in the development of

their Marine Corps equivalent, the Naval Infantry. The USSR's "Moscova" class helicopter carrier, with a single-lift helicopter capability of 750 amphibious troops, plus the approximately 100 amphibious ships and 130 amphibious craft of their navy, implies a shift in relative military power.[4]

To reinforce the existing doctrine that amphibious operations are naval in character and to place responsibility and authority in the proper personage, command of operations undertaken in the MSBAF concept should remain with the Commander of the Amphibious Task Force. More than "wiring diagrams" is involved in this command relationship; one which although doctrinal, is looked upon by some as heresy.

It means that the CLF will not displace his command post ashore. It also means that the commander of landing force aviation will remain operationally subordinate to the CATF, through his tactical air control center, and will operate aircraft from appropriate shipping. It means in the larger sense that the landing force will remain a naval force, a means of the projection ashore of sea power. If viewed in these terms by both the CLF and the CATF, the "problem" of the constancy of the fleet is obviated. Based upon recent discussions with senior Marines, the actual attitudinal problem is not with the Navy--it is an in-house problem: the commander of the ground element of the landing force will command and control ground operations ashore, the commander of the landing force will (or should) be fully occupied in the

decisionmaking involved in the allocation of his resources and in coordinating with the CATF those resources of the ATF essential to the success of the operation. He should not fight the land battle. This currently appears to be heresy.

THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER

"How do you plan to use them?" is a fair counter to those Navy officials who object to inclusion in the ATF of their most critical asset--the aircraft carrier. Assuming the situation postulated in the SEF-80 study and in this monograph, it is doctrinally proper to provide the CATF with an organic means for the provision of air support. Again, doctrine becomes heresy through non-doctrinal practice. "I don't want my carriers tied to a beach" is an over-exaggeration of the situation in view of the speed of aircraft and the excellence of communications in existence. A carrier 50 to 100 miles at sea carries aircraft only minutes away from the beach, is well within a typical amphibious objective area--and is, also, no closer to shore than CVA's were often positioned during the war in Vietnam. It is possible to evolve a tortured "wiring diagram" to provide a link between the CATF, CLF and the commander of a task grouping of non-ATF CVA(s) with landing force aviation embarked, and, at the same time, provide for an equal pecking order position for all commanders; but why? What mission more important than the success of the landing force's operations will obtain at this

time? Should one occur, it requires only a two or three paragraph message to realign the task organization to reflect changing situations. No resistance has been felt equal to that experienced by those developing the MSBAF concept when not one, but two CVA's per ATF (with a single MAB landing force) was proposed. Heresy? Only to the extent that unity of command, security, maintenance of the objective, and economy of force are also heresies. It is proposed that landing force aviation is, in fact, landing force aviation, and the inclusion of a support carrier group within the ATF is not only possible, but essential. This concept of inclusion embodied in current doctrine, but perhaps to be made more palatable by the development of the AVE's of the SEF-80 study, is a sine qua non.

DE-VIETNAMIZATION

The final attitudinal conflict exists in "de-Vietnamization." The ineconomies, both tactical and logistical, of the Vietnam war cannot be supported by the MSBAF concept. The air-mobile concept of the U.S. Army--suitable as it is for that service--exceeds the capability of the ATF. No sea basing for 400 plus helicopters per division, for example, is conceivable. Command and control helicopters will be in short supply. The dedication of helicopters based on rank or echelon will probably (and fortunately, some will say) prohibit the "stacking" of commanders above points of contact with the enemy.

Major logistical and command installations ashore must be eliminated. The "containerization" concept for resupply cannot be projected ashore. Unit resupply must be just that--and based on direct delivery to the rifle company level. The breakdown from "wholesale" to "retail" quantities will be aboard ship, and "conex" containers (not to mention the boxcar-sized follow-on models proposed) will be of no use to units ashore who are only foot and helicopter mobile.

The type of logistical support provided units in Vietnam under the helicopter-mobile concept involved the stepping stone approach of fire support, logistical and command bases. None of these are practicable in the MSBAF concept.

SECTION III

FOOTNOTES

1. Logistics Branch, Education Center, Marine Corps Development and Education Command. Mobile Seabase Concept 1973-1975, (Lesson Plan), p. 23.

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. Ibid., pp. 35, 30, 26.

4. D. K. Cliff, "Paloondra," Marine Corps Gazette (January 1972), pp. 19-27.

SECTION IV

CONCLUSION

> . . . The 'political chastity' of sea power cannot be insured unless advanced techniques in sea-basing for both combat operations and logistics are developed.[1]

POLITICAL CHASTITY

In two words--"political chastity"--Hanson Baldwin points to the peculiar applicability of the MSBAF to the Nixon Doctrine. The "luxury" to which he refers, to "choose the time and place of ground intervention; . . . take as much or as little of any war as we wish,"[2] is the crux of the political problem to which the Nixon Doctrine is the answer. This luxury is available to the United States over that 70 percent of the earth's surface represented by the oceans and seas, and over the adjacent littoral area inland to the operating depth of the MSBAF.

Although limited by several considerations, geographical, tactical, or technological, the MSBAF offers almost unique solutions to the military problems raised by "wars of national liberation" or low to mid range intensity combat, and is a credible instrument of national power in the prosecution of the Foreign Internal Defense Program.

One might wish to argue Mr. Baldwin's caveat headlined in this section, by proposing that MAB-size sea based operations are totally within the current state-of-the-art, but much remains to be done.

THE PEOPLE PROBLEM

The "people problem" is very much with us. The tactical mobility of the helicopter and the near-instant world-wide communication capability have their adverse effects on both the capability and the authority for exercise of initiative or judgment on the part of subordinates from top to bottom of the national military command system.

Military operations are more likely to be time-limited by waiting for authority to act than by an intrinsic tactical shortcoming. The speed, surprise, mobility, and flexibility of the MSBAF are thus, to some degree, degraded. The cumulative, long term effect of this upon the military is beyond the scope of this paper.

A generation of Marine officers has been developed in the era of the last two major combat episodes who are landsmen, who use the words "deck," "head," and "aboard," for parochial rather than other purposes. "Port" and "starboard" are avoided, if possible.

SEA POWER

The relative and absolute weakening of U.S. seapower, and the magnitude of the anti-submarine problem may have given us "more fight than we can ferry."[3] Personal experience and observation indicate a low level of interest, if not priority, among senior Navy officers for the amphibious capability of their service.

Only one eight-inch gun cruiser is left in the fleet inventory and the resurrected 16-inch gun battleship New Jersey has been again retired.[4] No naval shore bombardment weapon worthy of such designation exists in the fleet.

THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

In spite of these problems, or perhaps because they are so obvious, improvements in hardware of the amphibious type (ships, VTOL aircraft, and amphibious tractors) are building or programmed.[5] Marine officers are increasingly talking and writing about subjects pertaining to the Navy/Marine Corps team, and arguing larger and more appropriate naval participation in Marine Corps professional education. III MAF is no longer a major ground combat headquarters, it is III MAF/Task Force 79,[6] an integral part of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. Marine attack aircraft squadrons are operating from CVA decks on a regular and semipermanent basis as part of the Sixth and Seventh Fleets.[7]

The trend is positive. The temptation is strong to trust to the obviousness of the strategic advantages of the MSBAF, and, for that matter, those of sea power, particularly in the era of the Nixon Doctrine and "wars of national liberation." This temptation, however, is easy to override in the Age of Aquarius--which ironically may be only a nominal designation.

E. H. ARKLAND
Colonel, USMC

SECTION IV

FOOTNOTES

1. Baldwin, p. 304.

2. Ibid., pp. 307-308.

3. Attributed to General David M. Shoup, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1960-1963. Probably apocryphal.

4. "Summary of Major Naval, Maritime, and Military Forces," United States Naval Institute Proceedings (May 1970), p. 459.

5. Laird, pp. 93-98.

6. "Marine Units Depart RVN, Command Reassignments Made," Marine Corps Gazette (May 1971), p. 2.

7. "Marines at Work," Marine Corps Gazette (March 1971), p. 4.

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