NAVAL WAR COLLEGE Newport, R.I.

The JFMCC and the Marine Corps: Integrate to Win the Black Sea Fight

by

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

The JFMCC and the Marine Corps: Integrate to Win the Black Sea Fight

Marine integration with the Navy contributes to meeting vital U.S. naval operational requirements, especially when organized as an integral part of a joint force maritime component command (JFMCC) in the Black Sea against the current Russian threat. The Global Operating Model provides an operational and cognitive framework to apply integration across through contact, blunt, and surge layers. In the contact layer, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to maintain regional access, assure allies, and counter expanding Russian influence despite limitations imposed by geography and international conventions. As a blunt layer force, Marine integration supports the JFMCC's operational objectives of denying Russian sea control and freedom of movement despite lacking a persistent force in the region. Finally, in the surge layer, a Navy and Marine integrated JFMCC gains a greater ability to project power against a robust anti-access and area-denial network and decisively defeat Russian aggression. The author acknowledges the current discussion on Marine and Navy integration at the service-chief level with a focus on the Pacific. However, to the best of the author's knowledge, this is the only paper exploring and proposing an operational framework for Marine integration using a functional component construct in the Black Sea.

Introduction



Figure 1: Black Sea Region¹

Russian surface groups, sortied from their naval bases around the Black Sea, have been operating in the region with impunity for years. The goal is Russia's version of naval diplomacy. Create space between the Black Sea NATO member-states, demonstrate overt control of the economic levers in the region, and maintain access to Syria through Tartus, Russia's only naval base in the Middle East. These goals are a significant aspect of Russia's overall strategy to challenge the 70 years of U.S. dominance in the Mediterranean and expand its influence around the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean.

These Russian actions serve as a reminder that great power competition is not solely focused on China. Russia remains a strategic competitor and military threat. In turn, the U.S. Marine Corps is a valuable player, not just in the Pacific against China, but also in the Black Sea against Russia. The Global Operating Model (GOM) provides a cognitive and

¹ Deborah Sanders. "Naval Diplomacy in the Black Sea: Sending Mixed Messages." *Naval War College Review* 60, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 64.

operational framework to explore the validity of Navy and Marine Corps integration in this region through the contact, blunt, and surge layers.² For the JFMCC, the GOM also provides leaders an operational warfighting framework that doubles as a sea control and power projection model.

Marine integration with the Navy is the best way to win in competition and armed conflict against Russia in the Black Sea, especially when organized as an integral part of a joint force maritime component command (JFMCC). In the contact layer, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to maintain regional access, assure allies, and compete against Russian influence despite limitations imposed by geography and international conventions. As a blunt layer force, Marine integration supports the JFMCC's operational objectives of denying Russian sea control and freedom of movement despite lacking a persistent force in the region. Finally, in the surge layer, a Navy and Marine integrated JFMCC gains a greater ability to project power against a robust anti-access and area-denial (A2AD) network and decisively defeat Russian aggression.

Why Does This Region Matter?

The geo-economic importance of the Black Sea outweighs its relatively small size. First, sea routes across the Black Sea are the most efficient way for bulk commercial goods to move between dozens of countries. Each day, over 450 bulk merchant ships transit into or out of the Black Sea. These ships are responsible for moving over 500 million tons of goods

 $^{^2}$ The 2018 National Defense Strategy uses the Global Operating Model (GOM) to describe the employment of the joint force across the world for all potential missions. The model is designed to allow the U.S. to compete more effectively below the level of armed conflict; delay, degrade, or deny adversary aggression; surge warwinning forces and manage conflict escalation.

per year.³ While trade in the Western Pacific dwarfs these numbers, the rate of trade in the Black Sea region is increasing significantly.⁴ As the rate of trade increases, the need for influence and control over trade in the area will increase proportionally as well.

In addition to its increasingly powerful economic engine, the region also has significant geopolitical implications for the United States, a leading member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Black Sea region is a contact point between NATO members and Russia. The proximity between NATO members and Russia results in a direct struggle for influence and strategic positioning. NATO's recent support to Ukraine and Georgia in their conflicts against Russia has highlighted this regional competition. Another primary reason the Black Sea remains of interest to NATO and the U.S. is that it provides a southern access point into Russia. These reasons make the entire region strategic key terrain for NATO should offensive action against Russia become necessary. The Black Sea will remain a strategically important region for the U.S. as competition continues or in the event of military escalations between Russia and NATO.

³ Deborah Sanders, "Maritime Security in the Black Sea: Can Regional Solutions Work?" *European Security* 18, no. 2 (June 2009): 101-124.

⁴ Sanders, "Maritime Security."

The Russian Problem



Figure 2: Russian Weapons Systems and Ranges in the Black Sea (overlay created by author)

The JFMCC faces a set of operational problems due to the strategic importance of the Black Sea. At the operational level, Russia is using the Black Sea as a hub to consolidate and project power into neighboring countries and the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵ To support power projection, Russia is developing a powerful Black Sea Fleet (BSF) and significant sea-denial capabilities in the region. Russia has implemented a modernization program for its BSF that includes six modern submarines, three guided-missile frigates, six missile corvettes, and dozens of smaller combatants. These vessels are specially designed for the Black Sea littorals and are capable of carrying Russia's most advanced anti-ship and anti-air systems.⁶ Elements of this fleet are already projecting power into Syria from the Eastern Mediterranean,

⁵ Michael Peterson, "The Naval Power Shift in the Black Sea," *War on the Rocks*, January, 9, 2019.

⁶ Igor Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis: Towards a Greater Russian Maritime Power in the Black Sea." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 14, no. 3 (September 2014): 367-382.

demonstrating Russia's ability and interest to expand its operational reach.⁷ The Black Sea Fleet has quickly become a modern and capable adversary.

In addition to modernizing its fleet, Russia is developing an imposing set of seadenial capabilities, which it calls its "counter-navy." This sea denial force, the BSF's operational center of gravity, blankets nearly the entire Black Sea region with anti-ship and anti-air missile systems, integrates capable land-based aircraft, and employs a robust electronic warfare capability (see Figure 2).⁸ In previous decades, the JFMCC could project power to nearly anywhere in the world while its capital assets were safe from enemy action. This is no longer true in the Black Sea.

JFMCC Operational Goals and Shortfalls

The JFMCC, as a functional construct, will likely be assigned the objectives in the maritime domain around the Black Sea. These objectives align with the GOM's layers found in the 2018 National Defense Strategy. These layers also serve as an effective framework to examine JFMCC requirements and challenges as they pursue their objectives.

In the contact layer, the JFMCC must maintain access to the region, assure allies, and compete against Russian influence. International combined naval exercises like BLACKSEAFOR, SEA BREEZE, and BLACK SEA HARMONY, part of the combatant command campaign exercise plan, all contribute to these goals as a way to compete against Russia without armed conflict.⁹ To continue to meet these goals, the JFMCC must overcome unique challenges presented by the Black Sea region. The Montreux Convention is one of

⁷ Alex, Lockie, "Russian Sent a Massive Naval Armada to Syria-And it Looks to be Readying to Fight the U.S." *Business Insider*, August 28, 2018.

⁸ Grzegorz Kuczyński, "Mare Nostrum Strategy: Russian military activity in the Black Sea," *Warsaw Institute*, March 2019.

⁹ Dmitry Gorenburg, "Is a new Russian black sea fleet coming? Or is it here?" War on the Rocks, July 31, 2018.

these challenges. It is an international agreement that limits the size, number, and operational duration of ships in the Black Sea from non-littoral Black Sea nations.¹⁰ Adhering to this convention means that Russia, a Black Sea nation, will almost always have a numerical naval advantage within the Black Sea. The Montreux Convention, along with constrained geography, also prevents the JFMCC from moving anything more substantial than a cruiser into the Black Sea, significantly reducing potential U.S. military capabilities.

In the blunt layer, denying Russian sea control and preventing a fait accompli similar to their recent annexation of Crimea is a likely JFMCC task. To do this, the JFMCC must maintain a persistent and credible presence in the region. This task is becoming increasingly difficult as U.S. defense priorities shift to the Pacific. As a result of this shift, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command will be assigned the majority of Navy assets, with less than 40 percent left to distribute between the remaining five combatant commands.¹¹ There simply is not enough Navy to always be in the Black Sea to counter Russian aggression.

In the surge layer, the JFMCC is responsible for quickly projecting power into the Black Sea region and decisively defeating Russian aggression. Russian A2AD systems, combined with the littoral geography of the region, make power projection a daunting task. The JFMCC must set conditions for power projection, sustain operational logistics, and support naval campaigns through combat force projection ashore.

Even the smallest Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) is capable of significantly enhancing the JFMCC's ability to meet its objectives in the Black Sea. Standard Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) number approximately 2,400 Marines, built around a

¹⁰ Ben Hodges, Janusz Bugajski and Peter Doran, "Strengthening NATO's Easter Flank: A Strategy for Baltic-Black Sea Coherence." *Center for European Policy Analysis,* (November 2019).

¹¹ Jim Garamone, "Panetta Desscribes U.S. Shift in Asia-Pacific." Armed Forces Press Service, June 1, 2012.

battalion-sized ground combat element. A robust aviation component of fixed and rotarywing aircraft and a logistics element directly supports this ground element. A common command oversees these three elements which are able to deploy to and from naval shipping and expeditionary land-based locations. Further, MAGTFs are designed to be tailor-made to achieve specific mission sets separate from naval shipping. These Special Purpose MAGTFs (SPMAGTF) provide the JFMCC with operational fires, scouting, command and control (C2), and other supporting functions to assist with sea control or sea denial mission sets by reinforcing aviation, long-range fires, and scouting capabilities.¹² This "supplies the [JFMCC and] joint force with an 'any sensor, any shooter' capability that persists within an adversary's threat rings."¹³ Marine integration with the JFMCC in each of the layers overcomes regional challenges, leading to strategic and operational success in the region.

¹² The Marine Corps is currently investing heavily in new capabilities that directly contribute to sea control or sea denial. Improving current rocket artillery and adding a Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) is giving standard Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) a remotely-operating, land-based, long-range, precision-guided missile capability. Additionally, all MAGTFs will soon be networked into the Naval Tactical Grid to support Joint All Domain Command and Control, Finally, the development of a new family of amphibious combat vehicles and light-weight tactical vehicles is already enhancing the operational mobility of the MAGTF in the littorals.

¹³ U.S. Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *The Honorable James F. Geurts and Lieutenant General Eric M. Smith Statement on Marine Corps Ground Programs.* 116th Cong., 2nd sess., March 5, 2020.



The Contact Layer

Figure 3: Competition for Influence in the Contact Layer (overlay created by author)

In the contact layer, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to maintain regional access, assure allies, and counter expanding Russian influence despite limitations imposed by geography and international conventions. Specifically, Marine integration increases the JFMCC's capability and capacity to meet these requirements through maritime interdiction operations and establishing naval infrastructure across the Black Sea region. These actions align well within the contact layer because they serve to compete with Russia while also preventing potential escalation. Professor James Holmes of the U.S. Naval War College describes the contact layer as "armed competition that casts a shadow across an adversary's decision-making process."¹⁴ Integrating these two unique Marine capabilities into the

¹⁴ Jim Holmes, "U.S. Maritime Strategy toward China." Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, 19 February 2019.

JFMCC as part of the contact layer provides an opportunity to rebalance the factor of force while complicating Russia's cognitive processes on how and where to compete or escalate.

The JFMCC must integrate the Marine Corps into maritime interdiction operations (MIO) and visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) activities to compete in the Black Sea under Russian sea denial umbrellas. Marine integration into MIO provides the JFMCC additional capacity and capability to compete against Russia while not directly challenging them. Using Marines to conduct MIO through VBSS missions frees up sailors to perform their primary ship fighting duties. This reduces the risk to mission a ship's commander takes by keeping sailors at their primary jobs and makes the JFMCC more capable.

At an operational level, a MAGTF task-organized for MIO uses its organic logistic and air assets to operate independently from Navy shipping. Integrating in this manner frees up JFMCC assets to be used for other missions. As MAGTFs expand the locations they operate from, to include allied countries and non-traditional shipping, it becomes more difficult for Russia to track and harder for malign actors to avoid interdiction. A MEU, integrated with the JFMCC in this manner, adds the ability to conduct up to six additional VBSS actions a day.¹⁵ This integration adds capacity and supplements the JFMCC's capability to compete with Russia in the contact layer.

In addition to MIO, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to prepare for armed conflict by using opportunities presented in the contact layer to set the theater should Russian forces escalate into armed conflict and assures regional allies by demonstrating U.S. commitment. Setting the theater is a term often used in the context of Army operations in

¹⁵ Six VBSS actions a day calculated by number of maneuver elements, supported by air and/or ship transport, each with associated assets for contingencies (quick reaction, casualty evacuation, fires), all organic to a MEU or battalion-sized SPMAGTF.

support of land campaigns.¹⁶ However, its principles also apply to naval operations. Setting the theater allows the JFMCC to prepare for potential armed conflict by establishing needed infrastructure across the region. This infrastructure needs to be in place before hostilities commence because Russian sea denial systems will prevent additional development, and the Montreux Convention and the Black Sea geography will limit access by major naval assets.

To overcome this shortfall, integrating Marine infrastructure development, as part of the contact layer, allows the JFMCC to be ready should competition escalate into armed conflict. The Navy's and Marine Corps' Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) concept, while generally designed for the Pacific, describes JFMCC support requirements and how Marine integration can meet those requirements.¹⁷ To do this in the Black Sea, Marines integrate into existing combatant command campaign plan exercises to build and leave behind completed infrastructure. Examples include Marine Wing Support and Air Control Squadrons, integrated with Navy Seabees, constructing and repairing runways in the Aegean, building long-term aviation fuel storage containers on the East Coast of Romania, and conducting partner training with Bulgarian allies to develop radar installations that cover the Southern portion of the Black Sea. Marine Engineer Battalions also expand hasty port facilities capable of reloading of vertical launch systems and build landing pads across the region (See Figure 3). Marine integration in the contact layer complicates Russia's operational decision-making processes, assures allies, and maintains regional access without significantly increasing major assets in the region or provoking hostilities.

¹⁶ Joseph Shimerdla and Ryan Kort, "Setting the Theater: A Definition, Framework, and Rationale for Effective Resourcing at the Theater Army Level." *Army University Press*, (June 2018).

¹⁷ EABO is a future naval operational concept conducted by low-signature naval and joint forces with operationally relevant sea control and denial capabilities. It is designed to support the JFMCC and fleet commanders in the fight for sea control, by exploiting the opportunities afforded by key maritime terrain, particularly in close and confined seas. From EABO Handbook.



The Blunt Layer

Figure 4: Blunt Layer actions (overlay created by author)

In the blunt layer, Marine integration provides the JFMCC a persistent force that will contribute to denying Russia sea control and freedom of movement. Marine integration with the JFMCC in the blunt layer provides distributed and persistent operational fires and scouting capabilities for the force as a whole while remaining operationally relevant despite Russian targeting. The blunt layer envisions a clash between JFMCC sea denial efforts and Russian sea control efforts, around maritime key terrain, to forcibly achieve Russian goals before the full might of the U.S. military and NATO can mobilize and respond. Operational fires, scouting, and C2 will be decisive in this struggle for sea control.

The JFMCC must fight with resources already in place, at pre-selected locations. These locations are maritime key terrain Russia must control or pass by to project power, thereby localizing the struggle for sea control (see Figure 4). The Black Sea region has an exceptional amount of maritime key terrain to include the Kerch Strait, Bosporus Strait, Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles Strait. Additional opportunities exist to use the 200 islands scattered throughout the Aegean Sea for land-based Marine units designed to counter Russian sea control efforts. The Joint Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons concept describe these Marine units as an inside force. A force that provides a "persistent forward presence to achieve an advantage...that will blunt adversary interference and set the conditions to introduce additional combat power ..."¹⁸ Marine integration in the Black Sea provides the JFMCC with a myriad of options to operationally employ land-based Marine Corps units to blunt Russian aggression.

The first way an integrated Marine and Navy JFMCC meets Russian aggression in the blunt layer is by enhancing the firepower function of the JFMCC through operational fires. Recent service, combatant, and joint staff-level wargaming efforts prioritized gaining insights on the employment of fires inside Russian threat rings. Globally Integrated Wargame 2019 revealed a decisive advantage to the force that can strike effectively first and remain "operationally relevant" inside Russia's long-range weapons ranges.¹⁹ The Marine Corps is this force for the JFMCC. Supporting this are Marine efforts to develop a land-based naval strike missile system specifically designed to strike enemy naval vessels from hard to find littoral locations.²⁰ Also, a recent order from the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed the tripling of precision-guided, long-range rocket artillery units while eliminating all main battle tank units.²¹ This demonstrates the Marines are serious about integration with the

¹⁸ United States Marine Corps. 2018. *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations Handbook: Considerations for Force Development and Employment*. Version 1.1. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Concepts and Plans Division, 5.

¹⁹ United States Marine Corps. 2020: *Force Design 2030*. Quantico, VA. Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps: 5.

²⁰ Kate Tringham, "Navy League 2019: U.S. Marine Corps Procures Naval Strike Missile," *Jane's Navy International*, May 9, 2019.

²¹ USMC, Force Design 2030.

JFMCC by investing in platforms that contribute to sea control and divesting from those that do not. Marine integration of maritime fires gives the JFMCC a decisive advantage with a force that strikes effectively first and remains operationally relevant.

The second way Marine integration blunts Russian aggression is through C2 and sensor support to the JFMCC. Given the robustness of Russia's sea denial assets in the Black Sea, Navy ships are generally not able to use their organic sensors to achieve their own targeting data prior to a strike. Marine units, acting as the JFMCC's inside force, cover this gap by increasing the JFMCC's scouting ability and improving operational, tactical, and technical C2 at the point of friction. Like land-based fires, small Marine units with drones, radars, and electronic warfare capabilities distributed near maritime key terrain enhance the overall scouting capabilities of the JFMCC in denied areas. A key finding in the Naval Services War Game in 2019 recognized the importance of sensing and targeting Russian assets while remaining undetected. It claimed, "the hider-versus finder competition is real. Losing this competition has enormous and potentially catastrophic consequences. This makes success in the reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance mission an imperative for success."²² Small distributed Marine units will pass targeting data to Navy ships and aircraft for prosecution. Those Marine units assist with the close-in coordination of those strikes through networked C2 functions. The high-value naval ship or expensive aircraft remains relatively safe outside of Russian threat rings. Marine integration helps the JFMCC win the hider-finder competition.

Distributed Marine units remain operationally relevant because they are more survivable, cost-effective, and are more risk worthy than the other options available to the

²² USMC, Force Design 2030.

JFMCC commander. These land-based Marine units will number approximately a dozen troops and a few vehicles, taking up less area than two basketball courts. This low signature reduces the probability of detection and reduces their chances of successful targeting by enemy weapon systems by a factor of five to twelve times when compared to Navy capital ships.²³ Dozens of these small units, simultaneously employed across hundreds of potential locations in the region, survive in more places, for longer, and retain more capability than Navy ships and aircraft. Since they are also cheaper to replace and less impactful if lost than warships or aircraft, the JFMCC commander may accept higher risk in their employment. These options do not exist in the JFMCC without Marine integration.

Marine integration also increases the capacity and enhances the capabilities of the JFMCC for sea denial. One battalion-sized MAGTF, task-organized for sea denial, can organically deny sea control around six pieces of maritime key terrain at a radius of over 100 nautical miles. It also doubles existing JFMCC sea denial zones by using its sensor and C2 assets for a total of nearly 80,000 and 40,000 square miles in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, respectively.²⁴ This type of integration in the blunt layer provides an opportunity for the JFMCC to rebalance the factor of force and time against Russia. Buying time and conducting a credible economy of force mission "prevents Russia from achieving a fait accompli" and gives the JFMCC commander more options while preventing Russia from achieving its operational goals before the U.S. can respond.²⁵

²⁴ Number of pieces of key terrain estimated by placing one firing launcher at the site equipped with a Naval Strike Missile. Six launchers in a battery assigned to a battalion, NSM estimated range of 100 nautical miles. Increase in JFMCC sea denial zones estimated by ISR and communication asset ranges organic to a MEU.
²⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee. "Hearings before the Committee on the Implementation

²³ See Table I in Appendix A.

U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee. "Hearings before the Committee on the Implementation of the National Defense Strategy." 116th Cong., 1st sess., January 29, 2019.

The Surge Layer



Figure 5: Decisive Action in the Surge Layer (overlay created by author)

Should blunt layer actions fail to deter Russian escalation, Marine integration in the surge layer allows the JFMCC to project power into a robust A2AD network and decisively defeat Russian aggression in the Black Sea. Marine integration in this layer sets the conditions for naval power projection into the theater, secures sea lines of communication (SLOC) for operational logistics, and supports naval campaigns by projecting force ashore (see Figure 5). In the surge layer, the JFMCC shifts from sea denial to sea control efforts as forces arrive from outside the theater. These surge forces "project power deep inland to disrupt the enemy, destroy enemy forces, and seize terrain in support of a joint campaign."²⁶ Marine units, already in place in the contact and blunt layers, and operating inside Russian threat rings, are in an ideal position to support the introduction of JFMCC surge forces.

²⁶ Secretary of the Navy. March 2015: *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. Washington, DC. Pentagon.

Marine integration sets the conditions for the war-winning forces that must come from outside the Black Sea region to defeat Russia.

The first and most significant way Marine integration enables the JFMCC in this layer is to set the conditions for naval power projection by naval expeditionary surge forces. Given Russian sea denial threats, U.S. national interests, and geographic limitations in the Black Sea, the decisive "war-winning" forces needed will primarily be naval aircraft, guided-missile capable naval vessels, and amphibious ground forces.²⁷ Marine integration leverages infrastructure developed in the contact layer to support this massive inflow of additional naval forces. In a decisive fight, Russian firepower, maritime chokepoints, and water depth will force U.S. carriers to remain well south of the Black Sea. Additionally, as surge forces become necessary, naval air assets will arrive and fight without being embarked on a carrier. Simply put, it is likely that the JFMCC will have more aircraft than the carriers available to support them, and the carriers they do have will have to maintain significant standoff from the conflict areas.

The dozens of potential airfields, pads, and resupply points that were either built or surveyed in the previous layers should now be used to support naval airpower. Recent joint training events with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in the Pacific validated a Navy and Marine concept that "envisions employing F-35Bs [across] a shifting network of expeditionary airfields, tactical landing zones, and forward arming and refueling points..."²⁸ In addition to this concept of logistical support, Marine units already in place before surge layer activities will continue to provide land-based firepower, sensor, and C2 support to

 ²⁷ Department of Defense. 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States. Washington, DC. Pentagon.
 ²⁸ United States Navy: December 2018: A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority. Washington, DC.

Chief of Naval Operations.

JFMCC forces outside threat rings. These distributed Marine units act as a breach into denied areas for naval surge forces.²⁹ Integrating multiple domains through a combined Marine and Navy JFMCC potentially triples the number of F-35B sorties available, increases their survivability, and reduces their rearming and refueling times. These distributed units are difficult to detect and target, especially when used only as needed and for short durations. Integrating Marine support for naval airpower will significantly increase the combat power and potential available to the JFMCC commander.

Another critical capability Marine integration provides the JFMCC in the surge layer is protecting SLOCs used by vulnerable Military Sealift Command (MSC) shipping to move supplies needed by war-winning forces into the region. In the surge layer, the JFMCC will rely heavily on MSC shipping for its operational-level logistics. Despite its unorthodoxy, the JFMCC should task SPMAGTFs to secure portions of designated SLOCs. Using distributed MV-22s, F-35Bs, and long-range precision fires, a SPMAGTF task-organized for maritime security, can secure up to 500 miles of SLOCs in critical areas.³⁰ The Navy does not have enough ships to escort MSC shipping in a surge layer-level conflict. Integrating Marines to secure SLOCs is a better option than telling the MSC, "you're on your own. Go fast, stay quiet."³¹ Marine integration provides the JFMCC an opportunity to rebalance the factors of time and space along these SLOCs.

In addition to maintaining distributed units across the Black Sea, Marine integration allows the JFMCC to project force ashore in amphibious operations as part of naval

²⁹ Scott Cuomo, Olivia Garard, Noah Spataro, and Jeff Cummings, "Not Yet Openly At War, But Still Mostly At Peace: The Marine Corps' Roles And Missions In And Around Key Maritime Terrain." *War on the Rocks*, October 23, 2018.

³⁰ Calculated using a task-organized, battalion-sized SPMATF operating from islands in the Aegean Sea reinforced with additional aviation, C2, and fires assets. Illustrated in Figure 4 along the Aegean Sea SLOC.
³¹ David Larter, "You're on Your Own': U.S. Sealift Can't Count on Navy Escorts in the Next Big War."

Defense News, October 10, 2018.

campaigns. This capability is especially relevant in the Black Sea, should NATO require large-scale action against Russia's southern flank for a decisive action.³² Aggregating distributed Marine units to provide a credible amphibious assault capability in the JFMCC will be a critical enabling operation for this potential NATO offensive. The JFMCC must enable "the decisive force that can arrive later, exploiting the operational and political leverage created by the blunt layer...to end the conflict on terms we prefer."³³ Marine integration with the JFMCC is key to defeating Russian aggression in the Black Sea.

Counter Argument

Some may say Marine integration with the JFMCC in the Black Sea is short-sighted. They argue this concept creates redundant capabilities based on current Army initiatives. Others may claim Marine integration with the JFMCC focuses only on one component at the expense of the joint force. Still, others argue this concept falsely assumes the combatant and joint force commander will always direct the proper command authorities and relationships necessary for this concept to work

Some argue this proposed operational construct of Marine integration creates redundancies to the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces, designed to address the joint concept of multi-domain operations (MDO). The MDO concept is undeniably similar to the general idea behind Marine integration with the JFMCC and the EABO concept. It calls for "Army forces to penetrate and dis-integrate enemy anti-access and area denial systems and exploit the resultant freedom of maneuver to achieve strategic objectives..."³⁴ With three Army

³² Hodges, "Strengthening NATO's Easter Flank: A Strategy for Baltic-Black Sea Coherence."

³³ Armed Services Committee, "Implementation of the National Defense Strategy."

³⁴ United States Army. November 2018. *Multi-Domain Operations*. TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1. Washington, DC, Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army. iii.

MDO task forces created for the Pacific and another on its way to Europe to fight across all of the domains, detractors claim the Marine Corps may be selling a product no one needs.

Others may claim Marine integration reduces the capacity of the joint force by only focusing on the JFMCC at the expense of the other components and services. They claim, integrating the Marine Corps with the JFMCC limits the Marine Corps' ability to support the Air Force and Army across the GOM in the Black Sea. All the services have a role in the contact, blunt, and surge layer against Russia. Defense Secretary Esper stressed his prioritization for cooperation during testimony to Congress, saying he will "ensure a mature joint concept of operations and the related capabilities [against Russian A2/AD capabilities] will be one of my top priorities."³⁵ Detractors believe that if a concept is not built from the ground up to support cooperation with every service, then its value is questionable.

Still, others may argue this concept is built around a false assumption that the combatant and joint force commander will always direct the proper command authorities and relationships necessary for this concept to work. For Marine integration at this level to be feasible, the combatant commander must agree to place both Navy and Marine Corps forces under operational control of the JFMCC. It is unrealistic to assume that this relationship will always be established. Despite the apparent Marine and Navy service-level alignment on integration, the service chiefs have no direct control over command relationships.³⁶ Detractors believe assuming the Marine Corps will be integrated and always task-organized under the JFMCC in the Black Sea is a significant flaw in the argument.

³⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, Advance Policy Questions for Dr. Mark Esper: Nominee for Appointment to be Secretary of Defense. 116th Cong., 1st sess., July 2019.

³⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff. 2018. *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States: JP 3-0 Joint Operations*. Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017. III-3

Rebuttal

While these arguments do present valid concerns, Marine integration with the JFMCC is not redundant. It prioritizes the fight for sea control as a specialized, complex task in-and-of-itself. Planning for sea control must be deliberate. Units gaining or denying sea control must be specially equipped and trained for it. While the Army's MDO task forces do provide operational options for operating in contested environments, it does not fulfill the same requirements as Marine integration with the JFMCC. The sum of Marine integration efforts is greater than its parts, allowing the JFMCC opportunities to systematically rebalance time, force, and space on an escalating spectrum. There is a requirement for both the Army's MDO forces and a Marine integrated JFMCC in the Black Sea as a previous Marine Commandant noted, "there's no such thing as a crowded battlefield."³⁷ As the DOD's priorities shift toward the Pacific, Marine integration with the JFMCC in the Black Sea provides more rebalancing opportunities and serves as a global operational economy of force mission.³⁸

Purposeful Marine integration with the JFMCC also does not imply exclusivity at the expense of the joint force. Successful execution of the GOM requires coordination and mutual support between all services and components. The entire joint force will need to provide show of force exercises, air-to-air refueling, long-range fires, air defense, and assemble large ground combat formations around the Black Sea. Marine integration with the JFMCC does not preclude the joint force commander's ability to direct supporting and supported relationships between components. Marine integration allows the JFMCC to pivot, based on the type and scope of supporting or supported relationships, using the inherently

³⁷ General Al Grey, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps

³⁸ Department of Defense. 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States. Washington, DC. Pentagon.

scalable MEUs and SPMAGTFs illustrated as baseline examples. As other components increase their forces in the region, the JFMCC has the option to scale down the size of its Marine integration. As those components' capabilities diminish, Marine integration scales up to brigade and larger sizes, providing the joint force exactly what it needs. Marine integration allows the JFMCC to be exceptional at one thing while still being able to support the rest of the joint force.

The best and most effective use of the Marine Corps service component will be to integrate early with the JFMCC by establishing the proper command relationships. Combatant commanders recognize they gain more value by purposely building Marine integration into the JFMCC from the ground-up. They will establish the necessary command relationships to ensure success in the maritime domain and win the fight for sea control. Aligning on the most likely employment scenario in the Black Sea means the Marine Corps and Navy can now plan, train, and equip more efficiently and effectively with an objective focus. Rather than engaging in pedantic arguments about command relationships, combatant commanders will support Marine integration with the JFMCC by organizing their forces in a way that allows them the best chance to strike effectively first and win in the Black Sea.

Conclusion

It is evident that Marine integration with the JFMCC is valuable in the Black Sea. The JFMCC is the force that needs to be prepositioned in places most likely to see littoral competition and conflict. Gone are the days when the U.S. military could move from their point of departure, arrive on the outskirts of a theater of operations, and then begin their fight. Now, the fight will begin long before our country even realizes it is in one. Marine integration enables the JFMCC to compete in the contact layer more effectively. It increases

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the JFMCC's capacity to roll back Russian aggression in the blunt layer by striking effectively first and winning the hider-finder competition. It allows the JFMCC to project power to decisively defeat Russian aggression against the BSF and capable A2AD networks in the surge layer. A Navy and Marine team, under the JFMCC, is the most efficient and effective way for the U.S. to support its national interests against the current Russian threat in the Black Sea.

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Appendix

Table I: Probability of Hit Chart

Missile Salvo Size Generate 95% Probability of Hit (PH)					
CVN-78	LHA-6	LPD-17	Marine NSM Firing Unit		
5	8	12	60		

*Methodology: Author expanded table and analysis from Major Leo Spaeder's "Get Small or Get Shot.³⁹ Calculations used a circular error probability (CEP) of 50% common to standard, modern long-range ballistic missiles found in Russian inventories. Calculated CEP to the radius of the potential targets in the table based on ½ the lengths of the assets. Estimated a Marine, land-based unit firing a naval strike missile would occupy an area 56m by 30m based on current HIMARS and ATACMS doctrine. ½ length for CVN: 169m, LHA: 128m, LPD: 104m.

³⁹ Leo Spaeder, "Get Small or Get Shot: Increasing Survivability for Maritime Operations." *Marine Corps Gazette*, December, 2019. Retrieved https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/Get-Small-or-Get-Shot.pdf