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Final Student Research Report

## Composite Warfare and The Amphibians

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Thesis: Amphibious forces must be integrated with naval battle groups which employ the Composite Warfare Concept (CWC). This paper proposes integrating these forces under a common commander with amphibious and battle group expertise.

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# COMPOSITE WARFARE AND THE AMPHIBIANS

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## COMPOSITE WARFARE AND THE AMPHIBIANS

### Outline

**Thesis:** Amphibious forces must be integrated with naval battle groups which employ the Composite Warfare Concept. We propose integrating these forces under a common commander with amphibious and battle group expertise.

- I. Introduction: the problem of integrating amphibious forces with Composite Warfare doctrine.
  - A. The Composite Warfare Concept
    - 1. Origin: meeting the demands of modern naval warfare.
    - 2. Structure: billets and command relationships.
    - 3. Characteristics: command by negation and defensive orientation.
  - B. Amphibious Doctrine
    - 1. Origin from WWII.
    - 2. The initiating directive.
- II. Historical Perspective: a review of history puts this problem in the proper perspective.
  - A. Guadalcanal: tension between CATF and CLF over command of the battle ashore.
  - B. Leyte Gulf: Halsey deserts the landing force in pursuing the Japanese fleet.
  - C. Grenada: without an initiating directive, the carrier battle group could withdraw its assets supporting the landing force.
  - D. Beirut: CTF 61 is denied authority over naval assets supporting the landing force.
  - E. Summary: history shows that this problem predates the development of CWC.
- III. Third Fleet's Proposal: two tactical memos of Third Fleet's propose integrating amphibious forces into the CWC structure.
  - A. Third Fleet's proposal is defective.
    - 1. It subordinates the end to the means.
    - 2. The CWC commander is inclined to emphasize the battle groups needs over the amphibious forces.
    - 3. The CWC commander, aboard his carrier, will be far from the battle on the beachhead.
- IV. Our Proposal
  - A. CWC commander and CAF never "dual-hatted."
  - B. CAF has both amphibious and battle group

expertise.

C. Present-day CATFs be renamed "ATCs."

V. Justification of Our Proposal

- A. Power projection versus sea control.
  - 1. Strategic versus tactical sea control.
  - 2. Tactical sea control a means to power projection.
- B. What our proposal offers.
  - 1. Unity of command.
  - 2. Integrity of the CWC tactic.
  - 3. Resolution of conflicts between battle groups and amphibians.
  - 4. CAF can devote attention to the amphibious assault.
- C. What our proposal avoids.
  - 1. Placing responsibility for amphibious assault onto CWC commander.
  - 2. Redundancy of having CAF and CATF responsible for amphibious assault.
  - 3. Subordinating an offensive capability to a defensive tactic.
  - 4. Subsuming amphibious warfare under command "by negation."
- D. What does the CWC manual say?
  - 1. Designates an OTC and CWC commander.
  - 2. Permits separating CWC duties from the OTC while OTC supervises power projection.
  - 3. Parallels our own proposal.

VI. Practical implications: what is the practical effect of our proposal?

- A. The officer corps.
  - 1. Need to "cross-deck" navy officers.
- B. CAF's platform: the LCC.
- C. CAF's staff: must have expertise in all areas of amphibious and battle group operations.

VII. Conclusion: three considerations should guide future discussions.

- A. Problem lies in integrating battle groups and amphibious forces.
- B. Amphibious doctrine has not been implemented in many recent amphibious operations.
- C. The U.S. Navy must alter command patterns for its officers to solve this problem.
  - 1. Existing command patterns in the Navy must not dictate the solution.

## Composite Warfare and the Amphibians

In the last decade a daunting problem has surfaced to face our naval communities. How should we employ amphibious forces in conjunction with the Navy's Composite Warfare doctrine? Where in this Composite Warfare structure do we fit the Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF) or the Commander, Landing Force (CLF), billets unique to amphibious operations? Is the Composite Warfare Concept (CWC) even compatible with amphibious warfare, or vice versa? Amphibious doctrine, formulated before the Composite Warfare Concept, is naturally silent on the matter, and Composite Warfare doctrine scarcely mentions amphibious operations. Addressing this silence is the crux of this paper.

The Composite Warfare Concept, a tactic designed to counter the high-speed threat of modern navies, tailors the defensive capabilities of the naval battle group to the three realms of modern naval warfare: air, surface, and subsurface. By assigning responsibility for each of these areas to a corresponding "functional warfare commander," and by allocating naval assets by function to each warfare commander, Composite Warfare permits the rapid use of the group's many capabilities for its own defense. Overall responsibility for coordination lies with the Composite Warfare commander. The result is a

flexible and responsive naval force, capable of swiftly shifting its assets to meet a rapidly changing threat.

On the other hand, amphibious doctrine has remained largely unchanged since its development in the crucible of the Pacific theater in World War II. The essentials of amphibious doctrine, with its billets of Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF) and Commander, Landing Force (CLF), are well known to Marines and most sailors. While the most frequently used adjective to describe amphibious doctrine is "time-tested," this very stability has subjected it to the criticism that it has not adapted to the Navy's relatively new Composite Warfare doctrine. Difficulties during recent conflicts in employing amphibious forces with carrier battle group support (i.e., in Grenada and Beirut) have buttressed these complaints.

Those who believe, however, that this problem is one of recent invention are mistaken. The Pacific campaign of WWII was rife with misunderstandings, confusions, and conflicts between the commanders of amphibious forces and those of naval battle groups. Understanding the historical lessons of WWII and of more recent conflicts is essential to grasping where the real problem lies. This historical perspective, therefore, plays a pivotal role in our analysis. In addition, we examine one prominent alternative offered by Third Fleet, a solution as well known among naval theorists as it is profoundly misguided. We offer an alternative which avoids the pitfalls not only

of Third Fleet's proposal, but of historical experience which predates the Composite Warfare Concept.

Key to a sympathetic grasp of our proposal is an untrammelled view of Composite Warfare and amphibious doctrine. We begin, then, by presenting the basic tenets of these doctrines.

#### The Composite Warfare Concept

The Composite Warfare Concept (CWC) was developed within the last 20 years to adapt defensive naval doctrine to the emerging speed and lethality of modern naval warfare. The development of high performance fighter aircraft with their deadly packages of anti-ship missiles has made battle on the high seas an event requiring ever swifter decision-making and response. Naval vessels too have become formidable weapons platforms. Yet their varied inventories of long-range interceptors and missiles, as well as powerful anti-submarine capabilities, have created the need to integrate this arsenal into a unified force. This was the impulse behind the development of Composite Warfare: to integrate the variegated capabilities of modern naval vessels by unifying their many functions under individual commanders. The authority delegated to these functional commanders, extending to functions rather than just to vessels, cuts across deck lines. An anti-submarine warfare commander, for instance, commands anti-submarine assets in the battle

group even though they may not all reside aboard his ship. Similarly for the anti-air warfare commander, and so on. Current doctrine for the Composite Warfare, as laid out in the Composite Warfare Commander's Manual NWP 10-1 (29), prescribes the following functional division (Figure 1):

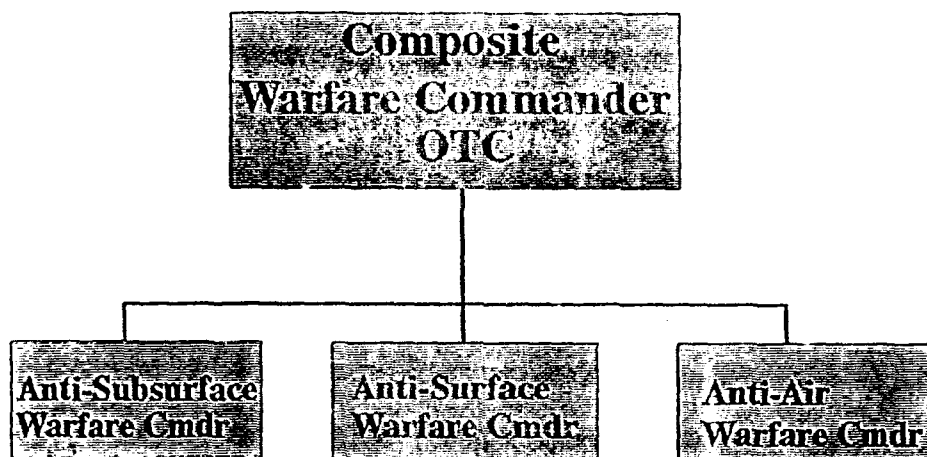


Figure 1

#### THE COMPOSITE WARFARE COMMAND STRUCTURE

Complicating the picture somewhat are the various coordinators. While they lack the tactical authority extended to the warfare commanders, they are responsible for coordinating the employment of a battle group's assets in a particular area. Some of these coordinators are:

Helicopter Element Coordinator (HEC)



Air Resource Element Coordinator (AREC)  
Submarine Element Coordinator (SEC)  
Electronic Warfare Coordinator (EWC)  
Battle Logistics Coordinator (BLC)

A recent change in the Composite Warfare philosophy is the addition of a Strike Warfare Commander to the three-fold functional command system. The Strike Warfare Commander is responsible for conducting offensive air strikes using carrier-based aircraft, the first offensive function to have a place in Composite Warfare.

Here, in a thumbnail sketch, is the heart of the Composite Warfare Concept. In order to understand it fully, however, two of its characteristics must be discussed in greater detail.

First, Composite Warfare is tactically defensive in character. The three functional commanders are denominated by "anti"s; that is, they react to a threat to the battle group. While the group may be employed in a strategically offensive role (its mere presence in an area may constitute an offensive posture by the United States), the Composite Warfare Concept ensures that it remains, for the most part, a tactically defensive force. We say "for the most part" because the recent inclusion of the Strike Warfare Commander dilutes the purely defensive bias of Composite Warfare.

Second, the method of command used by the Composite Warfare commander is command "by negation." This method permits the functional commanders to make decisions and

take action subject only to the veto of the Composite Warfare commander. They need not solicit approval beforehand for a course of action. The Composite Warfare commander does not lead blindly, however. He monitors the decisions of his immediate subordinates and reserves the authority to veto a course of action should he choose. Since the original impulse behind the Composite Warfare Concept was to accelerate decision-making and response by key commanders, it is logical that command by negation should be the standard of Composite Warfare.

These, then, are the chief characteristics of Composite Warfare pertinent to our discussion here. The basic concept is familiar to most naval officers and fairly noncontroversial. Amphibious doctrine is equally familiar and free of controversy when taken by itself. Nevertheless, a perusal of some its characteristics is necessary.

#### Amphibious Doctrine

Amphibious doctrine, as set forth in Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations JCS Pub 3-02 (26), was formulated from two sources. The first was the early Tentative Manual for Landing Operations (1934), and the second was the extensive experience with amphibious landings in the Pacific theatre in World War II. The development of the billets of Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF), and Commander, Landing Force (CLF), and the

sharply defined boundaries of their respective authorities, was the result of trial and much error in the Pacific campaign. Difficulties encountered in the landings at Guadalcanal, for instance, led to the articulation of specific criteria for passing command ashore from the CATF to the CLF.

Its genesis aside, amphibious doctrine is implemented by an initiating directive which promulgates specific guidelines and measures for the harmonious execution of an amphibious mission. Typically published by a numbered fleet commander, this directive provides, among other things, for the following:

1. Creation of the Amphibious Task Force (ATF) and the assignment of supporting forces.
2. Designation of the CATF and CLF and their command relationship.
3. Delineation of the Amphibious Objective Area (AOA).

By making these designations, the fleet commander ensures that procedural measures set forth in amphibious doctrine will be observed. Among the most important of these measures is the CATF's authority over naval assets assigned to him in the creation of the amphibious task force. Also important is the CATF's authority over naval assets within the AOA, authority which ensures continuity of support for the landing force. If naval gunfire ships, for instance, could be removed from gunline duty by the

battle group commander who provided them, the CATF could not guarantee continuous fire support for the force ashore. The progress of a ship-to-shore attack would be seriously impaired. The CATF's authority here is so complete that it even extends to forces not assigned to the ATF in the initiating directive but operating within the AOA. Amphibious doctrine is clear: within the AOA, the CATF is unquestionably in charge.

These procedural guidelines were not formulated lightly. The clear areas of authority laid out for the CATF and CLF were considered essential to the smooth prosecution of amphibious warfare. The logic of this approach is attested to by the absence of serious complaints about the adequacy of amphibious doctrine for many years. However, the development of Composite Warfare doctrine has provoked complaints that amphibious doctrine must be modified to merge with it.

Before we examine this issue, however, a brief look at key amphibious operations is essential. Without this historical perspective it is easy to assume that the problem is simply one of reconciling amphibious doctrine with Composite Warfare. Indeed, most essays on this topic address the issue from this perspective. We will see, however, that the problem is more complex and more intractable, with firm roots in our country's naval past.

## AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### Guadalcanal

The Guadalcanal campaign was the first offensive amphibious operation to be launched by the United States in World War II. At the time, amphibious doctrine called for overall responsibility for the operation to rest with the Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF). Doctrine, however, was silent on command relationships as the battle ashore developed. By the end of this campaign, the seeds of change had been planted, forever circumscribing the CATF's authority over the land battle. What occurred at Guadalcanal that eventually modified the CATF's sweeping authority? The answer lies in the command relationship between the CATF, Rear Admiral Richard K. Turner of the U.S. Navy, and the Commander, Landing Force (CLF), Major General Alexander Vandegrift of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Admiral Turner, a hard-fighting and experienced naval officer, believed that doctrine's silence on command relationships once the land battle began indicated that the CATF retained overall command even after Marines were landed. (5:153) General Vandegrift, on the other hand, believed that he, as the CLF, was in a better position to make command decisions for the landing force once the beachhead was secured. This disagreement between the CATF and the CLF manifested itself throughout the campaign.

From August to October of 1942, Vandegrift was busy holding off powerful attacks by Japanese forces on

Guadalcanal, particularly around Henderson airfield. The importance of holding this airfield, as well as the limited American forces available, induced Vandegrift to view his mission as defensive. Admiral Turner, however, thought quite differently. On three occasions Turner planned to move Marines, already outnumbered by their fanatical enemy, outside the Guadalcanal-Tulagi perimeter. (5:154) Adding insult to injury, Turner, ignorant of the desperate defensive battle the Marines were fighting, rebuked Vandegrift for not taking the offensive with the Japanese. Fortunately for the Marines, other events prevented Turner from carrying out his potentially disastrous diversion of forces. Yet Turner's routine interference in events ashore was a persistent source of irritation for the leathernecks.

One particular case illustrates the difficulties his interference caused. While the Second Marines was fighting on Tulagi during 7-8 August, Turner transferred the reinforcements for this regiment (approx. 1,400 men) to Espiritu Santo some 560 miles away. He then formed the core of these units into the Second Marine Raider Battalion, even though a unit bearing this name already existed. To make matters worse, General Vandegrift was not even consulted about the move. Fortunately, higher headquarters intervened and reversed Turner's decision. (5:154-155)

Admiral Turner's manifest inexperience with tactical

operations in a land campaign brought about a re-thinking of the command relationship between the CATF and CLF. Eventually the relationship between them, so familiar to present-day Marines and sailors, was established. Once the beachhead is secured, the CLF assumes command of all landward ground and air forces. However, the command dysfunction that characterized Guadalcanal was not an isolated incident. The Guadalcanal difficulty centered around the CATF and CLF; later command problems centered around the CATF and the naval battle group commander. Nevertheless, this first major amphibious fight of WWII established a pattern of command confusion that persisted through WWII to the present day.

#### Leyte Gulf

The amphibious landing at Leyte Gulf in the Philippines during late October 1944, was marked at the outset by an unwieldy and convoluted command structure. (17) Four primary commands, without a common superior under the newly formed Joint Chiefs, were directly involved in the Leyte landings. For brevity's sake, only two of these commands shall be described here.

The first was headed by General MacArthur, who bore the title Supreme Commander Southwest Pacific Area. His command included all ground forces (Army and Marine) in the southwest Pacific area as well as the Navy's Seventh Fleet. Answering to MacArthur as the Commander, Seventh

Fleet, was Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid, who also held the title of Commander, Central Philippines Attack Force. Direct command of the landing forces was held by Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, Commanding General Sixth Army, also answerable to MacArthur.

The second command chain was headed by Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas. His immediate subordinate supporting the Leyte operation was Admiral William Halsey, Commander Third Fleet. During the battle for Leyte Gulf, Nimitz was located at Pearl Harbor.

As ordered by MacArthur, Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet, organized as an amphibious landing force, was to transport and land the Sixth Army on the Leyte Gulf shore. Seventh Fleet was to open and guard the Surigao Strait, the southern access into Leyte Gulf, and provide close-in support for the landing force by air and anti-submarine assets (Figure 2).

Admiral Halsey's mission was to "cover and support" (17:50) the landings by striking more distant sites of enemy activity: Okinawa, Formosa, northern Leyte, and various Philippine peninsulas in the area. More generally, Third Fleet's mission was to provide "strategic support" for the Leyte operation by destroying enemy naval and air forces threatening the Philippines area after 21 October. To accomplish this, Third Fleet was organized as a strategic defense and strike force.



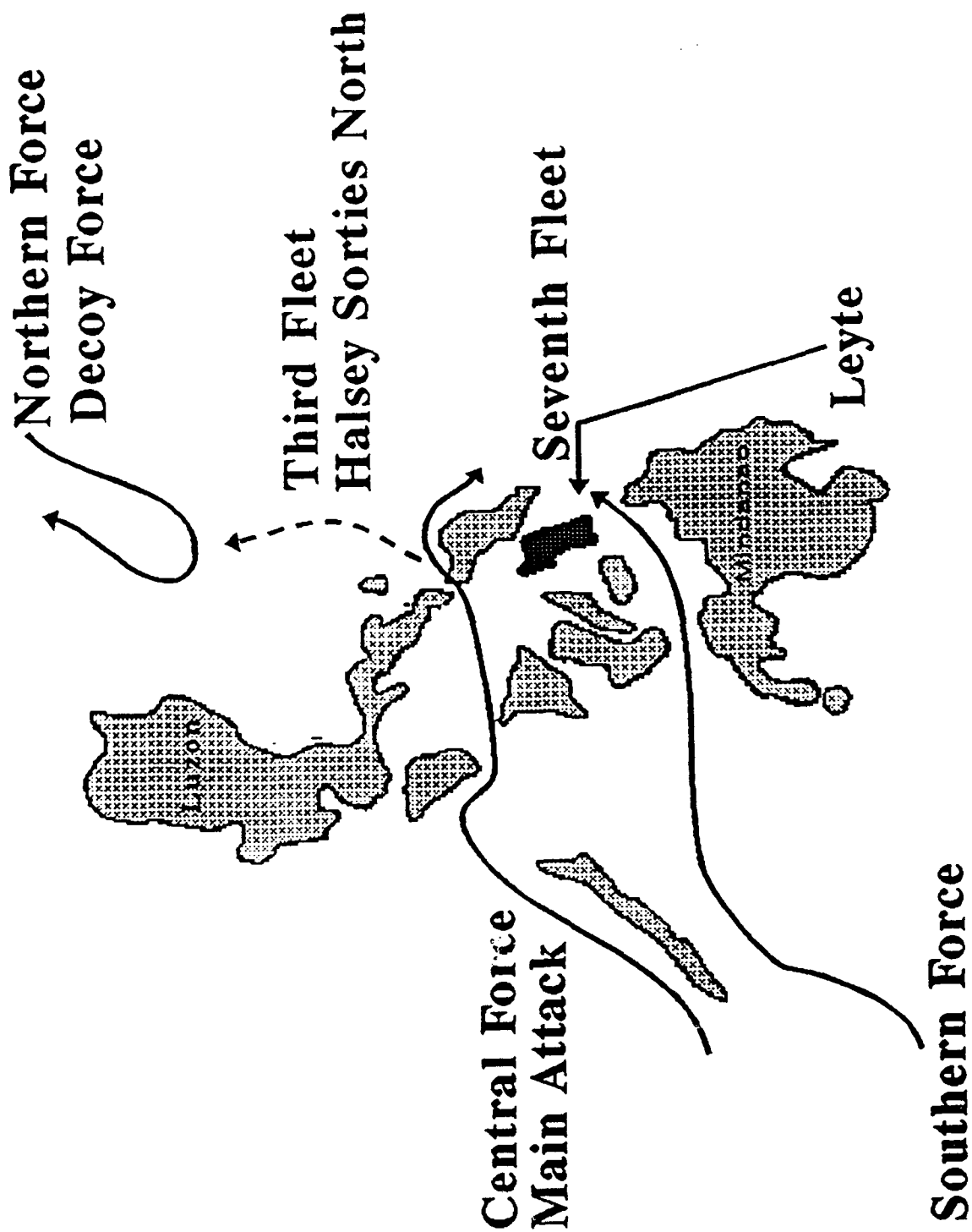


Figure 2  
THE BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

At this point in the plan's development, the confusing command chain played its disruptive role. Though Halsey's support for the attack was coordinated by his and MacArthur's staffs, Halsey's orders came from Admiral Nimitz, not MacArthur. Nimitz's order to Halsey reiterated the "cover and support" phrasing cited above, but made an important addition:

In case opportunity for destruction of major portion of the enemy fleet is offered or can be created, such destruction becomes the primary task. (17:58)

This single line, repeated almost verbatim in Halsey's own order to Third Fleet, would nearly lead to the destruction of the Leyte attack force.

Initially, the Leyte landings on 20 October went smoothly with supporting naval forces in place: Kincaid guarding the Surigao Strait in the south, and Halsey's Third Fleet patrolling the San Bernadino Strait north of Leyte Gulf. However, on 24 October Halsey's aircraft sighted a Japanese force north and east (the Japanese Northern Force) of the strait. Believing he had found the bulk of the Japanese fleet, Halsey sailed north with his entire force, leaving the San Bernadino Strait unguarded. In fact, he was pursuing a decoy, a hollow force designed to draw off the American fleet covering the landings. (17:192-193)

That night, as Kincaid's Seventh Fleet was battling a Japanese force attempting to force the Surigao Strait in

the south, the main body of the Japanese flotilla (the Central Force) passed through the San Bernadino Strait without American opposition or knowledge. The next morning this force fell upon Kincaid's weary sailors.

The Seventh Fleet's commander, as well as MacArthur and Nimitz, sent immediate calls to Halsey to ask for the whereabouts of the battle group covering the strait. Meanwhile, Kincaid's limited naval and air forces battled the powerful Central Force, eventually turning it back at the cost of 6 ships lost, 1130 men killed, and 913 wounded. (17:316) Only the extraordinary heroism of Kincaid's men, fighting outnumbered and outgunned, saved the Leyte landing force. On the shore, however, naval aircraft, which would otherwise have been used to support the soldiers fighting a well-entrenched enemy, were unavailable. They were locked in combat with the Japanese naval force.

The problems with the Leyte operation are not difficult to spot. The hydra-headed command structure readily bred confusion and conflicting orders. Had a single local commander controlled all the forces involved, it is unlikely that he would have permitted the multiple "primary tasks" that marked Nimitz's order to Halsey. Although Halsey is usually blamed for the near-debacle, Nimitz's extraordinary order is the real heart of the confusion. When he tasked Halsey to pursue the enemy fleet as the opportunity arose, Nimitz gave Halsey

conflicting priorities and set the stage for undercutting the landing force's sea protection.

### Grenada

The invasion of Grenada on 25 October 1983 is a good example of current doctrine's silence on the command relationship between amphibious and naval battle group forces.

The required forces for the invasion were hastily assembled beneath the umbrella organization Joint Task Force (JTF) 120, under the command of Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf III. Amphibious forces, enroute to Beirut under the command of Captain Carl Erie, had to be diverted to the aegis of this joint task force. Required naval force was provided by the Carrier Battle Group Independence, and additional landing forces in the form of two U.S. Army Ranger Battalions and elements of the 82d Airborne Division were also assigned to JTF 120.

Other than the order establishing Vice Admiral Metcalf as the Commander of JTF 120, no further directive was published. (2:24) The command relationships between the amphibious forces and the carrier battle group were never formalized. Consequently, the commander of the carrier battle group retained the authority to employ his assets in accordance with his own priorities. In the absence of an initiating directive to establish the CATF, CLF, and amphibious objective area (AOA), Captain Erie, the

amphibious force commander, lacked the authority to control naval forces tasked to support the landing. (2:3) The potential for trouble here is clear: had the battle group commander believed a sufficient threat to his naval force existed, he could have recalled his ships supporting the landing force. Fortunately, because no enemy attacked the naval group, no conflicts between the battle group and amphibious commanders surfaced. Fortunately also, the relative weakness of opposing forces ashore would have made the loss of naval gunfire ships insignificant for U.S. landing forces.

Nevertheless, command relationships during the Grenada operation were successful because they were never subjected to strain. Had the amphibious and carrier battle group commanders found themselves at odds over battle group support for the landing force, the joint task force commander would have been compelled to resolve the issue. How Admiral Metcalf would have decided such a point cannot be determined. His decision would have been influenced by the degree of threat to the carrier battle group and the intensity of opposition to landing forces on Grenada. Less obvious, however, is the impact of Admiral Metcalf's perception of the threat. His judgment of the relative importance of success on the Grenada island against the safety of the carrier battle group would surely have been decisive.

## Beirut

U.S. Marines were initially established ashore in Beirut, Lebanon, in September 1982. Despite the presence of almost all the elements of a classic amphibious operation (the only difference being the static positions of the Marines ashore), no initiating directive for the operation was ever promulgated. (2:11) Once again as at Grenada, the coordinating measures that an initiating directive generates were lacking: CATF and CLF were never formally designated, nor was an amphibious objective area (AOA) ever delineated. (2:8)

This failure to publish an initiating directive soon created serious problems for the Sixth Fleet Amphibious Force commander, Captain Carl Erie (CTF 61), all related to the use of Sixth Fleet assets to support the Marines ashore. In short, the latent tensions of the Grenada operation became manifest in Beirut.

Off the Beirut shore, the limited number of destroyers was stretched between the competing missions of screening the fleet and providing naval gunfire support for Marines ashore. (2:7) Unfortunately, control of these assets fell to the senior flag officer in the fleet or his Anti-surface Warfare Commander (ASUWC), neither of them in the amphibious force. Unable to control naval gunfire assets without an AOA, CTF 61 (Captain Erie) saw as many as three gunfire ships move in and out of firing positions in a day. (2:8) Needless to say, this irregular rotation

generated instability and complicated the efficient execution of firing missions ashore.

Failure to establish an AOA and the resultant loss of control over gunfire assets by CTF 61 reached its inevitable conclusion in December 1983. At that time, authority to release the destroyers' guns for fire missions was arrogated by the ASUWC, 11 miles west of the amphibious area in the USS Ticonderoga CG 47. (2:9) The danger that a distant Navy commander, lacking target lists and the appropriate staff, might deny naval gunfire support to the Marines ashore became very real.

Luckily for the Marines, Captain Erie resisted this unwise move and authorized destroyers on the gunfire line to fire at the Marines' request. (2:9) Fortunately also, this conflict was resolved in favor of Captain Erie by the fleet commander. Nevertheless, the point was made: failure to publish an initiating directive stripped CTF 61 of essential authority to obtain and control fleet assets to support the amphibious force.

### Summary

This historical sampling reveals command problems that have beset amphibious operations across decades. The Guadalcanal battle revealed the inadequacies of doctrine regarding the CATF/CLF relationship. Leyte Gulf laid bare the tensions between the amphibious mission and the need to cripple the enemy fleet. Grenada and Beirut, on the

other hand, are more difficult to categorize. Amphibious doctrine can hardly be judged inadequate on the basis of these two latter operations because it was never invoked. Even so, the tensions that marked WWII amphibious campaigns were also present in Grenada and Beirut.

In presenting a solution to this problem of integrating amphibious forces and pure naval forces we have included one salient lesson: the persistent tension between the "blue water" and the "green water" navy. It is here, in this tension between amphibians and naval battle groups, that the root of this problem lies. Conflict between the Composite Warfare Concept and amphibious doctrine is only the most recent manifestation of long-standing differences in tactical perspective between these two communities. Until this source of our problem is recognized, we will continue to treat the symptoms instead of the disease.

One solution which treats symptoms is that of Third Fleet. A critique of Third Fleet's suggested modification to doctrine is useful for two reasons. First, Third Fleet's plan is the most widely promulgated solution to this problem and is the closest the Navy has come to changing Composite Warfare doctrine. Second, as we examine Third Fleet's solution, the direction we must take to solve this problem will become clearer.



### THIRD FLEET'S SOLUTION

In recent tactical memorandum the U.S. Navy Third Fleet recommended changes to the Composite Warfare doctrine of NWP 10-1. (10, 27, 28) The first memo's proposal is as follows (10:20-21):

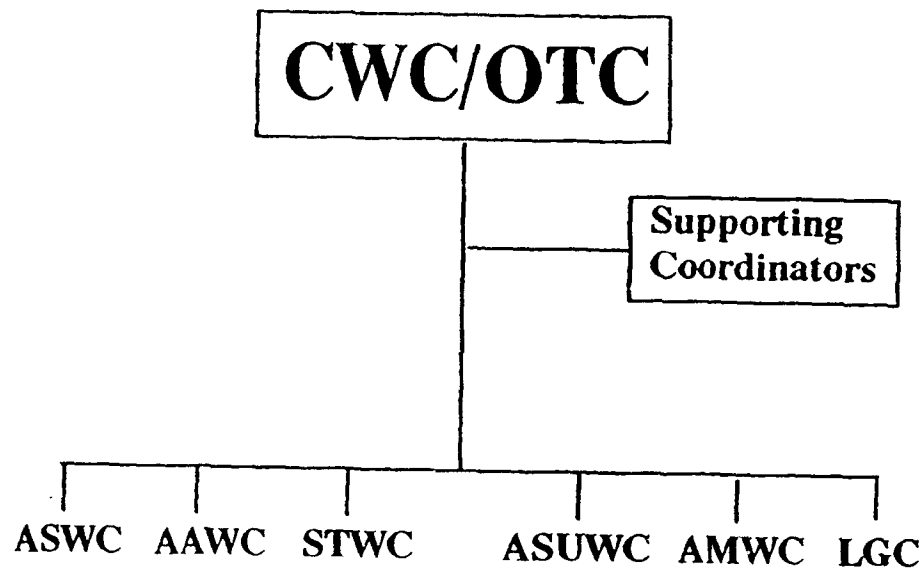


Figure 3

### THIRD FLEET'S PROPOSAL

In this proposal, amphibious forces are integrated into the Composite Warfare structure by making traditional amphibious commanders (CATF and CLF) functional warfare commanders working for the Composite Warfare commander. The terms "CATF" and "CLF" are replaced with "Amphibious

Warfare Commander" (AMWC) and "Landing Group Commander" (LGC) respectively. Advocates of this scheme have provided two rationales for it. (10:21)

First, unity of command is established by merging the AMWC and LGC into the Composite Warfare organization as functional warfare commanders. This eliminates having two separate organizations and commanders, amphibious and Composite Warfare.

Second, it allows the Composite Warfare commander to attend closely to the needs of the amphibians since the commander's primary mission is conducting amphibious operations.

This proposal has at least three serious defects. (10:24-25) First, in any naval task force organized to conduct an amphibious assault, the naval battle group provides the tactical sea control necessary to ensure the success of the mission. By integrating the amphibious commanders under the Composite Warfare commander as functional commanders, the end has, in effect, been subordinated to the means. The commander of the primary mission of a naval task force (amphibious power projection) has been subordinated to the commander of the secondary mission (sea control). This is precisely backwards. Unity of command has indeed been achieved, but at what price?

The second flaw in Third Fleet's proposal is a corollary of the first. As overall commander of an

amphibious mission, the Composite Warfare commander, by virtue of his background, disposition, and position, is inclined to place undue emphasis on the needs of the battle group. This inclination may result in slighting the amphibious forces when it comes to critical battle group support. To suppose that the Composite Warfare commander would not permit this to occur is to ignore the lessons of history.

The third defect is the Composite Warfare commander's physical location. Typically, the Composite Warfare commander is located aboard the aircraft carrier of his battle group. Yet the carrier is likely to be many miles seaward of an amphibious assault, putting the Composite Warfare commander far from the scene of action.

Only superficial defects of the first tactical memo of Third Fleet were redressed in the second memo. (10:23) The title "AMWC" was replaced by "CATF" and the billet of "COMMARFOR", senior to the LGC and co-equal to the OTC, was instituted. Yet even with this revision, the second TACMEMO falls victim to weighty objections, chief among which is the abandonment of unity of command.

In any event, by failing to consider the lessons of history the Third Fleet incorporates fatal defects in its proposal, the very defects our proposal avoids.

### OUR PROPOSAL

Our proposal for integrating battle groups employing the Composite Warfare tactic and amphibious forces is as follows:

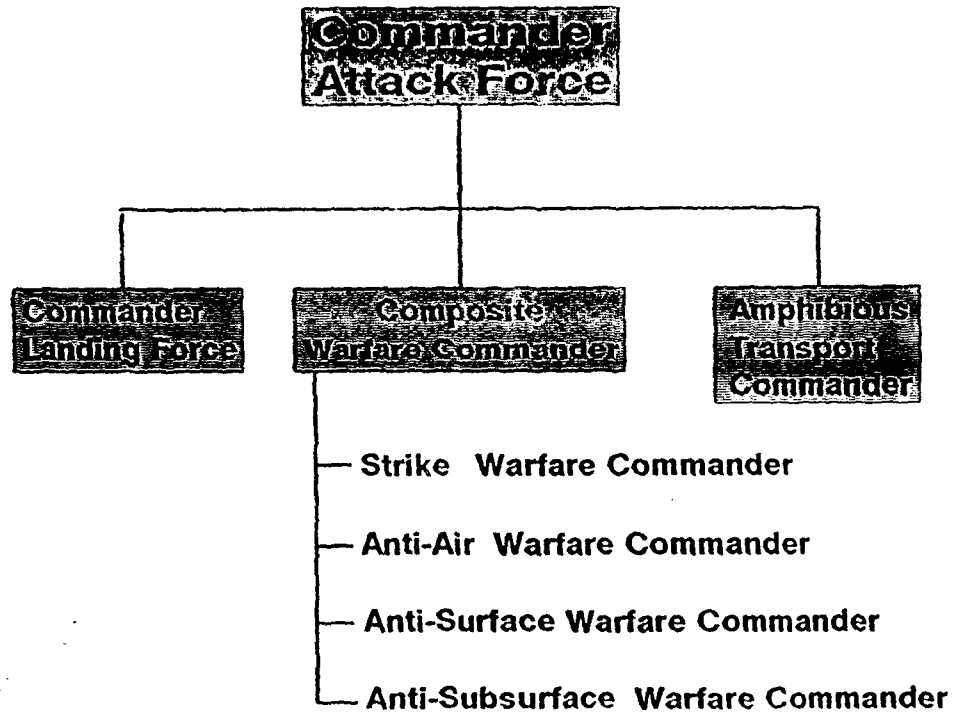


Figure 3

Some characteristics of this scheme deserve elaboration.

First, though typically functional warfare commanders have multiple duties, in our plan the duties of the Commander, Attack Force (CAF) and Composite Warfare commander are never shared by the same officer. The Composite Warfare commander has been subordinated to an

overall commander (CAF) for reasons explained in the following section, reasons that would be swiftly vitiated were the CAF and the Composite Warfare commander to be one and the same.

Second, though we have designated the overall commander the "CAF," we envision him as a typical CATF, but one with battle group experience. We have declined calling him a "CATF" to avoid the conceptual baggage attendant upon the use of this acronym. Modern CATFs are usually Navy captains commanding collections of vessels that would have been transport groups within an amphibious task force of the World War II era. Contemporary battle group commanders, flag officers for the most part, are naturally reluctant to be commanded by a junior officer with limited battle group experience. By not designating the overall commander "CATF" we hope to anticipate and disarm criticism from the battle group community.

We have also avoided calling the overall commander "Officer in Tactical Control" (OTC) for similar reasons. The OTC title has been so regularly connected with the Composite Warfare commander that its use might bolster the inclination to "dual hat" the Composite Warfare commander as the overall commander, i.e., OTC.

Third, we propose that the officers currently serving as CATFs be designated Amphibious Transport Commanders (ATC), as the title is more descriptive of their functions. Retaining the title "CATF" would also confuse

the duties and responsibilities of these commanders with those of the CAF.

Fourth, we have made the Commander, Landing Force (CLF) answer directly to the CAF instead of to the ATC. This is a logical step after transferring overall responsibility for the amphibious operation to the CAF.

#### JUSTIFICATION OF OUR PROPOSAL

In his seminal work Democracy in America, Alexis De Tocqueville observes that each type of government (e.g., monarchy, democracy, oligarchy, etc.) possesses its own unique and inherent structural weakness. The genius of the lawgiver consists in discerning that weakness and designing safeguards which prevent the flaw from rending the fabric of government and generating despotism or anarchy. Analogously, even the cursory examination of amphibious-oriented naval battles presented in this paper reveals a critical weakness: the conflict of interest between amphibious and battle group forces. This is caused by their differing perceptions of their reasons for being, and the impact of those perceptions on the decisions of their commanders.

Amphibious force and battle group commanders perceive two quite different priorities in the waging of naval warfare: successful establishment of a beachhead versus

defense of the fleet. The key to any effective solution of the problem of integrating these forces lies in properly structuring the task force to balance the antagonisms which would naturally rend it apart. To this end, we need a clearer view of the different functions amphibious and battle group forces fulfill, using U.S. Navy strategic doctrine as our guide.

#### Power Projection v. Sea Control

The doctrinal Strategic Concepts for the U.S. Navy (30) prescribes the functions of the U.S. Navy, chief of which are sea control and power projection. Examples of sea control include securing sea lanes for the passage of troop ships, resupply vessels, or other combatant ships; of power projection, conducting amphibious assaults. The Composite Warfare Commander's Manual (29) refines sea control further, distinguishing between strategic sea control and tactical sea control. The former is defined as:

. . . destruction or attenuation of hostile sea-denial forces at some distance from the area to be protected, e.g., blockades, mining, location/destruction of hostile naval combatants on the high seas. (29: para. 3.1)

Tactical sea control, on the other hand, encompasses

. . . operations by naval units for self-protection or local defense of supported forces engaged in other operations, e.g., perimeter defense of operating areas for amphibious forces, mine countermeasures, or clearing the sea

surrounding ships in transit. (29: para. 3.1; added emphasis)

Clearly, the sort of sea control an amphibious force relies upon to transit safely to the amphibious objective area (AOA) and execute its mission is tactical sea control. The destruction of a hostile naval force on the high seas, strategic sea control, is the traditional function of naval battle groups operating alone. Although tactical sea control plays a role in the operations of battle groups tasked with destruction of an enemy fleet, the opposite is generally not true. That is, amphibious forces escorted by battle groups have not historically been assigned the additional mission of enemy fleet destruction, certainly not with the same priority as the amphibious assault. Nor should they; the near disaster of Leyte Gulf demonstrates the folly of a battle group trying to conduct strategic sea control while also responsible for the tactical sea control which shelters an amphibious task force.

These considerations suggest the obvious: tactical sea control is typically a means to the performance of power projection, particularly when the latter takes the form of an amphibious attack. Put in more martial parlance, tactical sea control is a supporting effort to the main effort of an amphibious assault. The relation between these two functions must be reflected in any attempt to integrate amphibious forces and naval battle groups.



Failure to understand where our main effort lies in amphibious missions lays the groundwork for confusion if not disaster.

A caveat must be made here, however. Strategic Concepts for the U.S. Navy (30) allows for the less common case when power projection serves as a means (supporting attack) to the end of sea control (main effort). In this scenario, amphibious forces seize a port or other shoreline area to deny an enemy access to the open sea, thereby preventing him from launching an attack on our naval forces. In such a case, the seizure of enemy ports or other sea-access areas amounts to a preemptive assault to safeguard our control of sea lanes and our own fleet.

This rarer situation, when power projection supports the main effort of sea control (tactical or strategic), need not confuse the issue. Even though an amphibious assault may serve the longer range end of sea control, the assault must receive the support any main effort deserves while it is being conducted, lest we endanger its chance for success. What we see here is the shift of priorities to match an evolving battlefield, just as a ground commander might shift his focus of effort to exploit opportunities as they arise. The fact that the focus of effort may change in the future does nothing to diminish the amphibious force's need for battle group support in the present.

Therefore, the principle remains: in the execution of

the amphibious assault, tactical sea control is a means to accomplishing forced entry.

#### What Our Proposal Offers

Our proposal for integration departs from the options offered not only by Third Fleet, but by most articles that address this issue. What is so different about our scheme? We think that four characteristics of our proposal differentiate it from others.

1. It provides effective resolution of conflicts over scarce resources between the battle group and the amphibious force. This, we believe, is our proposal's chief merit. By subordinating the battle group (employing the Composite Warfare Concept) and amphibious forces under a common commander with amphibious expertise, we ensure that conflicts over support of the amphibious assault will be resolved by a commander cognizant of the needs of amphibious forces. Whether the requirement is for naval gunfire support or offensive anti-air warfare, amphibious forces are more likely to be supported by the battle group under our proposal. The problems of battle group support that marked Guadalcanal, Leyte Gulf, Grenada, and Beirut, are much less likely to recur.

2. It preserves unity of command. The principle of unity of command, first enunciated by Clausewitz, remains

as a requirement of efficient command in war. We have met this requirement by uniting the Composite Warfare commander and the amphibious forces under a common commander (the CAF), thereby providing a single source of command and conflict resolution. The traditional antagonisms that have plagued amphibious and battle group forces will be resolved by a single authority.

3. It preserves the integrity of the Composite Warfare tactic. Despite the fact that Composite Warfare has never been tested in war against a comparable enemy (i.e., the Soviet Navy), it has never been criticized as being fundamentally misguided. Other proposals which attempt to place the traditional amphibious billets (i.e., CATF, CLF) within Composite Warfare disrupt this sound defensive tactic. While such disruption is not a decisive objection by itself, an alternative proposal which does not disrupt it and offers other advantages will be more efficient and hence more desirable.

4. It permits the CAF to devote his attention to the amphibious assault without impairing the execution of tactical sea control. No commander can be in two places at once, yet typically amphibious warfare and tactical sea control occur in widely separated sea areas. While modern communications ease the urgency of this problem, there is still no substitute for a commander's presence in the

battle area. A CAF supervising an amphibious assault in one area cannot serve adequately as a Composite Warfare commander in an area many miles seaward. Employing the Composite Warfare commander to oversee tactical sea control frees the CAF to concentrate on the main effort (amphibious assault), while providing a single, local source of command to guide the functional commanders of Composite Warfare.

#### What Our Proposal Avoids

Part of our proposal's merit is that it avoids difficulties that plague other solutions.

1. It avoids placing overall responsibility for the amphibious assault onto a commander trained to perform sea control, strategic or tactical. Subordinating amphibious task force and landing force commanders, traditionally CATF and CLF, to the Composite Warfare commander by making them functional warfare commanders is the substance of Third Fleet's proposal. This ill-serves the amphibious commanders, and is likely to exacerbate the confusions that have marked amphibious operations since WWII.

2. It avoids the redundancy of having two commanders (the CAF and the CATF), both responsible for the amphibious assault, in the AOA. By re-designating the present-day CATF as the Amphibious Transport Commander

(ATC), primary responsibility for the amphibious assault is clearly laid on the CAF.

3. It avoids subordinating an offensive capability (amphibious assault) to a defensively oriented tactic (the Composite Warfare Concept). While the Navy has recently incorporated the Strike Warfare Commander into Composite Warfare, the latter still remains a reactive rather than a pro-active tactic. Subordinating amphibious warfare to a defensive tactic is likely to have deleterious effects on the conduct of amphibious assaults. The offensive nature of amphibious warfare demands a pro-active commander and staff.

4. It avoids subsuming amphibious warfare under the command "by negation" of the Composite Warfare Concept. The Composite Warfare commander commands his functional subordinates "by negation," a method of command well-suited to the reactive nature of this tactic. In the fast-paced environment of modern naval warfare, functional warfare commanders must be free to react to a threat without obtaining their senior's consent in each instance. Amphibious warfare, on the other hand, is highly volatile, requiring much coordination and close monitoring. Command "by negation" may prevent the commander from decisively influencing the battle at critical moments.

Finally, a review of some rarely cited portions of the

Composite Warfare manual (29) is in order. While this manual scarcely addresses amphibious warfare, it "leaves the door open" for a command structure similar to our own proposal.

#### What Does the Composite Warfare Concept Manual Say?

It is remarkable (or perhaps it is not) that a tactic whose implementation was subject to the threat faced and the forces available should have become ossified into a rigid battle group command structure. The following passage from the Composite Warfare Concept manual suggests a much more ductile view:

The CWC concept [sic] embodies a basic organizational structure that is susceptible to flexible implementation and a body of recommended operational principles . . . . The OTC [Officer in Tactical Control] can implement CWC procedures whenever, and to whatever extent, he may require, depending upon the composition and mission of the force and the nature and severity of the threat. (29: para. 2.1)

From its inception, then, a considerable degree of flexibility was designed into Composite Warfare, flexibility which permits severing the duties of the Composite Warfare commander from those of the OTC. Introductory remarks in NWP 10-1 show this clearly:

The OTC will normally be the CWC [commander]. Nevertheless, . . . appropriate sections of the text separate the OTC and the CWC at the command level to provide for special conditions that may require the OTC to delegate the CWC function. (29: para 2.3)

What are these "special conditions" that may require the separation of the OTC and CWC duties and the delegation of the latter to another officer? The following gives a clue and provides one of the manual's few references to power projection:

The CWC concept [sic] allows an OTC to delegate tactical command to a CWC to wage combat operations to counter threats to the force and to maintain tactical sea control with assets assigned, while the OTC retains close control of power projections and strategic sea control operations . . . .  
(29: para. 3.1)

This last reference provides for a situation precisely paralleled by our own proposal, with the sole difference being that the OTC mentioned above is named "Commander, Attack Force" in our scheme. In both cases, an overall commander (OTC or CAF) commands a battle group organized along Composite Warfare Concept lines, while monitoring the activities of other forces engaged in power projection, e.g., amphibious forces. The key to the solution of this problem lies in these few lines in the manual which serves as the blueprint for the Composite Warfare tactic.

In summation, the argument in favor of our proposal is three-fold.

First, our proposal has its seed in the Composite Warfare Concept manual itself; it has a doctrinal basis.

Second, our proposal addresses the critical weakness

of task forces composed of battle groups and amphibious forces. We attempt to emplace counterweights against the centrifugal tendencies that pull these forces in different directions.

Third, our proposal avoids the pitfalls of amphibious warfare as executed in conflicts since World War II. Instead of merely reciting history, we attempt to incorporate its lessons into our solution.

#### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

If implemented, our proposal would require some changes in existing practices in the U.S. Navy. Addressing these changes in detail, however, would take us beyond the intended scope of this paper. Nevertheless, a sketch of these changes is in order.

##### The CAF

One implication is the need for senior Navy officers with experience in both amphibious and traditional battle group communities. The Commander, Attack Force (CAF), must be familiar with the demands of battle groups carrying out tactical sea control and have substantial expertise in ship-to-shore assaults. This will require that the Navy expand the practice of "cross-decking" its officers between naval communities. Indeed, this practice



makes good sense under any proposal: an integrated naval force, free of parochial jealousies, is the desirable result.

Without trying to formulate an ideal career pattern for a CAF, some highlights of such a career can be mentioned. Tours as a battle group commander, particularly of carrier battle groups, are essential. More essential are tours as the commander of an Amphibious Squadron (COMPHIBRON) and, later, an Amphibious Group (COMPHIBGRU). Indeed, COMPHIBGRU, a two-star billet, is the logical source for the CAF, next to a numbered Fleet Commander with a previous COMPHIBGRU tour.

#### The CAF's Command and Control Platform

With the Composite Warfare commander stationed aboard a group's aircraft carrier and the ATC and CLF aboard an LHA or LHD with the amphibious group, it is natural to ask where the CAF and his staff will be placed. With the Fleet Commander as the CAF for larger operations (MEF- or MEB-sized), the LCC, with its greater command and control capabilities, is the logical choice for a command platform. In operations with COMPHIBGRU or COMPHIBRON as the CAF (MEB- or MEU-sized), the absence of an LCC makes the LHA or LHD the best available platform. In this case, limited space and communication capabilities would push the ATC or CLF to an LPH or second LHA or LHD in the task force.

### The CAF's Staff

Key to the smooth functioning of the entire force is a CAF staff that understands the unique environment of each of the major elements of the attack force. Accordingly, the CAF's staff must be made up of officers experienced in each warfare area: anti-air, anti-surface, anti-subsurface, and amphibious. These officers will not "represent" their areas at the CAF level, but be a true planning staff for the CAF.

### CONCLUSION

We believe that our proposal offers the best solution to this issue. Yet whatever the final answer is, we hope that three considerations raised by our proposal will guide future discussions of this issue:

First, the problem of "integrating the Composite Warfare Concept and amphibious task forces" is fundamentally illusory, and illustrates well the logician's fallacy of "mistaking the question." Amphibious forces and naval battle groups have suffered from tensions, confusions, and outright conflicts since they began operating together. The Composite Warfare Concept, on the other hand, is a relatively new development in naval warfare. The difficulty lies not in "integrating the Composite Warfare Concept and amphibious

task forces" but in integrating battle groups and amphibious task forces.

Second, modern problems (i.e., post-WWII) between amphibious forces and battle groups are caused more by the failure to implement doctrine than by the doctrine itself. What we see in recent amphibious operations (Grenada and Beirut) is the refusal, for whatever reason, to implement amphibious doctrine. The result has been conflicts between the amphibians and the battle group forces over the employment of fleet assets such as naval gunfire ships. We then "discover" that there is a problem with the integration of amphibious forces with carrier battle groups (or, fallaciously, with the Composite Warfare Concept). Yet in many of these instances amphibious doctrine was never employed to begin with. This is muddled thinking at best, and outright sophistry at worst.

Third, any solution to this problem must best serve the nation's ability to project power via amphibious warfare. Considerations such as the existing rank or experience of naval officers tasked with executing amphibious operations must not be allowed to block adoption of the best solution. We must tailor the solution to the problem, not to the prevalent patterns of command in the Navy. If solving this problem requires changing the command patterns of U.S. Navy officers, then so be it.

In any event, finding a solution to this problem

remains essential to the nation's ability to project power in an uncertain and volatile world. We cannot assume that our adversaries will not exploit the ambiguous relationship that exists now between our amphibious forces and naval battle groups. We must formalize that relationship and confront our future enemies with a seamless and integrated naval force.

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