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**THE MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT: A LIMITED CONVENTIONAL RESPONSE FORCE -  
NOT A SOF SUBSTITUTE**

by

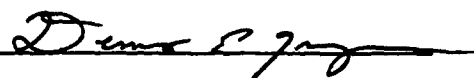
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

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 of

### THE U.S. MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT: A LIMITED CONVENTIONAL RESPONSE FORCE - NOT A SOF SUBSTITUTE

The Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) is analyzed as to its proper employment in a theater Commander in Chief's Area of Responsibility. Arguments are presented as to how the development of a Service unique special operations capability unnecessarily duplicate current in-theater special operations forces missions and how this degrades a MEU's primary mission of amphibious warfare. The organization and missions are discussed to provide background to place the MEU in proper perspective as a CINC's forced entry capability. Deficiencies, limitations, and conventional capabilities are also discussed. Recommendations are made to improve the MEU's capabilities and concludes that the MEU should emphasize conventional warfare with some enhanced capabilities to address post-Cold War problems that face the New World Order.

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## PREFACE

Sources were drawn primarily from professional Marine Corps periodicals that discussed the MEU(SOC) concept, its problems and ever expanding missions. Many articles were parochial and argued politically for the MEU to be the dominate and primary CINC's fighting force. Statements that the MEU(SOC) is "the most flexible, immediate response force capable of conducting the full range of special operations" were found to be widely published , but are in fact misleading. Additionally, I drew from my four years as a Marine Corps Infantry Officer and my twelve years of special operations experience as a Naval Special Warfare Officer which includes a MEU(SOC) deployment and two years assigned to a forward deployed Amphibious Group to analyze the MEU's actual capabilities and recommend proper employment.

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# THE U.S. MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT: A LIMITED CONVENTIONAL RESPONSE FORCE - NOT A SOF SUBSTITUTE

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For a theater Commander in Chief (CINC), the most significant change in the past forty years has been the virtual disappearance of the single overarching security threat that has defined theater force requirements. Today's focus of effort has changed completely from that of containing a coordinated conventional Soviet threat backed by nuclear weapons to the dizzying array of low intensity conflicts and operations other-than-war in areas around the world.<sup>1</sup> An analysis of U.S. military involvement over the past decade has reinforced this transition of our national security policy and strategy to one of peacetime engagement and discriminate response through forward presence and regional crisis response (see Table I).

Table I

National Security in Transition

	COLD WAR BIPOLAR WORLD	POST-COLD WAR NEW WORLD ORDER
NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY:	CONTAINMENT	PEACETIME ENGAGEMENT
NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY:	FLEXIBLE RESPONSE (DETERRENCE)	DISCRIMINATE RESPONSE (DETERRENCE AND INFLUENCE)
NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY:	FORWARD DEFENSE RAPID REINFORCEMENT FOR GLOBAL WAR	FORWARD PRESENCE CRISIS RESPONSE FOR REGIONAL CONTINGENCIES

Source: Cole C. Kingseed, "Peacetime Engagement: Devising the Army's Role," *Parameters*, Autumn 1992, p.98.



The regional CINC's forces comprised of all four services have transitioned from the conduct of large scale unilateral operations to small scale joint regional crises with varying degrees of success. Of primary concern to the CINC is that future operations must be joint, however this does not imply that each operation will be equally divided among the services. Instead, future operations will be directed by the CINC through a Joint Task Force Commander who will be able to select from each service those capabilities essential to mission success.

There are two Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) that deploy aboard Amphibious Ready Groups and one Ad-Hoc MEU that is shore based in Okinawa, Japan. Together they provide the ready Fleet Marine Forces that can contribute to the JTF's mission success -- if properly employed.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT

Background. In this era of the U.S. military drawdown and budget cutbacks, the Marine Corps has focused on methods of task organization for the MEU and felt it necessary to create a capability to conduct special operations. Meanwhile, Congress has directed reviews to seek areas for consolidation, streamlining, and outright reduction of our military forces, focusing on the unnecessary duplication of effort among the Armed Forces.<sup>1</sup>

The deployment of Marine forces to regional theaters has remained basically the same despite the end of the cold war and collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the Marine Corps has had to redefine its stated capabilities in order to maintain its budget and force structure.

The Appeal of Special Operations. In order to maintain force structure, all services have had to examine non-traditional mission areas that can address areas of world interest. This has drawn attention to special operations organizations, whose role has received greater emphasis as a force that can best contribute to solving low intensity conflicts. Special operations mission areas have increased in

the 1990's and in contrast to the budget in general, the SOF budget is predicted to remain basically the same. This provides an attractive inducement to the Services and Service communities to join, support, or duplicate Special Operations Forces (SOF) in order to maintain force structure and assets. The Marine Corps' shrinking budget and bottom-up review has caused concern as to the Marine Corps' state of political survivability and thus drawn them toward the funding justified for special operations organizations.

The situation today is a reversal of the early 1980's when the prevailing attitude within DoD was that SOF was not important. It was not until October 1983 that the Deputy Secretary of Defense published a memorandum to revitalize the country's Special Operations Forces whose growth and funding lagged significantly behind respective service priorities. As a direct result of the memorandum, the Army, Navy and Air Force SOF units were modernized and expanded significantly. For example, the Navy created The Naval Special Warfare Command with Flag level representation, redesigned all Underwater Demolition Teams as SEAL Teams and created two additional SEAL Teams. The Army created another Special Forces Group and added a Ranger Battalion while the Air Force significantly increased the acquisition of special operations airframes such as the MC-130, AC-130 fixed wing platforms, and the MH-53 and MH-60 helicopter.

The Marines received no additional funding in this regard, as they are not a special operations force by definition.

According to JCS PUB 3-05, the Marine Corps is defined as,

". . .a conventional, general purpose force."<sup>2</sup>

As a direct result of the SOF revitalization and budget allocation, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, then General P.X. Kelly, stated unequivocally in 1985 that:

- ◆ "First, we should examine in detail the full range of missions that are appropriate within the definition of special operations. Only then will understand their scope and magnitude." --Comment: This statement portends a lack of knowledge and understanding of special operations by the Marine Corps.
- ◆ "Second, we should look within all four services to see what special operations can be conducted by existing conventional units."--Comment: The Army, Navy and Air Force had already done this and created and bolstered their respective special operations commands vice giving special operations missions to conventional units.
- ◆ "And third, for those special operations that are beyond the capabilities of existing conventional units, we should organize, train, and equip appropriate *special purpose units*."<sup>3</sup>--Comment: This statement provided the impetus to create units and duplicate existing special operations forces, despite statements that the goal was not to duplicate existing forces.

Thus, with no prompting from any outside organization or higher authority, the Marine Amphibious Unit (Special Operations Capable) [MAU(SOC)] was born. In reality the MAU was and is to this day, a reinforced Battalion Landing Team (BLT) with a layer of staff added. Later, the name changed to Marine Expeditionary

Unit (Special Operations Capable) [MEU(SOC)], as a step toward special operations and another step away from its primary amphibious role of:

"Service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign."<sup>4</sup>

#### Terminology.

"The MEU(SOC) is defined as a task organized, forward deployed force; it is neither a special operations force by formal definition nor does the Marine Corps provide forces with the primary mission of conducting special operations."<sup>5</sup>

To set a baseline as to how the MEU should be best employed by theater CINC's, certain definitions, terms, and missions must be agreed upon. To avoid confusion caused by Marine Corps' unique publications and definitions, the references here will be joint in nature. Special Operations Forces are those forces specifically designated by law (Public Law 99-661). These forces are: Army Special Forces and Rangers under the Army Special Operations Command, Navy SEALs and Special Boat Units under the Naval Special Warfare Command, and Squadrons assigned to the Air Force Special Operations Command. JCS PUB 1-02 states that special operations are:

"Operations conducted by specially trained, equipped and organized DoD forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national objectives. Conducted during either hostilities or peace, they can support

conventional operations, or they may be prosecuted independently when conventional forces are inappropriate or infeasible."<sup>6</sup>

The core SOF mission areas are defined as Unconventional Warfare (UW), Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), and Counter-Terrorism (CT). Complete definitions are provided in Appendix I.

In the Marine Corps' attempts to duplicate SOF, new terms were created to avoid being classified by law as a Special Operations Force and thus placed under USSOCOM operational control. The Marine Corps also uses unique definitions instead of Joint terms such as *Special Operations Capable* (vice Special Operations Force) and internal SOF mission definitions that create an entity unto itself. The Marine Corps advertised mission areas of the MEU(SOC) vary from 16 to 24 and are often locally tailored to perceived CINC requirements (see Appendix II). Additionally, the locally produced mission definitions are often changed to fit particular scenarios and unnecessarily duplicate standing SOF missions (as defined by JCS). According to the Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) MAGTF (SOC) standardization conference held in 1992, "There is no CMC (HQMC) approved mission statement for deploying MEU's nor is there a HQMC approved listing of MEU(SOC) missions"<sup>7</sup>. This confuses CINC staffs, Naval commanders (to whom they are embarked and work for), and Allies whom they exercise with. The majority of these

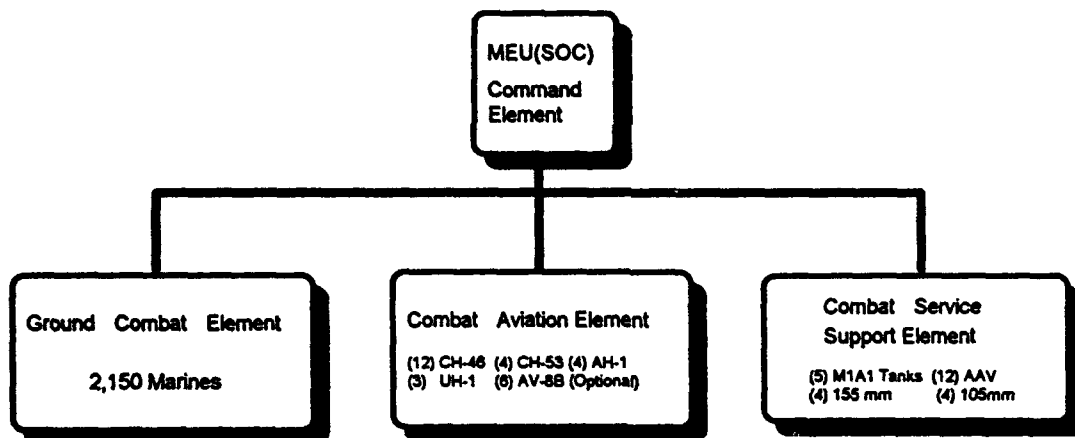
specific missions are not special operations at all, but merely, conventional capabilities put under a Marine special operations umbrella. As an example these service specific special operations missions, Appendix II shows the wide range of conventional missions and those missions created for local conditions that the Marine Corps has advertised as special operations. Additionally, Appendix II shows how the MEU(SOC) mission has changed over the years to reflect perceived threats at the time.

## CHAPTER III

### Employment of the MEU by the CINC

MEU Organization and C<sup>2</sup>. The Marine Corps provides to the theater CINC, through the Navy chain of command, a MEU formed from an air-ground-logistics task force that provides a limited, but flexible, unilateral conventional fighting force. The MEU organization is depicted below in Table II:

Table II  
MEU Organization



The MEU is often referred to by Marines as the CINC's rapid response force, implying a direct link from the MEU to the CINC. The actual chain of command, forged during World War II, emphasizes the fact that the MEU is a Navy fleet asset. Additionally, the MEU Commander reports to the Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF) for all operational matters, until



command and control is passed ashore. Table III provides the routine operational chain of command. In the event the ARG is called to perform as part of a JTF, the structure remains the same with exceptions noted in Table IV.

TABLE III

Routine OPCON

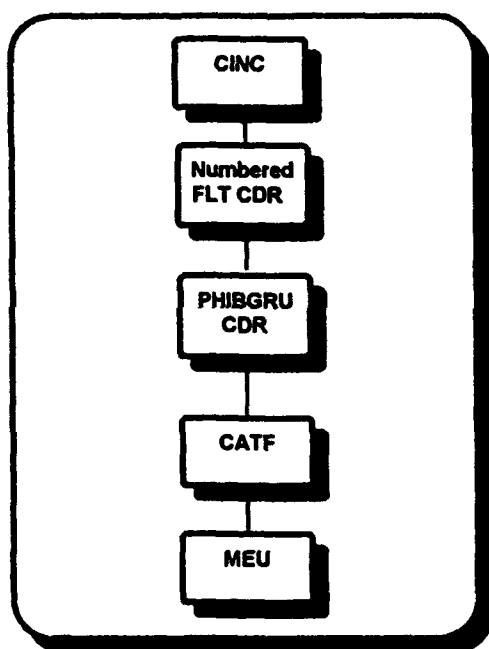
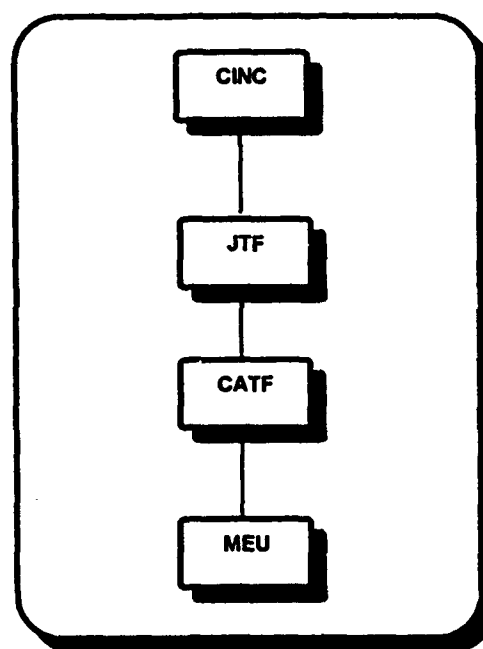


TABLE IV

JTF OPCON



## CHAPTER IV

### LIMITATIONS AND DEFICIENCIES

Embarkation Requirements. The Marine Corps provides to the Navy, two MEU's embarked in two Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG) comprised of three to four ships, normally forward deployed for six months. A third MEU can be drawn from III MEF in Okinawa, Japan, when required, but their forces are rotated amongst the Third Marine Division and are not a dedicated "special operations capable" MEU. In fact, each MEU that deploys varies in composition and has concomitant limitations, e.g., some MEU's will have AV-8B's, LAV's, or M1A1 Tanks, and some do not. This provides varying degrees of readiness, flexibility and mission constriction.

"The MEU is not task organized for the accomplishments of a specific mission; instead its organization is based on assigned forces, available shipping and probable mission requirements."<sup>1</sup>

Constraints on amphibious shipping limit equipment and personnel embarkation requirements and decisions must be made to reduce force levels and capabilities prior to deployment. The fact that each MEU varies in composition, size and capability, must be communicated to the supported CINC in order to ensure proper employment; by chain of command this is a Navy responsibility.

The downsizing of Navy amphibious shipping further constrains embarkation requirements. By the end of 1994, all LST's and LKA's will be decommissioned and recovery will not be realized until 2008 when the new LX class amphibious ship will be operational. Meanwhile, the ARG is reduced from its previous mix of four to five ships to three ships. As a result, the MEU must trim its embarkation requirements from 2,500 to 2,000 personnel.

Limited available embarkation space on the three ship ARG must be prioritized to those missions the MEU will most likely conduct. Currently, a priority for embarkation includes special operations capable equipment that the Marine Corps has spent millions of dollars to procure. Loading 20 Combat Rubber Raiding Craft (CRRC) and 15 Boston Whaler Rigid Raiding Craft (RRC) with requisite cradles, outboard engines, and special launch and recovery devices, takes up considerable storage space that could better be utilized for equipment that would enhance conventional amphibious operations, or provide heavy armor, artillery, or additional transport to the Marines on the beach. An example of this was surfaced in an article from the Marine Corps Gazette:

"The Indian Ocean deployment (NAVCENT) is a prime case in which MEU capabilities and potential threats are mismatched. The Ground Combat Elements (GCE) we sent into this area are essentially no more than a traditional infantry battalion reinforced . . . the only ground anti-tank capability consists of a TOW section and some organic hand-held weapons. Yet, potential threats in this region contain significant armor capabilities."<sup>2</sup>

The author goes on to propose embarking 30 M1A1 tanks to counter an armor threat; but to embark anything additional in the three ship ARG, something has to go. The question remains, what is the priority?

Reduction of Marine Forces and Reduced Training Time. In 1992, LTGEN Stackpole, the FMFPAC Commanding General, put the problem in perspective:

"As we draw forces down to 159,000, our deployment tempo will increase. Simply put, there will be less Marine Forces to do the same work for the CINC's. For example, today we have 24 infantry battalions. These battalions are deployed 43 percent of the time. In 1997, there will be 16 infantry battalions required to be deployed 57 percent of the time. This will impact adversely on accessions, retention, readiness, training, maintenance, and quality of life."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, flexibility is lost with: (1) the limited equipment embarkation space caused by the down-sizing of the ARG ship mix; (2) the reduction of amphibious shipping in general; (3) the reduced force size; and (4) limited predeployment training time. The primary focus must now be on capability; that is what does the CINC want the Marine Corps to be able to do effectively?

Deficiencies. If the Marine Corps is to maintain a "special operations capability" and a conventional capability, amphibious

operations have to take a second priority due to the intensive training special operations require. The Marine Corps, in trying to stand up special training programs, procure special equipment and develop new tactics to suit large unit "special operations missions" have created several deficiencies. One is that the conventional mission of amphibious operations is suffering. This hits hardest in the reconnaissance units that are tasked to provide deep reconnaissance as part of advance force operations prior to an amphibious landing and are now tasked to conduct Hostage Rescue.

When counter-terrorism (CT) was a top priority in the Reagan Administration, dedicated SOF units were formed specifically to provide a highly trained ready response force. This prompted the Marine Corps to train for Hostage Rescue in order to provide a centerpiece that would demonstrate a true SOF mission capability and justify increased funding.

This "centerpiece" of the MEU(SOC) is the reconnaissance platoon that is trained to conduct the In-extremis Hostage Rescue (IHR) mission.\* Unfortunately, this is a duplication of special operations forces that already conduct counter-terrorism as one of the five core SOF missions.

\* The *IHR Mission* is a Marine Corps term. The *CT Mission* is the accepted Joint term.

The IHR mission replaces the capability of the MEU to conduct reconnaissance for the landing force due to the intensive training required to maintain the highly perishable CT skills.

"IHR has been a tail wagging the MEU(SOC) dog ever since the first MEU(SOC) was formed. The most critical problem it creates is an extra-ordinary consumption of MEU resources. Not only does the IHR mission significantly denigrate the amphibious reconnaissance capability of the MEU, but it sucks out many more of the MEU assets . . . such as intelligence requirements. The focus of the MEU staff shifts completely to the IHR mission as it is the high profile mission. Without a successful IHR exercise, a MEU does not get certified "special operations capable" . . . yet it's the mission that the MEU is least likely to conduct once it is deployed. Not one MEU has ever conducted a hostage rescue. The reality of the situation is that MEU's must be best prepared to carry out the missions they are most likely to face, and IHR is not one of them." (Emphasis added.)

The IHR mission is the special operations capable mission that most resembles a SOF mission, and is the one that receives the most emphasis in the MEU(SOC) program. SOF units are already forward deployed to conduct these missions by air, within hours notice, and would be on scene faster than the ARG could steam to an area to rescue hostages that were "In-extremis." In-extremis is exactly that--under life and death conditions. These are the same conditions under which a commander would feel compelled to take grave risks in order to accomplish a critical mission or save lives, e.g., Navy Cross and Medal of Honor situations.

Skew of Special Operations. The techniques and skills required to conduct actual special operations have been diluted by the Marine Corps to fit larger and lesser capable conventional Marine units. These tried and true special operations techniques fitted to small highly trained, mature and generally more intelligent special operations forces, are not effective for conventional Marine Corps battalions. For example, a SEAL platoon (16 personnel) can fast rope from a helicopter to a deck of a ship at night in less than 12 seconds. With emphasis on safety for a lesser trained unit, the MEU fast-ropes a Marine platoon (42 personnel) in daylight in 20 minutes, thus negating a rapid assault onto a target. The concern for safety is not without merit. Accidents involving Marines training for special operations are well documented: Shoalwater Bay, Australia 1988 -- the Raid Company was swamped by large surf at night. The force was dispersed and CRRC's overturned--one dead. The list goes on; Subic Bay, RP 1990, a Marine falls out of a CRRC in daylight and his leg cut off by the outboard motor. The conduct of special operations must only be assigned to those small, highly trained units, that are trained to minimize risk in the face of great peril.

The responsibility for safety of small boat operations rests with the CATF, as such and in the wake of the training accidents, a COMNAVSURFPAC/COMNAVSURFLANT instruction was produced to limit

how and when Marines can conduct small boat operations. Moreover, the instruction spells out the safety requirements which would ordinarily hamstring SOF, but are required for the MEU. For example, a MEU Company of Marines in CRRC's must have a dedicated safety craft such as a Special Boat from the NSW TU along with a dedicated safety communications net, an EMT qualified Corpsman, a qualified boat engine mechanic, and a safety swimmer in order to conduct an across the beach evolution. Clearly, this would compromise any attempt to conduct a clandestine insertion into hostile territory.

Marines with only a Third Class swimming qualification<sup>†</sup> must be ready to negotiate the beach surf to get ashore. In comparison, all SEALs are all qualified rescue swimmers and devote three days a week to open water swimming skills throughout their career. The introduction of a large force with minimal training skills, under austere conditions, by CRRC's or Boston Whalers invites disaster. In one case, the CATF was so concerned by Marine non-capability that the 15TH MEU(SOC) was forbidden to use their Boston Whalers unless the ARG was in a protected port with calm seas (sea state less than one). The use of conventional landing craft to conduct amphibious raids makes more sense and is more appropriate to the forces involved.

<sup>†</sup> Swimming 25 yards across a swimming pool qualifies a Marine as a Third Class Swimmer.



Lack of Expertise. The confusion surrounding a Marine concept of special operations that is passed along to the Amphibious Ready Group Commander and Theater CINC stems in part from a lack of established special operations expertise in the Marine Corps hierarchy. The Army and Navy have established primary warfare specialties (or Military Occupational Specialties) for their officers, with 30 year career patterns. These standing SOF organizations maintain the expertise to advise on the proper employment of SOF. The Marine Corps does not generate the same level of expertise. A very small percentage of Marine Lieutenants (02) or Captains (03) will be fortunate to have one tour in a Reconnaissance unit. As the MEU(SOC) is a relatively new concept with a high turnover rate, it is most likely that the MEU staff will be learning special operations techniques for the first time. As one Battalion Commander put it:

"Before our unit deployment, we had no special operations experience other than that routinely associated with an infantry Battalion, i.e. amphibious raids and evacuation of non-combatants. We were anxious to 'take on' the program, but were apprehensive as to the effect that a focus on special operations would have on our ability to defeat a conventional enemy on the battlefield."<sup>5</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### CAPABILITIES

With the limitations and deficiencies defined, what is the best use of the MEU by the CINC? With a concentration on conventional operations and an abdication of the special operations mission, the MEU is a valuable tool for the CINC.

Forced Entry Capability. Forcible entry is an essential element of U.S. power projection and its capability must be maintained. The MEU provides one of only two options of forced entry; that is the capability to establish a lodgment in the face of an enemy. It is the CINC's and the National Command Authority's decision as to whether to employ the 82ND Airborne Division/Rangers by air or the ARG/MEU by sea. Advantages of the ARG/MEU over an Airborne means of insertion are:

- ◆ The ARG/MEU is self contained.
- ◆ The ARG/MEU is self sustaining.
- ◆ The ARG/MEU can loiter in the vicinity of a pending crisis for extended periods.
- ◆ The ARG/MEU brings its own air support.
- ◆ The ARG/MEU has no self limiting reliance on ports, airfields, or other fixed installations.
- ◆ The ARG/MEU is a mobile force that can be concentrated where it is needed.

The disadvantage is that the ARG/MEU provides a slow response to a crisis when compared to CONUS airlift capable of inserting a force into a crisis within 24 hours. The ARG is

limited by ship speed, an average of 18 knots. The CINC, through the Fleet Commander, must therefore keep close tabs as to the ARG's location and resupply (fuel/stores) status. It is only when a potential crisis is identified in advance (approximately one week or more) can the MEU respond in time. This is especially true in the Western Pacific, where the MEU is land based in Okinawa, and must be embarked in ships homeported 600 miles away.

The Pacific AOR stretches from the coast of Africa to midway between Guam and Hawaii where sailing time/distances could be two weeks or more. Any situation involving the capture/loss of American lives would be handled by dedicated SOF, not by the MEU.<sup>6</sup>

#### Forward Presence.

"As the United States closes 628 overseas bases, a 38 percent reduction of the 1990 overseas basing structure, the strategic mobility of the Navy and Marine Corps looms more relevant than ever to the United States."<sup>7</sup>

The ARG/MEU provides this forward presence along with Carrier Battle Groups. In the Mediterranean, Adm Boorda as CINCUSNAVEUR, sees the CVBG/ARG concept as a single unit, able to task organize to respond to a variety of situations to include show of force operations. "We are actors on the world scene. We are forward deployed."<sup>8</sup>

Forward deployed forces maintain liaison with regional players, cross-train with foreign militaries and provide the basis for coalition building. Forward deployed units also act as a deterrence, in that they demonstrate U.S. interest and resolve.

"Forward presence is the totality of U.S. instruments of power and influence."<sup>9</sup>

Humanitarian Intervention/Civic Action. Probably one of the best capabilities of the ARG/MEU is the ability to provide credible sea based support to a country devastated by natural disaster, famine, or dislocation. When Cyclone Marion hit Bangladesh in April 1991, 139,000 people perished in a single night. The ARG/MEU, on its way back from the Persian Gulf, was diverted and provided invaluable support to JTF SEA ANGEL. The LHA, with its modern floating hospital, provided treatment and Marines were used to establish aid stations and food distribution points. Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in Northern Iraq, Operation FIERY VIGIL in the Philippines, the 1990 San Francisco earthquake, the Haitian refugees in Cuba, and actions in Somalia provide other examples of how the MEU can be used to provide humanitarian relief. The capabilities of the MEU can easily be used to support a humanitarian/civic action mission with reliable communications, sea/land based transportation, technical repair advice and basic life sustenance of food, water, and shelter.

While humanitarian assistance must take second priority to national defense interests, this mission can quickly change to a first priority given the world political situation today. The CINC must balance his forces to ensure his AOR does not get caught short of critical response needs. While all military forces can conduct the humanitarian relief mission, the ARG/MEU can respond [relatively] rapidly and independently in support of national objectives.<sup>10</sup>

Non-combat Evacuation Operations (NEO). The most likely future employment of an ARG/MEU will be to conduct NEO operations to evacuate U.S. citizens and friendly allies from an area of instability. This has been demonstrated with great success in Liberia, 1990, and Somalia just prior to Desert Storm. Other NEO's that were planned, but were not executed, include Burma in 1989 and Cambodia in 1992. The MEU, with the amphibious ships as safe havens, were the CINC's primary option for a non-permissive NEO. "However, if the crisis erupts more quickly, Army Airborne forces may be more appropriate."<sup>11</sup> The determining factor of choice of forces is time. Regardless, the MEU could be used as a follow on force or reinforcement. It is this "special" mission that the MEU should focus on and train for.

Primary Mission. The primary purpose of the MEU is to conduct Amphibious Warfare. This capability of the MEU is taken

for granted but is often downplayed in favor of a special operations capable mission. Amphibious warfare, as an aspect of operational art, provides a mobile force with sea-based logistics and a tailored force for the CINC to conduct forced entry operations with momentum, increased tempo, and leverage. The CINC can strike at a place of his choosing to establish advanced Naval and air bases, strike at the flanks of an opponent, or control sea lines of communications. Amphibious forces can function as the theater's operational reserve or attain the element of surprise in a third world low intensity conflict.

"The inherent strength of amphibious forces is synonymous with the fundamentals of operational art: Mobility, surprise, increased reach, extension of the culminating point, ability to concentrate or disperse, ability to strike the enemy's center of gravity, ability to generate momentum, increase tempo and exert leverage; and maintain the initiative."<sup>12</sup>

## Chapter VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Redefining the MEU mission. Instead of focusing on a special operations capability, the MEU needs to redefine and publish its mission as a primary amphibious force capable of conducting amphibious operations across a spectrum of conflict. Enhanced capabilities are required, such as an over the horizon landing capability, humanitarian assistance, NEO and security operations. These do not equate to special operations, therefore to avoid confusion, unnecessary duplication, and re-establish priorities, the (SOC) should be deleted from the MEU title. A statement that the MEU is *enhanced* will satisfy the regional CINC requirements. These redefined missions should be:

- ◆ Forced entry-amphibious.
- ◆ Forced entry-vertical assault.
- ◆ Amphibious raid (planned withdrawal).
- ◆ Amphibious demonstration (deception).
- ◆ Humanitarian/disaster relief operations.
- ◆ NEO (permissive/nonpermissive).
- ◆ Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT).

These redefined missions provide the most versatile and flexible missions that are appropriate to the force. The MEU will be more capable, affordable, and credible.

Additionally, the MEU should delete the CRRC's and RRC's from the MEU load-out and use this space to embark required conventional amphibious equipment.

Geographical Orientation. With a focus on conventional operations, the MEU should tailor their forces to operate within their respective theater of operations:

- ◆ The CENTCOM MEU should concentrate on desert operations, train for a high armor threat, and maintain extended mobility.
- ◆ ADM Boorda states the areas of instability in the Mediterranean are most notably Bosnia, North Africa, and Algeria. Therefore the Mediterranean MEU should concentrate on amphibious raids, humanitarian relief missions, and MOUT.
- ◆ The WESTPAC MEU should concentrate on conventional cold weather operations and amphibious raids for a North Korean contingency. Additionally, the Third World countries in the AOR often experience natural disasters so humanitarian relief operations are also a priority.

Each MEU could also maintain theater-specific capabilities such as language skills, specialized equipment, and geographical acclimatization. Geographical orientation makes sense for the



specific MEUs that routinely deploy to the same theater of operations.

Conclusions. The future of the Marine Expeditionary Unit lies with a return to conventional operations with an enhanced capability. The conduct of special operations is a USSOCOM responsibility and the proper forces are already forward deployed and tasked. Attempts to duplicate this capability by the MEU is a wasted effort and does not complement SOF missions. With the military draw-down and budget reduction, a redundant capability is neither cost effective nor prudent. The U.S. Congress has directed that the military consolidate, stream-line and reduce. There is no argument for the requirement to maintain a Marine Corps. The MEU is a valuable tool to the CINC. It should be focused on its primary mission, *Amphibious Warfare*.

## APPENDIX I

### SELECTED DEFINITIONS

1. Counter-Terrorism (CT): The preemption or resolution of terrorist incidents.
2. Direct Action (DA): The seizing, damaging, or destruction of a target; to capture or recover personnel or material in support of strategic/operational objectives or conventional forces.
3. Foreign Internal Defense (FID): To assist another government in any action program taken to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.
4. Special Reconnaissance (SR): To verify, through observation or other collection methods, information concerning enemy capabilities, intentions, and activities in support of strategic/operational objectives or conventional forces.
5. Unconventional Warfare (UW): The conduct of a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations in enemy held, enemy controlled, or politically sensitive territory.

# **APPENDIX II** **COMPARISON OF THE EVOLVING MEU(SOC) MISSION**

## **1985 MISSIONS**

<b>INTELLIGENCE GATHERING</b>	<b>DIRECT ACTION</b>
1. Visual Reconnaissance	11. Amphibious Raids
2. Multisensory Imagery	12. Limited objective attacks
3. Electronic reconnaissance	13. NEO
4. Beach reconnaissance	14. Show of force operations
5. Hydrographic surveys	15. Reinforcement operations
6. Ground reconnaissance	16. Security operations
7. Engineer survey operations	17. Mobile training teams
8. Sensor implants	18. Civic action
9. HUMINT, SIGINT, IMINT	19. Deception operations
10. Topographic operations	20. Fire support control
	21. Counterintelligence Ops
	22. Initial Terminal Guidance
	23. Electronic Warfare
	24. Hostage Rescue

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## **1990 MISSIONS<sup>2</sup>**

1. Amphibious Raid
2. Security Operations
3. Limited Objective Attacks
4. Mobile Training Teams
5. NEO
6. Show of Force Operations
7. Reinforcement Operations
8. Civic Action
9. Deception Operations
10. Fire Support Operations
11. Counterintelligence
12. Initial Terminal Guidance
13. Electronic Warfare
14. MOUT
15. Clandestine Recovery
16. Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP)
17. In-Extremis Hostage Rescue

## **1990 WESTPAC MISSIONS<sup>3</sup>**

1. Amphibious Raid
2. Security Operations
3. Specialized Demolition Ops
4. Mobile Training Teams
5. NEO
6. Show of Force Operations
7. Offload Prep for Alert MAGTF
8. Civic Action
9. Deception Operations
10. Fire Support Operations
11. Counterintelligence
12. Initial Terminal Guidance
13. Electronic Warfare
14. Maritime Interdiction Ops
15. Clandestine Recovery
16. Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP)
17. In-Extremis Hostage Rescue
18. Gas and Oil Platform Takedown
19. Initial Port Security
20. Survey Liaison Reconnaissance

## **1993 MISSIONS<sup>4</sup>**

1. Amphibious Raid
2. Security Operations
3. Sustained Operation Ashore
4. Humanitarian Relief
5. NEO
6. Show of Force Operations
7. Simultaneous Operations
8. Civic Action
9. Deception Operations
10. Counterintelligence
11. Electronic Warfare
12. Maritime Interdiction Ops
13. Clandestine Recovery
14. Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP)
15. In-Extremis Hostage Rescue
16. Gas and Oil Platform Takedown

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