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The ability of JSB to operate independently and in concert with other concepts demonstrates the flexibility that makes JSB such a powerful tool for the JFC. JSB flexibility enhances the JFC ability to operate a sustainable and protected Intermediate Staging Base (ISB), rapidly close forces in austere environments, and project a powerful and adaptive force. The sum of these capabilities allows the Joint Task Force (JTF) to engage preemptively in crisis and conflicts across a wide spectrum of conflict, diffusing volatile situations before they gain momentum.

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A JOINT SEBASING OPERATIONAL CONCEPT

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 Joint Military 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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Introduction

Aim

The aim of this paper is to present an argument for the requirement and operational viability of a joint seabasing (JSB) concept. The paper is intended for the Department of Defense (DoD) military and civilian personnel who are familiar with DoD's and individual services' visions and operational concepts.

Scope

This paper will first focus on identifying major challenges confronting the Joint Force Commander (JFC) currently and out to 2020. Second, the paper will describe how those challenges manifest themselves in the operational environment faced by the JFC. Third, the paper will describe the JSB concept and its design. It describes how JSB functions in 2015 in a focused vignette. Fourth, the paper will address the potential vulnerabilities of JSB and finally, the paper will draw conclusions and suggest recommendations for JSB development.

Method

Joint Seabasing does not currently exist as a concept. A recent article published jointly by the Marine Corps Combat Development Center (MCCDC) and the Naval Warfare Development Center (NWDC) mentioned the Enhanced Networked Seabasing (ENS) concept supporting a "fully integrated joint force", but the mention lacked specificity.¹ The Flag Officer panel of a NWDC

sponsored seabasing wargame also commented on the need to explore seabasing as a joint concept², but no formal work has appeared. Numerous published articles, papers and studies addressing elements of the U.S.'s maritime capabilities provided the basis for the research in this paper. In addition, the Expeditionary Networked Seabasing (ENS) concept greatly influenced the design for JSB.* The final JSB design was an analytical extrapolation of the capabilities of each of the services, the ENS concept and the requirements of the JFC.

Challenges

The two major requirements facing the joint force operating at the operational level of war out to the year 2020 will be to *respond quickly* and to *act decisively*. The latest National Security Strategy of the United States (NSS) has stated that the United States must be able to act alone and preemptively, if necessary, to strengthen alliances, defeat global terrorism and prevent attacks against us and our friends³. Joint Vision 2020 (JV2020) has charted the course for future U.S. military capabilities by directing "full spectrum dominance". Full spectrum dominance implies that U.S. forces are able to conduct prompt, sustained, and synchronized operations with combinations of forces tailored to specific situations and with access to and

* Enhanced Networked Seabasing, a draft NWDC/MCCDC working paper details the naval approach to a seabasing concept

freedom to operate in all domains - space, sea, land, air, and information⁴

The language in both of these strategic documents has a tremendous impact on the capabilities of the operational level force. To be able to act alone, the United States must possess military forces capable of *decisive* action. A decisive military force faced with the reality of today's (and certainly the future's) budget constraints must look for efficiencies. Hence, the force must be flexible, scalable, and sustainable in order to respond affordably to "specific situations" in "all domains". In addition, for the United States to act preemptively it must be able to deploy and employ *quickly*. The speed at which the operational forces can move and then engage the threat is critical to preempting a problem before it becomes a larger crisis.

Two major challenges to the U.S.'s ability to respond decisively at the operational level of war are: *providing flexible, scalable forces* and *protecting the force*. There are also two major challenges to the U.S.'s ability to respond quickly at the operational level of war: *rapidly closing the force* and *countering access denial strategies*. This paper will demonstrate the utility of a JSB concept to significantly mitigate the vulnerabilities associated with these challenges. JSB will provide the JFC with a tool with which he can complement other

operational concepts or act alone, in either case, to respond quickly and act decisively.

Operational Environment

Increasing degrees of uncertainty and violence will characterize future crisis requiring U.S. military intervention. The seemingly simultaneous emergence of well-funded and capable global terrorist networks, the increased frequency of Balkan, African and Middle Eastern humanitarian emergencies and ethnic genocide, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technology will continue to shape the spectrum of conflict that faces the U.S. military. The U.S. military must break from its Cold War paradigms and tailor its ability to respond to the varied nature of the new threats while maintaining its traditional capability to fight and win the nation's wars. An adaptive force with multi-mission capabilities will be the force of choice.

The terrorist attacks that struck the USS Cole, the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and recent attacks on U.S. Marines in Kuwait have demonstrated the crucial need for effective measures to protect U.S. forces. We must continually consider the enemy's capacity to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD), information operations, ballistic missiles as well as terrorist activities⁵ to unbalance us and redirect our precious resources away from engaging the enemy.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States has seen the loss of military infrastructure overseas that impedes our ability to respond with regionally based forces. As a result, strategic airlift has become increasingly important in order to deploy "first responders" in a timely fashion. But, strategic airlift is not a panacea because the current and programmed inventory is insufficient to meet all the planned requirements⁶ and many potential hotspots in the world lack sufficient throughput to support the operations of heavy lift aircraft.⁷ Additionally, strategic sealift is severely limited because of its speed and requirements for well-developed, deep draft ports that are also uncommon in underdeveloped countries. These limitations potentially slow U.S. response to regional crises. The dilemma arises of how to deploy and employ preemptively within the reality of infrastructure and lift constraints.

As the U.S. continues to plan for the next emerging crisis, we can anticipate that future U.S. opponents will pursue anti-access strategies, which will play against our strengths in order to delay, deter, or counter our capabilities.⁸ Increased reliance on inter-theater movement of forces has placed a premium on obtaining basing rights from other countries as well as developing more expeditionary capabilities. Meanwhile, our opponents are attempting to impede our ability to close forces and sustain them during a crisis. Even now, Iraq is employing commercial,

diplomatic, ethnic and religious coercions to isolate the United States from countries like Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia in the impending conflict.

This paper will demonstrate how the JSB concept becomes a force multiplier when applied to all of four of these challenges.

JSB will provide the JFC with a joint capability for arrival and assembly at sea that will allow the selective offload of specifically tailored forces prior to employment or redeployment.

In addition, seabasing will allow the JFC to protect his forces by leveraging the agility and inherent level of protection derived from operating in the most independent and secure maneuver space - the sea.⁹ Given U.S. maritime and air superiority today and into the mid term (roughly the next fifteen years out), JSB will experience fewer protection concerns than a static, Intermediate Staging Base (ISB). The ability of JSB to link strategic throughput to tactical and operational maneuver will increase the speed and freedom to close and employ forces quickly. As sovereign U.S. territory, JSB can also free the JFC from the pitfalls of "entangling alliances" that concerned George Washington. The JFC will have a secure, maneuverable base from which to conduct operations free from the requirement to seek basing rights, over flight permission or port clearances from other nations. Essentially, the JSB concept will extend to the

joint force the advantages that naval forces have enjoyed for centuries.

Joint Seabasing Concept

Assumptions

In constructing the conceptual design for JSB, four key assumptions were made:

1. No U.S. peer military competitor out to 2020.
2. Maritime and air superiority in the Joint Operations Area (JOA) are achievable early in crisis response.
3. Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) will continue to be the prevalent (but not exclusive) employment for U.S. military forces in the near and mid terms.
4. Programmed platforms, included in the JSB concept will be available at current projected timelines.

Concept Design

What is joint seabasing? Foremost, JSB is a method in which the JFC organizes, employs, and sustains the joint force in a littoral environment. JSB will enable joint force maneuver and power projection from the sea. JSB will also complement the functions of ISBs or the operations of maneuver forces during large-scale campaigns. JSB can also independently project sustained combat power in an austere JOA. JSB is similar to the naval vision of a seabase concept in that JSB is not a "thing".¹⁰

The JSB concept is a construct for the joint interoperation of

platforms, systems and people, in a littoral environment. Unlike ENS, JSB is temporary in nature and operates in a limited area. JSB begins when the JFC orders the establishment of a Joint Seabasing Area (JSBA) and terminates at the JFC's discretion.

Platforms

There will be wide varieties of platforms (and systems of platforms) that interoperate in JSB. It is important to be familiar with some of the systems of platforms and major individual platforms that participate in JSB. A list of JSB platforms has been included in Figure 1. Figures 2 and 3 provide conceptual graphics of future platforms. The JSB construct that follows focuses specifically on the operational functions of command and control, movement and maneuver, and logistics. JSB will enable other operational functions as well, but these specific functions best address the operational challenges facing the JFC.

Insert figures 1, 2, and 3 here.

Command and Control

The JFC will order the creation of the Joint Seabasing Area (JSBA), typically inside the JOA, to initiate JSB. The JSBA is defined as the area in which the preponderance of the joint force's maritime operations will be conducted (see figure 4) The

purpose of establishing a JSBA is to create a unity of command for all the maritime assets assigned to the JFC.

Insert figure 4 here

The responsibility for coordinating the movement and control of the maritime assets within the JSBA would be assigned to the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC). Ideally, the JFMCC would coordinate his efforts with the Joint Force Logistics Component Commander (JFLOG)* for all logistics operations taking place in the JSBA. The JFC would also direct coordination as required between the JFMCC and the Joint Force Land Component Commander (JFLCC) and Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) with respect to air or land operations ashore.

JSB will enable the JFC to base his staff at sea. The JSB Command and Control Network (JSBCCN) would support the JFC and his staff for both planning and execution. JSBCCN would be a sophisticated network, built on the Navy's ForceNet model, and would link the joint force into a common operating picture. The JFC could then retain the option to remain at sea or transition ashore as the situation warrants.

The principal ships housing the staffs would be the Joint Command and Control Ships (JCC ships), future MPF ships, and/or Littoral Command Ships (LCSs) and additional contracted merchant

vessels outfitted with modularized command and control suites. The footprint of the JFC's staff in, and outside the JSBA, would determine the size and scope of the JSBCCN. The JSBCCN links the elements of the JFC staff outside the JSBA to the JFC while they remain in the continental United States (CONUS) or at the nearest ISB. The potential development of the Mobile Offshore Base (MOB) concept as a future JSB platform would provide the JFC a greater capacity to position his staff afloat.

Movement & Maneuver

One advantage that international waters afford the seabased force is the freedom to move maritime forces quickly into any littoral region. Using this freedom of the seas, the JFC can begin to build his combat power very early in the deployment phase of any crisis or conflict. Even before the JFC precisely defines the JOA and JSB, issued warning orders can direct JTF assets into an area of concern. Once in the area, those forces can begin to build the conditions necessary to conduct JSB operations. Early crisis responders that would make up the nucleus of the JSB capability would typically be forward positioned Carrier Battle Groups (CVBG) and/or Expeditionary Strike Groups. The units would combine with other available allied or coalition naval assets that move into the JOA to achieve the maritime and air superiority required to conduct JSB operations.

* Flag/General Officer Issues of the Office of Naval Research wargame included an expectation that a Joint Force Logistics

Once the nucleus ships have established air and maritime superiority, the JTF begins to build combat power in the arrival and assembly phase. If airfields in the JOA are inadequate or unavailable, strategic air moves Objective Force (OF) Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) to the nearest ISB and then transload to TSVs.

The MPF(F) and APA ships arrive and serve as the central points to building combat power in the JSBA. Intra-theater TSVs and HSVs will move to the JSBA and support the shuttling and offloading of MPF(F) and APA forces and equipment. LCS vessels begin counter-mine, anti-submarine and anti-surface operations while acting as an advanced staging base supporting Special Forces. In addition, inter-theater SDHSS begin to move additional OF BCTs to the JOA from CONUS or another theater.

During the engagement or employment phase the Marine units begin Ship to Objective Maneuver (STOM) operations from amphibious and MPF(F) shipping. Combatant ships at sea maneuver at sea to support maritime operations as well as operations in support of ground forces ashore. OF units conduct sustained operations ashore as they are delivered to entry points by AMTs or TSVs from APA shipping or even MPF(F) ships conducting lily pad operations.

During the sustainment and redeployment phases, the JFC has established ship-to-ship interface links with CLF, RRF and

Component Commander (JFLOG) would be a requirement by 2015.

commercial ships. Strategic sealift ships move into the JSBA and discharge their cargo to the MPF ships or logistics LCS ships. Additionally, combatant ships move into the JSBA to replenish underway. As forces continue to deploy from or redeploy back to the JSBA, the movement of HSVs, TSVs and vertical lift assets become critical. As mission, threats, or even weather dictates, the JFC may adjust the size or location of the JSBA, or direct the addition or removal of ships into the JSBA to best support the force and protect the integrity and effectiveness of the JSBA.

Logistics

All six tenants of seabased logistics* will guide the design of joint seabased logistics. For this discussion, four of these tenants directly apply to overcoming the JFC's operational challenges. We will focus on the *primacy of the sea base, adaptive response, force closure and reconstitution at sea.*¹¹

The primacy of the seabase focuses on building, projecting and sustaining combat power; the CVBG and ESG will form the nucleus of this capability in the JSBA. These 'nucleus ships' will interface with SDHSSs, HSVs, TSVs, and LCSs to form the basis of an operational node linking strategic and tactical logistics. JSB will take advantage of improved distribution and in-transit visibility technology to streamline throughput by delivering

* The six tenants of seabasing are primacy of the sea base, reducing demand, in-stride sustainment, adaptive response and joint operations, force closure and reconstitution at sea.

support from the JSBA directly to the requesting unit. The primary goal will be to reduce the logistics footprint ashore eliminating the traditional layers of shore based support.

Providing the JFC with adaptive response to a wide range of operations is another important advantage of seabasing. When ports, roads, and airfields in the JOA become unavailable due to natural disasters or enemy threat, JSB provides sustainment and distribution capabilities that are not dependent infrastructure ashore. During a humanitarian crisis, the JFC could direct the retailoring (within the JSBA) of afloat prepositioned humanitarian support packages from MPF (F) and APA shipping to meet the specific mission (e.g. famine and/or flood). JSB would also include the flexibility to integrate with theater logistics systems and transition as required to support traditional shore based logistics.

Rapid force closure is an important operational requirement. JSB provides the JFC with options in situations where JOA airfields and ports are inadequate or unavailable. The forward deployed nature of the CVBG and the ESG can provide the JFC a ready response in hours. MPF(F), APA and LCS vessels create a strategic throughput node which can support the closure of forces from outside the JOA. Strategic airlift offloads forces at the nearest friendly ISB and TSVs then move those forces to the JSBA. Onboard JSBA shipping, the force assembles their combat loads and

move ashore via TSVs, HSVs, advanced lighterage platforms or vertical lift aircraft.

Once operations have developed to allow retrograde of forces, the JFC will have the ability to recover the force and reconstitute combat power at sea. CVBG, MPF(F) and ESG assets all possess the capability to conduct maintenance on ground and aviation equipment underway. MSC, CLF and RRF shipping can all resupply and evacuate severely damaged equipment. MPF (F) ships as well as dedicated medical support ships (e.g. USS Mercy and USS Comfort) can provide sophisticated patient care. Reconstitution can occur simultaneously as current crisis operations continue ashore. The end state is a potent combat power, redeployed aboard JTF shipping, ready to execute follow-on missions.

Borneo Vignette

In the summer of 2015, a severe tropical cyclone in the South China Sea devastates many of the islands in the area. The island of Borneo and many of the Philippine islands suffer significant destruction to infrastructure and lose critical services. To compound the problem, recent reports over the last few weeks have indicated that the Kalimantan Republic* (KR) has been preparing an attempt to seize the rich oil resources of East Malaysia and Brunei and topple their governments**. Intelligence sources indicate that the KR has been reluctant to take any action in the

* Formed in 2002 when the southern half of Borneo broke from East Malaysia

past given the demonstrated ability of U.S. forces to flow quickly into theater. With many of the theater's major ports and airfields damaged or inoperable, the KR has seized upon this moment to intensify their preparations.*** The governments of East Malaysia and Brunei are asking the United States for assistance with the KR threat. The Philippine Government (GOP) is requesting humanitarian assistance from the United States and the United Nations.

The United States responds by establishing a single Joint Task Force (JTF) for both missions. On the initial day of notification (N Day), the JFC establishes a JOA around Borneo and a JSBA near the Celebes Sea (see map, pg 16). The JFC directs a CVBG and an ESG based in Japan to move to the JOA.* Within three days, the CVBG and ESG arrive as do a limited number of Australian and British ships. On N+2, the JTF begins to conduct maritime and air superiority operations around Borneo.

Concurrently, the Maritime Prepositioning Squadron (MPSRON) moves to the JOA from Guam. An Army Brigade Combat Team (BCT) flies via C-17s from CONUS to Darwin and moves by TSV** to the JSBA. TSVs deliver the BCT to Borneo on N+3 and the shallow draft TSVs bypass the damaged ports and offload a combat ready unit.

** The U.S. successfully defeated the original attempt in 2006

*** Most of KR's airfields and ports are on the southwestern side of Borneo and suffered only minor damage from the winds and were unaffected by the storm surge.

* CVBG and ESG were conducting joint operations in the vicinity of Okinawa

Okinawa based Marines move by HSV and link up with MPF(F) ships JSBA on N+4.

The JFC and his staff assemble onboard MPF(F) shipping and standup the JSBCCN. In both the Army and Marine cases, netted command and control systems allow enroute planning and interface with the global command and control networks. The engineer and medically tailored Marine task force assembles a humanitarian response aboard the MPF(F) ships and then re-embarks aboard HSVs to initiate relief operations by N+6.

Maritime superiority, air superiority, and humanitarian operations continue as the JTF plans a non-combatant evacuation (NEO) operation of American citizens in East Malaysia and Brunei.

The JFC intends to use the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) as the NEO security force and move evacuees by V-22 aircraft and HSVs to ESG shipping. Following processing aboard ESG ships, TSVs move evacuees to the nearest ISB.

Insert map 1 here

By N+7, the Army moves two additional BCTs from APA ships and one from CONUS via SDHSS. Marine units in the Philippines continue to provide food and fresh water and work to restore critical services. MPF and APA ships continually resupply Army and Marine units via TSVs, HSVs, AMTs and V-22s. CLF and RRF

** TSVs and HSVs are based out of Okinawa and Guam and require only two days to move to Darwin

ships continue to provide a steady stream of support to the nucleus ships in the JSBA. The added support of inter-theater air from the Air Force and other nation support have assured secure sea and air lines of communication (LOCs). In light of this rapid build up of forces, the KR forces stand-down.

In this scenario the preemptive response enabled by the speed and flexibility of a seabased force diffused a potential threat to critical regional oil resources. Additionally, the actions of the JTF secured the critical commercial sea lanes in the area and provided immediate humanitarian assistance to the victims of the cyclone. The demonstrated speed at which the United States built combat power without reliance on ports and air fields must now factor into every enemy's rational calculus when confronting the United States and her allies. Additionally, the U.S.'s quick response to devastated communities in the region improved its standing in the international community.

Vulnerabilities

JSB is not without its vulnerabilities. What if we cannot achieve early maritime and air superiority? The U.S. possesses a naval capability superior to any other in world, currently. Will the same be true in 2015? Countries such as India and the North Korea possess very sophisticated, albeit limited, naval and air forces. In addition, sophisticated mines are relatively

affordable and present an easy way for even poorer countries to attack us asymmetrically.

The response to this question is that we must work hard to maintain the advantages in naval power we currently enjoy. JSB will not operate effectively without both air and maritime advantages. The United States must develop superior ships and aircraft to securing LOCs as well as passive measures like a fleet missile defense. In addition, we must improve U.S. anti-mine and anti-submarine capabilities; The LCS will be a critical part of this solution. Finally, a good threat and mission analysis may allow the JFC to decrease the seabased JTF's vulnerability by simply moving the JSBA to avoid enemy threat rings.

The weather has a tremendous impact on naval operations. Weather could be seen as a disadvantage to conducting seabasing operations. High sea states can slow or halt underway replenishment activities. Amphibious operations, particularly the employment of landing craft and lighterage, are also greatly affected by sea state. Communications and the coordination of numerous maritime vessels become increasingly dangerous as visibility decreases and wind and rain increase.

While the weather will always affect naval operations, new technology and the flexibility of the JSB concept will reduce its affects. Increasingly reliable satellite technology will help forecast weather conditions allowing the JFC to adjust the JSBA to

avoid or mitigate its affects. Additionally, new advances in lighterage, landing craft and container delivery systems are anticipated to increase operational parameters for amphibious operations and especially replenishment from sea states of three to five¹² - a significant improvement. Finally, it must be understood that weather will play a role in any operation - at sea or on land. Desert storms lodge destructive sand in the inner workings of aircraft and vehicles. Tropical rains produce flooding and mudslides that hamper ground movement. No military operation is free from considering the effects of weather on its operations, but JSB does offer the unique ability to readily move your "ISB" to avoid weather affects, and then reinstate it when foul conditions pass.

Conclusion

Road Ahead

The Navy and Marine Corps are forging ahead with their commitment to seabasing. The visions articulated in *Sea Power 21* and *Marine Corps Strategy 21* are being operationalized in the emerging *Naval Operating Concept (NOC)* * and seabasing has been included in both the Navy and Marine Corps overarching operational

* This document was approved on 02 November, 2002 by the Commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command and the Commanding General of Marine Corps Combat Development Command. It is awaiting Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps approval.

2 concepts.** A mission need statement for the Future MPF requirement has been approved¹³ and the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) has been tasked develop solutions.¹⁴ The Navy has cancelled its Joint Command and Control (JCC) ship concept and directed that the future MPF platforms support the JCC(X) requirement.¹⁵ Even the controversial MOB concept was resurrected when DoD placed over a billion dollars in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 budget*** for MOB concept development.¹⁶

Other indications of progress can be seen in the Army's Transformation Wargame 2002 findings that recognized a requirement for seabased assets to support future power projection requirements.¹⁷ Also, Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) and the Marine Corps are both currently conducting independent experimentation with high speed vessels. However, most seabasing efforts have been stovepiped. The development of ENS is an exception, but it is a naval concept and still under development. There has been no central effort to integrate initiatives throughout the DoD. The following recommendations are designed to coordinate the efforts of the DoD to develop a joint concept.

- 1. Direct JFCOM to develop a joint concept for seabasing, with the Navy as the lead in the DoD and integrate joint seabasing experimentation across the DoD.*

** Both Sea Power 21 and Marine Corps Strategy 21 incorporate the concept of seabasing

*** The money has been budgeted for the budget's out years and may be intended to spur transformational support for seabasing vice the MOB concept itself. \$150 million has been budgeted for FY-08 and \$900 million for FY-09

2. Direct all services to include seabasing in their Title X wargames.

3. Continue aggressive joint development of HSVs.

Interoperable HSVs - both inter-theater and intra-theater - are crucial to the success of JSB.

4. Continue aggressive development of the multi-role LCS.

Counter-mine and counter submarine capabilities are essential to protecting the seabased JTF.

Closing

Joint Seabasing is not a stand-alone concept. The scenario in which no other options are available to the JFC except JSB may be probable, but it is unlikely. The ability of the JSB to operate independently and in concert with other concepts demonstrates the flexibility that makes JSB such a powerful tool for the JFC. JSB flexibility enhances the JFC ability to operate a sustainable and protected ISB, rapidly close forces in austere environments, and project a powerful and adaptive force. The sum of these capabilities allows the JTF to engage preemptively in crisis and conflicts across a wide spectrum of conflict, diffusing volatile situations before they gain momentum. In essence, JSB will provide the Joint Force those advantages historically enjoyed by naval forces; freedom of action, immediate employability, increased security and sustained access¹⁸.

Notes

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