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14. ABSTRACT Joint Seabasing is a visionary concept aimed at increasing combatant commanders' flexibility in responding to the range of military operations. The Department of Defense has identified Seabasing as a joint capability, and is developing the capability for the 2015 timeframe. It is critical that the effort is truly joint, especially in light of indications that this has not been the case to date. In addition to the joint challenge, the concept of Joint Seabasing identifies several logistical challenges with respect to command and control, logistics information systems, doctrine, training, integration and host nation support. Options are presented to overcome these challenges, and successful implementation of Joint Seabasing can yield significant operational advantages with respect to logistics. The paper identifies several recommendations for the combatant commander to advocate for or implement today to better prepare the armed forces to leverage the full capability of a Joint Sea Base in the future.					
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Newport, RI**

**WHERE'S THE JOINT IN JOINT SEABASING:
LOGISTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER**

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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13 February 2006

Abstract

Seabasing is a visionary concept aimed at increasing combatant commanders' flexibility in responding to the range of military operations. The Department of Defense has identified Seabasing as a joint capability, and is developing the capability for the 2015 timeframe. It is critical that the effort is truly joint, especially in light of indications that this has not been the case to date. In addition to the joint challenge, the concept of Joint Seabasing identifies several logistical challenges with respect to command and control, logistics information systems, doctrine, training, integration and host nation support. Options are presented to overcome these challenges, and successful implementation of Joint Seabasing can yield significant operational advantages with respect to logistics. The paper identifies several recommendations for the combatant commander to advocate for or implement today to better prepare the armed forces to leverage the full capability of a Joint Sea Base in the future.

We are developing joint sea bases that will allow our forces to strike from floating platforms close to the action, instead of being dependent on land bases far from the fight

– President Bush¹

Introduction

Joint Seabasing has evolved from the military's requirement to provide the United States Commander-in-Chief sovereign options for defense. Seabasing began as one of three cornerstones, along with Sea Shield and Sea Strike, of the Navy's Sea Power 21 vision. The visionary concept of Seabasing aims to take the Navy's Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups and Maritime Pre-positioning Fleet of today and create an enhanced operational capability that will provide the combatant commander a solution to the challenge of denied access. Additionally, Seabasing will provide combatant commanders with increased flexibility and responsiveness in executing the full range of military operations in the 21st century.

The Department of Defense (DOD) developed a Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept and defined Seabasing as:

the rapid deployment, assembly, command, projection, reconstitution, and re-employment of joint combat power from the sea, while providing continuous support, sustainment, and force protection to select expeditionary joint forces without reliance on land bases within the Joint Operations Area (JOA). These capabilities expand operational maneuver options, and facilitate assured access and entry from the sea.²

One might argue that Seabasing is not new to the Navy; in fact, the Navy has successfully conducted numerous sea-based operations over many wars and conflicts. The distinction with today's definition of Seabasing is the emphasis on the Sea Base and its role in assembling, sustaining and reconstituting forces without having to establish a land-based logistical hub.

As the DOD continues down the path of pursuing Seabasing, it is critical to ensure that the effort is truly joint. This paper will examine the service participation in developing this joint capability. Additionally, Seabasing raises several operational logistics issues, which may significantly impact the success or failure of the Joint Sea Base. This paper will outline some viable options to overcome these current issues and provide an increased capability to future combatant commanders.

“Joint” Sea Base

When Admiral Clark published the Navy’s Sea Power 21 vision in 2002, Seabasing was envisioned to project joint operational independence. The vision advocated jointness and increased capability for the combatant commander, but made no mention of integration with the Army and Air Force.³ In their January 2003 Naval Institute Proceedings article, VADM Moore and LTG Hanlon, USMC, wrote that “The integrated battlespace of the future may witness not only Special Operations Forces operating in the maritime domain, but also Air Force unmanned combat vehicles surging to sea bases ...bedding down ashore.”⁴ Though one might argue this example might appear to make Seabasing joint, the question still remains on the complete integration of the Sea Base.

In 2003, the Defense Science Board Task Force on Sea Basing report identified twelve issues, the “dirty dozen,” that had to be addressed; the #1 issue was “*meaningful participation* by the Army and Air Force in forming a joint capability.” Ironically, this task force was hardly joint, as there was no Air Force member or advisor and only one of the more than 50 presenters was Air Force.⁵ In their 2005 report on Sea Basing, the National Research Council criticized the Navy’s Naval Operating Concept: “...it has not involved joint entities outside the Department of the Navy (such as combatant commanders

(COCOMs), the Air Force, Army, Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), and the like) to any significant degree.”⁶

Though senior military officials profess their support for Joint Seabasing, that sentiment does not echo throughout. Cultural differences exist among services and can serve as a roadblock to delay development of Joint Seabasing.⁷ Another indicator of the level of service participation in Joint Seabasing is the Air Force’s perspective that they support the joint warfighting concept and bring several capabilities to bear to support the Sea Base. However, the Air Force stops short of embracing the concept or outlining integration with the Sea Base in terms of operations or logistics.⁸

On the other hand, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approval in August 2005 of the Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept (JIC) indicates progress in making Seabasing more joint than before; however, it is not a guarantee of future support. The JIC is focused on 2015-2025 and the nature of the enemy and threat may change, as may the willingness of the services to cooperate. Additionally, the establishment of a JIC does not, in and of itself, yield enthusiastic support.

The issue and degree of the jointness of a future Sea Base is critical to the operational commander. Within the last few years, Combatant Commanders have successfully utilized current “Sea Bases”: U.S.S. Kitty Hawk serving as an Afloat Forward Staging Base for SOF Forces in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM,⁹ the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and the U.S.S. Bonhomme Richard Expeditionary Support Group providing humanitarian relief after the Tsunami in Indonesia, and more than 20 ships that supported Hurricane Katrina relief.¹⁰ Just as Seabasing provides the Commander-in-Chief sovereign options, it also has the potential, if properly implemented, to enhance the combatant

commander's options for military action. However, previous operational successes, especially ones as listed above that do not utilize the yet-proven technologies of the future Joint Sea Base, should not be interpreted as guarantors of future success. There are many issues that must be integrated for the successful development and deployment of a Sea Base, several of which fall under the umbrella of logistics.

Logistics

Joint Pub 4-0, Doctrine for Logistics Support of Joint Operations, states: "Logistics is the foundation of combat power."¹¹ The military services acknowledged the criticality of this operational function by granting the Combatant Commanders directive authority over logistics, despite the service responsibility and typical practice of providing its own logistics. Another recognition of the importance of logistics was the establishment of U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) to provide strategic common-user air, land, and sea transportation to support the combatant commanders. The concept of Joint Seabasing presents no less a challenge in terms of command and control, integration, doctrine, and host nation support.

Command and Control. Logistics C2 is often more confusing than that of operations, especially because of the nature of the services providing their own logistics and combatant commanders having directive authority. Dr. Vego argues that logistics is a command function and that unity of command is essential.¹² There are numerous historical examples of inefficient logistics, which could only be exacerbated on a future Sea Base. During the Gulf War, several logistics organizations worked separately for their own services, one downside of which was the Air Force only utilizing 69,000 of the 350,000 tons of ammunition that they shipped.¹³ Even in today's era of jointness, concurrent logistics operations continue to exist

where services do not work together. During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, US European Command (EUCOM) established a EUCOM (Forward) element in Ankara, Turkey to plan and coordinate troop movement through Turkey into Iraq. In addition to personnel from each EUCOM directorate, each service (USAFE and USAREUR) also deployed teams, providing three separate faces to the Turkish General Staff. Later, when EUCOM was tasked to support the 173d Airborne Brigade and Joint Special Operations Task Force-North, USAFE was tasked with sustainment and USAREUR was tasked with deployment, with no single logistics commander for the overall effort.¹⁴

Joint Seabasing will present a challenge to the command and control of logistics. Unlike today's prepositioning fleet, a Joint Sea Base will potentially have assets from all four services, and it is conceivable that there might also be humanitarian assets from interagency partners. Coordination of these assets and prioritization of distribution will present challenges to the combatant commander and their J-4. The potential benefit of eliminating the need for a logistics base ashore may be negated by a logjam of supplies due to inefficient or ineffective logistics command and control. Though the Seabasing JIC does mention that the sea base provides the capability to the combatant commander to exercise command and control, no mention is made of logistics command and control.

C2 Systems. A critical aspect of command and control that merits its own consideration is command and control (C2) systems. Currently, the services' supply systems are incompatible¹⁵. Additionally, some service logistics information systems are antiquated and unable to keep pace with the fast pace of OIF fighting units.¹⁶ These current day challenges will hinder, if not prevent, Seabasing's success. Optimistically, the Seabasing JIC states that: "Decision support tools and total asset visibility will provide the capability to

coordinate and control the distribution of joint logistics.”¹⁷ The Defense Science Board determined that “current information systems do not support the *logistics-intense* (emphasis added) seabase activity.”¹⁸ Visibility of all classes of supply will be required from foxhole to factory. Current information systems only provide in-transit visibility and inventory information by service, but do not integrate well with other services, which will be critical to the success of a Sea Base. According to Lieutenant Colonel Quinones, Deputy Director of US Joint Forces Command’s (JFCOM) Joint Logistics Transformation Center, “When it comes to managing logistics, the services do well individually, but we don’t do as well managing logistics at the joint level...it’s not as efficient as it could be.”¹⁹ In response to this problem, USJFCOM is currently testing the Joint Experimental and Deployment and Support (JxDS) concept, which should provide better visibility of all services’ assets and provide improved logistics to joint force commanders.²⁰ Although JFCOM’s upcoming test is a positive move in the right direction, it is long overdue.

Doctrine. In addition to C2 issues and lacking C2 systems, Joint Seabasing highlights challenges with Joint Logistics Doctrine. With respect to Joint C2, Joint Publication 0-2, Unified Action Armed Forces, states that combatant commanders should focus on interoperability and emphasize “development of ISR, C4 systems and logistics architectures.”²¹ Although one could argue that combatant commanders should use all opportunities to advocate for joint logistics systems, the reality is that services design their own logistics information systems to meet their own needs.

Another doctrinal limitation highlighted by Joint Seabasing is the Combatant Commander’s options for logistics function in the Area of Responsibility (AOR). Joint Doctrine identifies several options for the combatant commander: each service providing

their own logistics, Single-service (or lead service) logistics support, an augmented J-4 staff, delegation to a JTF commander, establishment of a stand alone logistics agency, or expansion of the logistics readiness center.²² The options each have their advantages and disadvantages. Each service providing its own logistics, as is the case in the EUCOM AOR, grants component commanders the greatest flexibility, but “results in redundancy and wasted resources while limiting the flexibility of the COCOM.”²³ Clearly this option would not be an ideal option for a warehouse-constrained Joint Sea Base. Lead service logistics support results in one service overseeing common user logistics functions, which can lead to efficiencies, though it may still be an undesirable option for a Joint Sea Base. “With the potential for short notice expeditionary operations to new countries, sorting out lead service and agency responsibilities can waste precious time.”²⁴ CENTCOM explored this option with contracting in the AOR, only to find out that there was no process to track contingency contracting purchases, which allowed the services to make their own purchases, often not synchronized with the combatant commander’s priorities.²⁵ Augmentation of the J-4 staff is a current practice evidenced by the combatant commanders’ establishment of Deployment Distribution and Operations Centers (DDOCs). Though generally considered success stories,²⁶ DDOCs are not without their negative aspects. In the case of EUCOM, inefficiencies include the requirement for the DDOC to generate tasking messages for the J-3 to issue to component commands and the tendency to overburden the J-4 staff to the detriment of long-range planning.²⁷ Missing from joint doctrine is the option of a Joint Logistics Command, either at the COCOM level or subordinate to the COCOM as a component commander, equivalent to the already established JFACC, JFLCC, JFMCC, etc. Closely linked to C2 and doctrine is the lack of integration among service logistics forces.

Integration. The premise of an effective Joint Sea Base is predicated on the concept of a Joint Logistics Enterprise that will “sustain joint, multi-national and interagency forces.”²⁸ Integration of forces, especially logistics forces, is paramount to development of the Seabasing capability. Unfortunately, the services do not prepare their logisticians well for joint logistics operations.²⁹ Additionally, during OIF, the services did not merge their logistics efforts very well, instead relying on their stove-piped systems, which led to backlogs of supplies, duplicate requests, wasted expenses, and excesses of supplies.³⁰ The armed forces’ inability to integrate logistics forces and efforts in the future will preclude the successful joint application of a future Sea Base.

Host Nation Support. For all the potential advantages of a mobile, off-shore Joint Sea Base, the establishment of such capability may end up countering the very intent of a combatant commander’s mission. Joint Doctrine discusses the “critical role” that host nation resources play in reducing a commander’s logistics footprint.³¹ Another equally important consideration for the combatant commander who decides to utilize a future Joint Sea Base is the potential negative impact on the local economy. With the recent trend of failed states and humanitarian operations, local contracting of resources from host nations has added benefit for the local economy and the legitimacy of the operational mission, both in the eyes of the local population and the US public. Combatant commanders will need to carefully consider whether to operate from the Sea Base and if and when they want to transition to a shore-based logistics operation. Additionally, the capability to set up logistics operations ashore must be maintained as a joint capability.

Operational Advantages

Despite the numerous logistical shortfalls raised by the proposed Joint Sea Base, there are several logistical advantages that the capability of Seabasing presents to the combatant commander. It is important to view these advantages through the logistics principles identified in Joint Doctrine: responsiveness, simplicity, flexibility, survivability, economy, attainability, and sustainability.³² With respect to responsiveness, the Defense Science Board determined that “A commander can place a seabase where and when he chooses to exploit enemy weaknesses and employ the element of surprise, confusing enemy defensive preparations.”³³ A Joint Sea Base can enhance a combatant commander’s adherence to this keystone logistics principle, especially by increasing the capability to respond to denied access areas and eliminating the operational pauses of previous forcible entry operations.³⁴

On the other hand, Seabasing will not necessarily result in simpler logistics. Integrating forces and logistics in the future Joint Sea Base will be quite complex. This challenge will be aided by information technology. Future combatant commanders will need to focus on standardization of procedures to minimize the complexity. At the same time, the Sea Base will provide a more repeatable process than the current process of establishing new land-based logistics hubs to support an operation.

Flexibility will be enhanced by the utilization of a Joint Sea Base. “Future seabases would possess flexible capabilities to enable a wide spectrum of operations from humanitarian activities to war.”³⁵ One might argue that flexibility may suffer as there may not be sufficient redundancy, an important aspect of flexibility, because the resources may be centralized in the large Joint Sea Base. This argument assumes that the combatant

commander has other options in gaining access to a denied access area, which will likely not be the case. This centralization of assets at a Sea Base does affect survivability.

Some have raised concerns about a Sea Base's survivability.³⁶ Joint Doctrine acknowledges that "Logistics units and installations are also **high-value** targets that must be safeguarded by both active and passive measures."³⁷ The very concern of massing forces at sea is also a measure of force protection. According to the Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept,

"Seabasing provides a large measure of inherent force protection derived from its freedom of operational maneuver in a maritime environment...The integration of these capabilities and freedom of maneuver effectively degrades the enemy's ability to successfully target and engage friendly forces"³⁸

Or, as the former head of Military Sealift Command, Vice Admiral Brewer, stated: "... I can put a sea base outside the enemy's surface-to-surface missile range, 200 miles or so, and still support the warfighter. I don't need ports and I am less vulnerable."³⁹

Economy of logistics may be improved with the deployment of a Joint Sea Base. The inherent limitation of cargo space in a Sea Base as compared to a more unconstrained land-based logistics hub should force combatant commanders, their staffs, and the services to achieve their effectiveness with the fewest resources possible. Attainability and sustainability are closely related, the former concerned with getting enough resources to start operations and the latter to keep the operation going. A Joint Sea Base should, assuming enough are fielded and are properly positioned, provide the combatant commander a faster response, thus meeting the principle of attainability. Sustainability is a central premise of the Joint Sea Base, though it is still a concept that is technology dependent and contingent on new systems. So the question remains, where does one go from here?

Recommendations

1. *Put the Joint in Joint Sea Basing.* Combatant commanders should push for the continued development of Joint Sea Basing. The National Research Council recommended establishment of a Joint Sea Base Planning Office led by a Navy or Marine Corps flag officer.⁴⁰ This concept is sound; however the leadership of the effort should change.

Ironically, Air Force Doctrine provides tremendous insight:

Doctrine is about *using mediums...not owning mediums*. This illustrates the importance of properly using a medium to obtain the best warfighting effects, not of carving up the battlespace based on Service or functional parochialism. Focusing on using a medium is a vital first step to integration of efforts. “Ownership” arguments eventually lead to suboptimal (and usually at best tactical) application of efforts at the expense of the larger, total effort.”⁴¹

Therefore, the Joint Planning Office would best be led by an Army flag officer. This would result in better joint integration and counter the myth that this is a Navy/Marine effort. More importantly, it would send the clear message to all the Services and the DoD that Joint Seabasing is a joint program and not solely an improved Maritime Prepositioned Fleet with the name “Joint” added to the title.

2. *Establish a joint theater logistics command.* Combatant commanders should review the results of the ongoing test of a Joint Theater Logistics Command in Korea and give consideration to establishing one for their respective AOR. The absence of a joint logistics command reduces operational effectiveness, as evidenced by Kendrick’s summary of OSD, the Joint Staff, USJFCOM, CENTCOM DDOC, and the Defense Science Board reports, which attributed the inefficiencies to: 1) lack of a joint logistics organization, 2) lack of a theater-level logistics commander, 3) inability to execute Directive Authority for Logistics (DAFL), and 4) lack of logistics command and control.⁴² A Joint Sea Base will require integrated logistics. Such integration begins with selection of the logistician who is

in charge, a decision that cannot be made as forces assemble on the Sea Base. The Department of Defense developed Focused Logistics, to guide logistics to meet Joint Vision 2020. One of the principles of focused logistics is the concept of joint theater logistics management, which provides "...the CINC the ability to synchronize, prioritize, direct, integrate, and coordinate common-user and cross-Service logistic functions necessary to accomplish the joint theater mission."⁴³ This requirement is best served by a Joint Theater Logistics Commander. One might argue that the combatant commander's J-4 is the logical choice to perform this function; however, history has shown that the military has conducted some very logistically inefficient operations. The criticality of a cargo space- and lift-constrained Sea Base can ill afford to have an inefficient logistics system.

3. *Deploy a joint logistics information system.* Regardless of whether the DoD eventually procures the Joint Sea Base, the different logistics information systems across the services should be integrated. Direction to consolidate will likely have to come from DOD. It is this author's experience that the Air Force operates two different logistics information systems for aircraft maintenance. Users are not typically in a position to change systems – higher headquarters must direct change. In the case of service logistics systems, DOD must direct the change. If the DOD is not willing to consolidate logistics information systems, the Joint Sea Base will not succeed.

"Current systems provide visibility into in-transit and inventoried supplies, but are unable to mix and match logistical needs easily from supply systems of the other services...The failure of the logistics system to meet operational needs flexibly will inevitably result in a logistical chain clogged with unneeded inventory."⁴⁴

4. *Integrate logistics forces via joint training, exercises, and operations.* Currently, training and education of logisticians is accomplished by the services. Though joint doctrine requires the services to "recruit, organize, train and equip interoperable forces for assignment

to combatant commands,”⁴⁵ joint, interoperable training is almost nonexistent. Mauldin’s proposed training and education model for logisticians is a step in the right direction.⁴⁶ With respect to exercises, the Defense Task Force report recommended regular testing of Seabasing,⁴⁷ which provides the perfect venue to better integrate logistics forces and develop joint procedures.

5. *Modify doctrine to emphasize utilization of host nation support as soon as practically possible after launching operations from the Sea Base.* Assuming a Sea Base of some type is fielded, it is quite probable that the C2, systems and hardware will exist to operate the Sea Base for a sustained period of time without having to stop for operational pauses. This system, if as efficient as proposed, will possibly discourage combatant commanders from relying on host nation support agreements. In this era of failing and failed states, utilization of host nation logistics can be a tremendous boost to the local economy and boost public support. A Joint Sea Base could, in some instances, detract from the very mission it is supporting. Therefore, it is critical that doctrine and practice continue to engage and rely on host nations for support, instead of relying on a more “clean,” sea-based logistics support base.

6. *Combatant commanders should advocate for accelerated proof of concept testing.* From both a logistics and operations perspective, Joint Seabasing has the potential to greatly enhance a combatant commander’s ability to rapidly generate combat power or provide relief. The DOD’s approval of the Seabasing JIC is a step in the right direction; however, its only mention of a development timeline is that “this concept focuses on the 2015-2025 timeframe.”⁴⁸ Time is of the essence. If, as some argue, the military has been doing Seabasing for years, then the military ought to be able to accelerate testing Seabasing

capabilities. The other reason that combatant commanders should push for an aggressive testing timeline is the concern that some services may support Seabasing more than others. As services navigate their way through a resource-constrained military procurement system, it is conceivable that support for Seabasing may decline as services attempt to procure systems that provide capabilities that better meet their core competencies. Combatant commander advocacy through the Joint Staff can help drive Seabasing through testing and avoid any service foot-dragging.

Conclusion

For centuries, militaries have faced the requirement to enter denied access areas or operate near disaster areas (Tsunami and Hurricane relief). Today is quite similar, with the exception of advances in technology. These advances in technology may result in the evolution of today's amphibious assault capability to a sustained sea-based operation. Joint Seabasing has the potential to improve operational effectiveness, but it is also affected by several issues that need to be addressed.

Support for Joint Seabasing is not universally joint, which could detract from any potential benefit the Sea Base of the future may provide. According to Admiral Clark, "We need to think about Seabasing in a very joint construct and what it does for the entire military structure...."⁴⁹ A joint program office should be established and led by an Army flag officer. In addition to improving the jointness of Seabasing, there are several logistical implications that Seabasing highlights. Command and control of logistics must be addressed. Implementation of a Joint Theater Logistics Command will help integrate the services' logistics. Lack of an integrated logistics C2 will degrade the improvements that a Sea Base may offer. Logistics doctrine and training must also be addressed in order to achieve the full

benefit of the Sea Base. General “Hap” Arnold identified the criticality of doctrine and vision:

National (security is) endangered by an Air Force whose doctrine and techniques are tied solely to the equipment and processes of the moment. Present equipment is but a step in progress, and any Air Force which does not keep its doctrines ahead of its equipment and its vision far into the future can only delude the nation into a false sense of security.⁵⁰

General Arnold’s insightful remarks, though specifically aimed at the Air Force, apply across all services and are clearly applicable to Seabasing. It is not about the equipment, it is all about the capability and vision.

Notes

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