

What's In A Word?

'Expeditionary' Means More Than Just Getting There Quickly

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For compelling reasons, America's armed services have embarked on efforts to revitalize their expeditionary capabilities. During the last decade, US military power has increasingly been used to mitigate chaos and restore stability in a world beset both by natural disasters and man-made crises. Indeed, as the Cold War's monolithic threat recedes, consensus in the US national security community has formed that less-predictable dangers to American interests continue to lurk all around the world. The forms of disorder are many: frequent and urgent requirements to ameliorate human suffering; challenges to our allies; and threats to regional stability, to name a few.

agencies during the past half century. From this experience, we have developed a distinct perspective concerning what it means to be an expeditionary force. Our concept differs somewhat from the various definitions currently emerging as the other services pursue their respective transformation plans and processes.

One thing is clear: the expeditionary age of the 21st century demands military forces different from the heavy forces that comprised the bulwark of US conventional defense for the last five decades.

DEFINING CAPABILITIES

So, with many services using the term, what exactly does "expeditionary" mean?

The 1998 edition of the Defense Department Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms offers this: "an armed force organized to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country." This is a broad and unfocused definition, embracing virtually every operational formation and military unit.

Marines believe the term "expeditionary" encompasses far more than simple task organization and a mission involving actions beyond US borders. To Marines, the term "expeditionary" describes a pervasive mindset, a perspective

that influences all aspects of organization, training, and equipment. We propose that an appropriate description of an expeditionary force is: "An agile and flexible force organized to accomplish a broad range of military objectives in a foreign country or region. Such a force must be able to deploy rapidly, enter the objective area through forcible means, sustain itself for an extended period of time, withdraw quickly, and reconstitute rapidly to execute follow-on missions."

In more detail, what I mean is this:

Agility Expeditionary agility is the product of strategic utility and operational reach, enabling worldwide responsiveness. The agile force, by virtue of its organization, training, and equipment, is ready for operations in any terrain or climatic condition. It can

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The bulk of our nation's land and air forces—"heavy" forces designed to defend Central Europe against the Soviet Union—are not optimally suited for today's increasingly common missions. Each of the military services is changing, or "transforming," to enhance its strategic responsiveness and broaden its utility. The Army, for example, is becoming lighter to reach crises more rapidly. The Air Force is forming "Aerospace Expeditionary Forces" to gain increased flexibility. The Navy is implementing doctrinal changes to address operations in the littorals.

The Marine Corps, however, requires no such renovation. With a far-reaching history of expeditionary operations, the Corps has long been organized, trained, and equipped for this role. Marine Air Ground Task Forces provide our nation a unique military capability tested and proven in various contin-



deploy immediately, without delays for special preparations to adapt it to the peculiarities of a specific area of operations.

Similarly, the expeditionary force possesses the mobility characteristics that enable it to extend its influence to potential crisis areas. This requires a combination of features: ready compatibility with strategic lift, inherent long-range tactical mobility, and the ability to combine the two to achieve high-speed operational maneuver.

Flexibility Expeditionary forces must be adaptable, with the capacity to commit to a specific mission, while remaining ready to rapidly shift to an entirely different one. That is, they must be able to withdraw from an operation, reconstitute while remaining forward deployed, and undertake an entirely different operation, without extensive reliance on "host-nation support" or overseas infrastructure. This quality is a major factor in deterrence: potential foes recognize

and respect the latent combat power of a force that never "runs out of steam"

and remains ready to face any contingency on a moment's notice. When deterrence fails, such a force possesses the operational resilience to adjust rapidly and confront a new threat.

Expeditionary forces must possess the capability to rapidly increase or decrease the combat power available in an area of operations, commensurate with political or military considerations. Frequently, a change in conditions will call for a rapid shift in the composition, strength, or "footprint" of forces. Versatility enables a force to perform such shifts seamlessly.

Speed Speed enables swift and certain power projection. Crises—regardless of the mission—typically call for immediate action. Speed is critical to an expeditionary force's ability to achieve its objective. I should note that "deployment" is more than rapid movement to a crisis area. A force also must be able to establish itself expeditiously in an operational posture within the crisis area. Only when it has done so, and is ready to conduct sustained operations, can we say properly that the force is deployed.

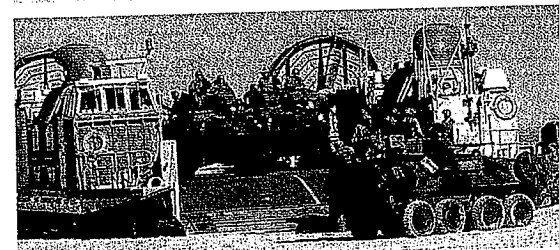
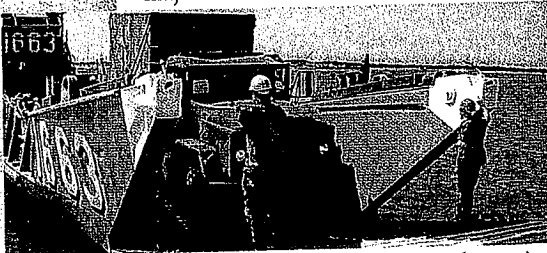
To carry this a step further, readiness to operate implies making available troops, equipment, and provisions; establishing an effective command and control system; and creating an effective logistics network that can manage the functions of supply, maintenance, transportation, engineering, and health services. We must measure expeditionary speed as the time required for a unit to transition from its pre-crisis state to the actual conduct of operations.

Forcible Entry Although not always a feature of expeditionary operations, forcible entry remains the *sine qua non* of expeditionary capability. When the mission involves combat, a force must be able to fight its way into the area of operations. Adversaries seeking to minimize our power-projection capabilities develop and field integrated and layered access-denial systems, using weapons such as mines, coastal defenses, and sophisticated air defense networks. Expeditionary forces must be able to overcome and penetrate these by identifying and exploiting seams in hostile defenses or, if necessary, by overwhelming them with superior firepower and maneuver.

Sustainability An expeditionary force must be capable of being sustained indefinitely, even in an austere environment devoid of host nation support or complex local infrastructure. The design of force structure must ensure balance between combat and support functions. Doctrine and systems for sustainment must be in place and operational. Procurement must emphasize expeditionary characteristics for equipment, such as economy of operation and ease of maintenance. Professional training and education must foster an attitude that encourages careful management of resources.

THE EXPEDITIONARY CHALLENGE

Forces that possess the attributes described above cannot be formed overnight or thrown together in ad hoc fashion. The process of crafting a true expeditionary warfighting capability is a complex endeavor. It requires deep-rooted understanding of expeditionary operations and a force-provider's commitment to remain focused on the unique requirements of an expeditionary organization. This commitment must be shared throughout the organization. In the Marine Corps, for instance, an expeditionary mindset is a powerful part of our unique Service culture. Beginning with recruit training, Marines are imbued



Versatility An expeditionary force must be capable of undertaking any task commensurate with its size and performing any mission across the operational spectrum. By designing crisis-response forces with a wide range of capabilities, we insulate ourselves from the unpredictable nature of crises and better position our units to achieve their objectives. While versatility means that a force can operate in any mission environment, such as humanitarian assistance, peace enforcement, and combat, it also means that the same force can operate in all physical realms: air, land, and sea.

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The Marine Corps answer to the challenge of assembling a force with all of the desired attributes is the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF): a task-organized, combined-arms formation that includes ground, aviation, and combat service support units under a single commander.

with the notion of doing more with less, of fighting and prevailing in an austere operational environment, of living a Spartan existence: all measurements on the expeditionary readiness yardstick. These things are not simple affectations. They are necessary parts of creating and maintaining a proper level of physical and mental preparedness. Marines learn to expect little support from permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure (and certainly no "luxury treatment") while deployed. The rugged lifestyle to which they become inured through training is second nature, and is held as a point of pride. Economy is elevated to an art form. The result is that Marine units can operate indefinitely with low logistical overhead.

Organization and force structure play significant roles in providing a force with expeditionary characteristics. The Marine Corps' answer to the challenge

MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT (MEU)

Strength: approx. 2,200
Composition: Command Element
Battalion Landing Team¹
Composite Aviation Squadron²
MEU Service Support Group
Deployment: forward-deployed aboard amphibious ships

MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE (MEB)

Strength: approx. 17,000
Composition: Command Element
Regimental Landing Team¹
Marine Aircraft Group²
Brigade Service Support Group
Deployment: amphibious ships, Maritime Prepositioning Ships, strategic airlift

MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (MEF)

Strength: approx. 50,000
Composition: Command Element
Marine Division¹
Marine Aircraft Wing²
Force Service Support Group
Deployment: amphibious ships, maritime prepositioning ships, strategic airlift

1. All ground combat elements are based on infantry formations, and include all supporting arms: artillery, amphibious vehicles, tanks, combat engineers, reconnaissance, etc.

2. Aviation combat elements include rotary wing, fixed wing, aviation C², air defense, etc.

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When employed using a building block approach, the MAGTF concept provides a joint force commander with extraordinary scalability of combat power. A forward-deployed Marine Expeditionary Unit, for example, can shape the operational environment for the later commitment of a much larger and more capable Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). The MEB, in turn, can serve as the foundation for an entire Marine Expeditionary Force deployment. Conversely, it can rapidly scale back the footprint in the area of operations by once again reducing its strength to that of a MEU.

The MAGTF's expeditionary qualities are greatly enhanced by its ability to operate from the sea as part of a naval force. A sea-based MAGTF embarked aboard amphibious ships is not subject to the physical limitations and political constraints that can hamstring a force that is bound to bases ashore. Free of requirements for host-nation support, and well-prepared for forcible entry, if necessary, such a MAGTF can strike anywhere in the world's littorals—even where it is not wanted. When operating with one or more of the three squadrons of Maritime

Prepositioning Ships (MPS) stationed around the globe, a MAGTF can bring to bear an enormous range of mission flexibility, with an unrivalled capacity for self-sustainment.

Its major items of equipment can identify an expeditionary organization. Procurement programs must balance mobility, ruggedness, maintainability, and ability to perform under austere conditions with the need to rapidly develop significant combat power. Current Marine Corps programs provide notable examples. The MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, currently entering the inventory, will provide MAGTFs tremendous speed and agility. Its ability to self-deploy greatly reduces the strategic lift requirement and increases deployment rapidity. Its lift capacity, ability to operate from the decks of amphibious ships or in rugged landing zones, and extremely high speed are the elements of extreme tactical mobility.

Another program to which the Marine Corps is heavily committed, the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), represents the future of expeditionary tactical aviation. The Marine Corps plans to procure the short take-off/vertical landing (STOVL) version of the JSF as a replacement for the AV-8B Harrier, which proved the validity of STOVL aircraft in a tactical role. The JSF's performance characteristics will enable it to operate from the decks of ships and from makeshift airfields located well forward, close to the ground troops it will support. This aircraft is designed with expeditionary operations in mind.

The Marine Corps' premier ground acquisition program is another example of the Service's commitment to expeditionary preparedness. The Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV) is the latest entry in a line of armored amphibians dating back to the Second World War. Like its cousins in our aviation procurement programs, the AAAV design leverages 21st century technology to create a highly advanced, unique capability. The combination of high speed on water and land, long operational range, armor protection, and organic firepower will make the AAAV a formidable weapon in a forcible entry scenario.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Although "expeditionary" can be neatly defined as a collection of discrete attributes, the capability can only be achieved if approached holistically. It certainly means much more than arriving in the area of operations quickly. The characteristics of true expeditionary capability are inextricably linked components, building blocks that complement one another, and are the product of their combined effects.

Our nation has most certainly embarked on an expeditionary age in national security. The military services, by initiating their respective transformation undertakings, have taken a step in the right direction. Each has some expeditionary capabilities, and maintaining them is clearly in our nation's best interests; however, the prospect of "transforming" Cold War heavy forces into nimble, 21st-century expeditionary forces is daunting indeed, especially so long as modernization accounts remain fiscally constrained. Changes to the outwardly obvious elements of doctrine, force structure, and equipment must be matched by dramatic shifts in the less visible aspects of organizational culture that are so critical to a service's self-image. ■