

The Future Requirement for Forward Afloat Expeditionary Forces:

Marine Expeditionary Units and the Long War – Do We Need To Change?

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Handwritten signature of Kim Deal, consisting of a stylized 'K' followed by 'D' and 'E'.

Kim Deal
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The Future Requirement for Forward Afloat Expeditionary Forces:

Marine Expeditionary Units and the Long War – Do We Need To Change?

31 July 2006

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This CNA annotated briefing contains an analysis of the existing requirement for forward afloat expeditionary forces in the Geographic Combatant Commanders' (GCC) areas of responsibility (AOR). This brief is the first deliverable in the "Adapting MEU Roles and Missions Study", which is being conducted by CNA under the sponsorship of the Director, Operations Division, Plans, Policies, and Operations (PP&O), HQMC.

The study objective is to analyze the relevance of the MEU (SOC) in light of recent operations and emerging requirements. As part of our analysis, we will provide PP&O with recommendations on how to position (change, restructure, and/or modify as necessary) the MEU (SOC) program to enable its continuing relevance into the future.

A bibliography for this annotated briefing is available and will be provided on request.

Adapting MEU Roles and Missions

- Analyze the relevance of the MEU (SOC) in light of recent operations and emerging requirements
- Validate the MEU as currently structured, trained, and equipped in light of emerging COCOM requirements
- Provide recommendations on how to position the MEU (SOC) program to remain relevant in the future
- Derive insights from:
 - National Security Strategy
 - View of the requirement at the Combatant Command
 - Changes in the global security environment – the Long War
 - Trends in recent MEU (SOC) operations
 - Birth of Marine Special Operations Command

2

The Operations Division Director, Plans, Policies, and Operations, HQMC, asked CNA to analyze the relevance of the MEU (SOC) (Marine Expeditionary Unit Special Operations Capable) in light of recent operations and emerging requirements. We are in a changed security environment since the events of 11 September 2001 and the opening years of what has come to be called the “Long War” against global Islamic extremism. The Marine Corps wants to validate the existing structure, manning, and training of its forward afloat expeditionary units against the particular requirements of this new challenge to the United States. Simply stated, Are the capabilities of the MEU (SOC) still relevant to the needs of the Combatant Commander?

In answering this question we will derive insights from several sources. The National Security Strategy as codified in the latest Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and other documents articulating the vision from the National Command Authorities will provide over-arching perspective. A study of changes to the global security environment as perceived by the Combatant Commanders will provide important insights into the requirement. A look at the way the way the MEU (SOC) has been used in the recent past is also important, although the MEU’s direct involvement in Operations Iraqi Freedom in Iraq and Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan may not provide an exact blueprint for the future in the longer engagement with global terrorism. The Marine Corps has recently created a Special Operations Command (MARSOC), which will have a decided effect on future MEU organization and employment.

All of these perspectives are important in addressing the continued relevance of the MEU (SOC). In this report, we focus on deriving and analyzing the requirement for forward afloat expeditionary forces.

Briefing Outline

- Design and assumptions
- Development of Naval Strategy
- Strategic defense policy guidance - 2006
- Synthesis
- GCC requirements (classified appendix)
- Comparison
- Way ahead

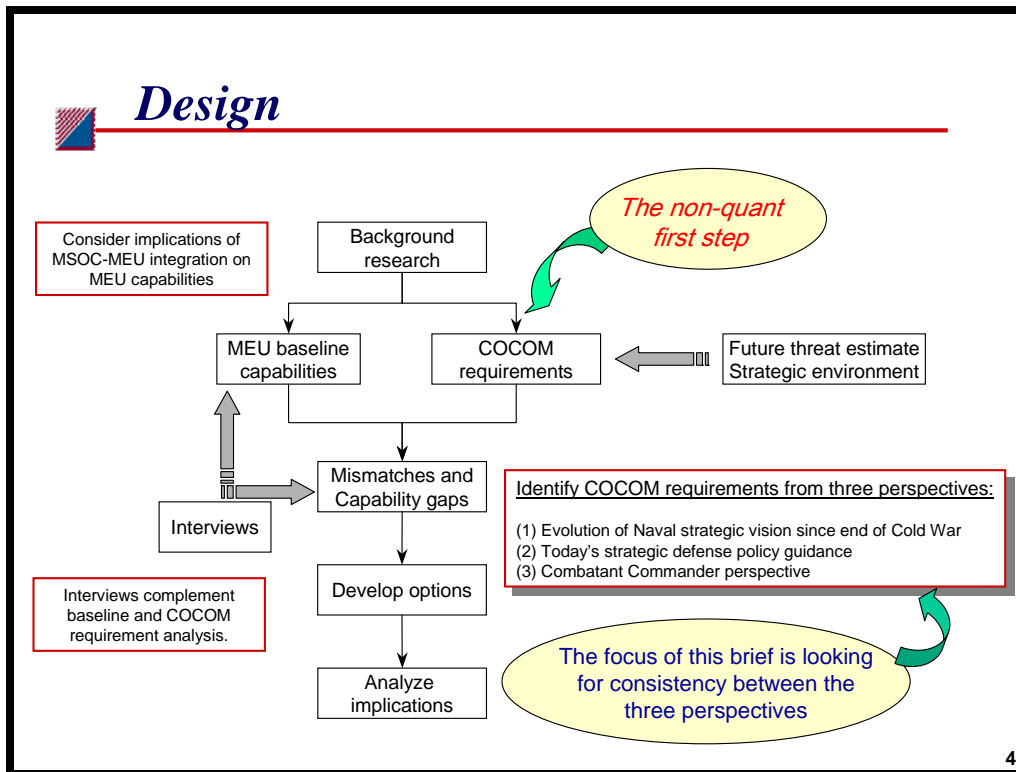
3

The brief begins with an overview of the design of the study – how we see the analysis proceeding from the outset. We will then look at the assumptions guiding our work, which will serve to bound the scope of the inquiry.

The substance of the brief is a development of the requirement for forward afloat expeditionary forces. We ask, Just what does the Combatant Commander “require” in the way of forward-deployed, ready, expeditionary forces for the future in his area of responsibility? What is the demand signal?

Requirements are a difficult thing to quantify – there is an understandable temptation to work backwards from what's available – and clearly the Marine MEU is based more on capabilities than on requirements. Still, we cannot do a course check without some idea of the destination. Our approach is to begin at the strategic top. We need to define the future global security environment and the role of Marine expeditionary forces in that environment. In this brief we define the requirement at three levels:

- First we examine how forward-deployed naval expeditionary forces fit into the evolution of U.S. Navy strategy since the end of the Cold War. What kinds of forces do the Navy and Marine Corps intend to deploy, and how do they intend to fight in the future?
- Second we analyze the current strategic defense policy guidance from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the National Command Authorities. What national priorities are naval forces intended to further?
- Finally, we consider the operational level – the domain of the GCC. How does the GCC see his requirements? This last area is difficult to quantify, even though it is essential to rounding out the picture.



This graphic shows the overall study design. We begin with background research into the requirement and the baseline capabilities of the MEU (SOC). By understanding the particular set of capabilities the GCC expects to get from his forward afloat expeditionary forces, we can begin to assess the “fit” of the Marine Expeditionary Unit into this requirement set. That analysis will uncover any mismatches or gaps in capability between what the MEU (SOC) brings to the theater and what the GCC needs to carry out his responsibilities. The “gap analysis” will lead to the development of options for improving the relevance of the Marine Corps’ routinely deployed expeditionary forces.

As we go through the analysis, we will consider the implications for the MEU (SOC) program of the new Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and the Marine Special Operations Companies (MSOC) which are to be attached to the MEU in the future and will provide the units with their SOC capability.

As mentioned on the previous slide, the whole process begins with an examination of the requirement, which is the purpose of this brief. Specifically, we derive and analyze the requirement from three perspectives: naval strategy, strategic guidance, and the GCC. We then synthesize these requirements into a single list.

Assumptions

- The subject matter is the MEU, not the ESG or the Phibron that carries the MEU.
- Recent use of the MEU in OIF/OEF is not determinant of future use
 - At the same time there may be lessons in these experiences
- MARSOC command relations not a question; the program is on track and C2 now agreed to
- History is not necessarily a definitive guide
 - But it is worth knowing the patterns of MEU employment over the recent past

5

Here we list the primary assumptions that will guide our research and analysis of the continued relevance of the MEU (SOC). Understanding that current deployment patterns situate the Marine MEU within the larger formation of the Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG), we nonetheless intend to concentrate on the MEU (SOC) as a discreet element. It may turn out that recommendations for change in the MEU will have an impact on the ESG or on the Amphibious Squadron of ships on which the MEU is embarked; however that will be considered separately, not as part of this study.

The Marine MEU has been used extensively in operations in Iraq and to a lesser extent in Afghanistan since the beginning of OEF and OIF. It is an important assumption that this combat experience will not form the pattern of future MEU (SOC) employment. That is not to say that such operational employment is not important or that no valuable lessons have been learned for MEU organization and training. Rather it means that we do not intend to develop future MEU (SOC) employment patterns based on recent fighting in the Central Command AOR. Our focus is on the longer-term future of the MEU (SOC) – specifically, its continued relevance to the evolving security environment and to the struggle with global Islamic militancy.

As mentioned, the Marine Corps is in the opening stages of fielding a new Marine Corps Special Operations Command and, as part of that enterprise, will build Marine Special Operations companies for future deployment with the MEU. The command relationships attendant to this development are not the subject of the current analysis.

Lastly, while the study sponsor has said he does not want a “history lesson” from this research, we must take some notice of MEU deployment patterns over the recent past in order to learn just what the MEU does while deployed. (Note, however, that the history of the MEU is not the focus of this study.)

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6

For historical perspective, we look first at how the United States intended to fight its naval forces as the decades-long Cold War with the Soviet Union. At that time, U.S. doctrine for the employment of naval sea control and amphibious force projection was articulated in the carefully developed “Maritime Strategy.” The conceptual inevitability of global war with the Soviets guided our strategic thinking for decades, and it is important to remember how complete a transformation was required when that conflict ended.

Cold War Maritime Strategy

- Covered the last decade of the Cold War
- Was the maritime component of the national military strategy under President Reagan
- Strong influence of Secretary Lehman; 1981-87
- Heavy Marine Corps influence in the strategy by 1989
- Weinberger doctrine of full force or not at all; 1984
- Told us what to buy and how to fight
- Future war with the Soviets at the heart of the strategy
- Strategy envisioned large-scale amphibious landings

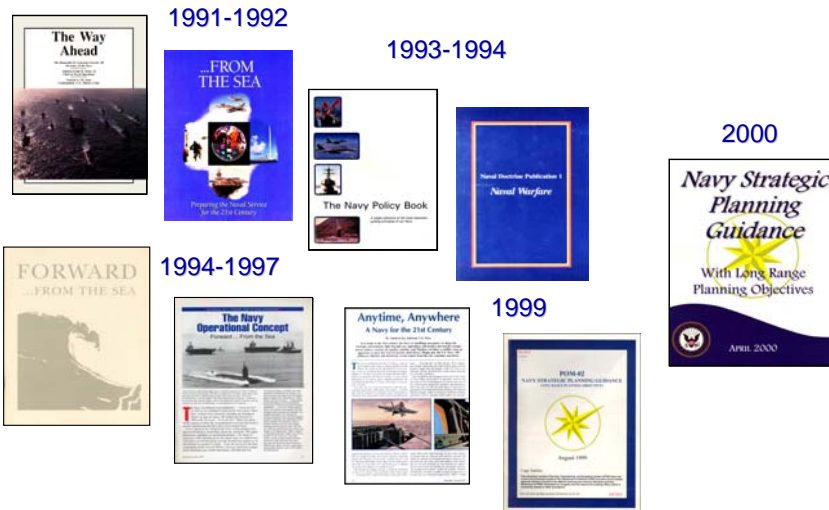
The Navy/Marine team ended the Cold War forward deployed in strength to support the expected land battle

7

We do not need to dwell on the strategy for the Cold War described above, only need to point out that this high-end global conflict strategy ultimately determined what systems the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps fielded, how we ordered our forward deployments, where we exercised, and how we intended to fight the fleets. When the Cold War ended, the Navy/Marine team found itself forward deployed in considerable strength against the anticipated conflict with the Soviets. It was out of this Cold War configuration that we deployed to the first Gulf War in 1990. It was not a war against the expected threat, but a conflict that required a large concentration of naval forces, to include Marine amphibious forces.

Again, what is important for assessing the current and future requirement for the MEU is to note how completely our focus has changed since the end of the Cold War.

The 1990s Required a Vision for the Century Following the Cold War



8

Coming to grips with the dimensions of that change was the challenge of the 1990s. This slide shows some of the strategy documents that were produced by Navy and Marine Corps planners as they worked to define the proper use of U.S. naval forces in the post-Cold War era.

In the next several slides we will look briefly at the evolution of strategic employment thinking over the decade of the 1990s. This will show us how the requirement was perceived to change over time and how those changes affect our perception of the usefulness of the Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The Paradigm Shifts Away from the Certainties of the Cold War



- *The Way Ahead* 1991 (Garrett, Kelso, Gray)
 - Recognized a fundamental shift in the balance of power
 - A complete reshaping of Naval force structure needed
 - Away from Armageddon at sea with the Soviets
 - From global focus to regional stability
 - Forward-deployed naval forces and power projection keys
 - Declining force structure and shrinking overseas infrastructure
- Building a smaller Navy for a more selective future
 - Smaller, more flexible, modularity of force response for Presence, HA/DR, Security Assistance, COIN, Crisis Response
 - Smaller forces forward made surge capability essential

Basic changes needed in force structure, in strategy and tactics, and in operational patterns

9

The Way Ahead was published in April 1991 by the Secretary of the Navy Lawrence Garrett; the CNO, ADM Frank Kelso; and the CMC, General Al Gray. They correctly understood the magnitude of the changes taking place in the global security environment as a result of the end of the Cold War, and the magnitude of the change required in reshaping the U.S. naval component to accommodate that change.

Clearly we needed to move away from a force structure and deployment pattern based on the assumption that we would enter into a global conflict with the sophisticated naval forces of the Soviet Union. What seemed certain was the need to bring the focus down to the regional level, and to concentrate on the stability issues that seemed likely to arise in the absence of the bi-polar certainties of the Cold War. Understanding exactly how to do that was to take some time.

It was clear that U.S. force structure was bound to decline in the immediate aftermath of the long struggle with the Soviet Union. It was similarly understandable that American overseas infrastructure – for so long the essential support of a widely dispersed, globally based military – was going to shrink. It seemed likely we would increasingly face limitations to our access, and even our influence, in foreign waters. Naval strategists in 1990, working with Service components forward positioned with the Combatant Commanders, saw the need to craft a smaller Navy with a reduced amphibious component, for use in more selective future operations.

Smaller, more modular and flexible forces, tailored for operations short of war as well as for conflict resolution would be required forward, with significant reinforcement prepared to surge forward from bases in the rear.

The Way Ahead is Tightened and made Official in From the Sea



- *From the Sea* 1992 (O'Keefe, Kelso, Mundy)
 - Preparing the naval service for the 21st century
 - The combined vision of both services for the future
 - White Paper makes “Way Ahead” more official
 - Key remains the shift from global to regional
 - Increasing emphasis on Joint and Combined
 - Resize naval forces to concentrate on the littorals
 - Naval expeditionary forces operating forward from the sea
 - Key operational capabilities now required
 - Swift response on short notice
 - Sustained support for long-term operations
 - Operate from international waters ashore
 - More flexible C2 and persistent surveillance

10

Under a new Secretary of the Navy, Sean O'Keefe, a new Commandant, General Carl Mundy, and CNO Kelso, the concepts for a transformed naval service expressed in *The Way Ahead* were tightened, further developed, and made official in the strategy statement, *From the Sea*, published in September 1992. The central tenet of the refined concept was a concentration on expeditionary forces, shaped for joint operations, operating forward and tailored to the particular situation in each of the critical regions of U.S. national interest.

Continuing the major shift from open-ocean warfare and large, flanking amphibious operations, the Navy/Marine team would now be forward in scalable packages which could respond to crisis on behalf of the GCC, and “enable” the initial arriving joint forces. This required the set of operational capabilities shown at the bottom of this slide. In addition to having the capabilities for rapid response, independence, and self-sustainment, naval expeditionary forces are most useful if they come with the inherent capacity to command and control a joint task force of the appropriate size.

Crisis management was seen as a high priority for the Combatant Commanders, who valued the ability of naval forces to operate in the littorals and, by adjusting their force packages, to send scalable signals to adversaries. At the higher end, expeditionary forces could be projected ashore at various levels independent of U.S. basing structure, sustained from the independence of the sea.

The Paradigm Shift Continues with Refinements to the Strategy



- “*The Navy Policy Book*” 1992 (Garrett, Kelso)
 - Force projection our number one war-fighting priority
- “*Naval Warfare*” 1994 (Kelso, Mundy)
 - Increased emphasis on presence and deterrence
- “*Forward From the Sea*” 1994 (Dalton, Boorda, Mundy)
 - Update of the 1992 White Paper
 - Engaged forward to prevent conflict and control crisis
- “*The Navy Operational Concept*” 1997 (Johnson)
 - Forward-deployed expeditionary forces
 - Ship-to-objective maneuver – OMFTS described
- “*Anytime – Anywhere*” 1997 (Johnson)
 - Influencing events ashore from the sea
 - Broad Navy missions of sea control, power projection, presence, and deterrence

11

Throughout the 1990s, following the timely publication of the two seminal documents, *The Way Ahead* and *From the Sea*, naval strategists continued to refine and develop their posture and employment concepts for use by the Navy/Marine Corps team in the coming century. This effort was not made in isolation from the country’s principal war-fighters, and there was continual coordination at the service component level with the Regional Combatant Commander.

We do not need to dwell on any of the publications in this series. Expeditionary forces were seen as instruments of foreign policy, as Combatant Commanders began to appreciate the concept of presence to demonstrate commitment, improve interoperability and provide combined training. The bottom line is that across the formative decade of the 1990s the naval service continued to refine its doctrine and strategic focus in the direction of smaller forces engaged forward to prevent crises and to control events leading up to outright conflict.

The Decade ends with Summary Capstone Strategic Guidance



- “*Navy Strategic Planning Guidance*” 2000 (Johnson)
 - New century, new security environment - globalization
 - Focus is on the littorals, still building on “From the Sea”
 - Growing role of regional, non-state actors as threats
 - Day-to-day shaping through forward presence
 - Robust, scalable presence to influence events ashore
 - OMFTS capstone concept for 21st century amphibious ops
 - Essential element of knowledge superiority
 - Central role of operations short of war – HA/DR, NEO, PK, and rapid reaction to terrorism

Expeditionary forces present forward, credibly shaped for combat during peacetime, crisis, and war

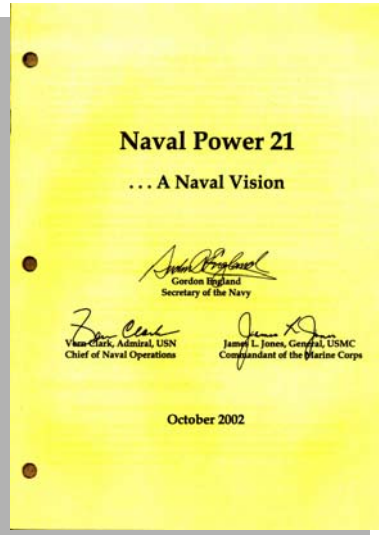
12

The decade ended with CNO Admiral Jay Johnson publishing the capstone *Navy Strategic Planning Guidance* in April 2000. This document summed up the work of the previous ten years since the publication of *The Way Ahead*, solidifying the U.S. naval service’s shift to an expeditionary focus on the littorals and confronting the growing threat from regional, non-state actors and international terrorism.

The decade had seen the evolution of naval force packages away from high-end counter-Soviet battle groups. Strategic thinking had migrated toward modular, scalable packages that could provide the GCC with several options, from operations other than war, to shaping and engagement activities with partner nations – all while maintaining the ability to shift rapidly to forces credibly shaped for combat.

For the landing forces of the Marine Corps, the 1990s ended with Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS) the dominant strategic concept for the projection of power across the shore to objectives inland. In OMFTS, the proven concepts of maneuver warfare and power projection from the sea were combined.

The World After 9/11 – Naval Transformation Confirmed



Unified Navy-Marine Corps vision for a new national security posture as articulated in QDR-01

- Solidifies Navy-Marine Corps team for the coming challenges
- Assured sea-based access is key
- Engage as far forward as possible
- Dispersed, netted forces with inherent flexibility of response options

Marine Corps Strategy 21

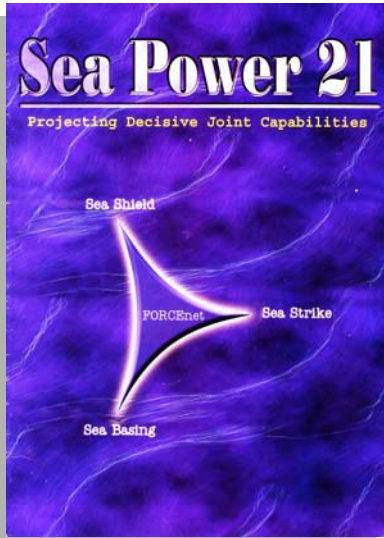
- Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare
- Coupled with Sea Basing
- Scalable, interoperable task forces for shaping and rapid response to crisis

13

None of us were ready for the events of 11 September 2001. The changes underway in the naval service over the previous decade proved timely as the nation geared itself to respond to a completely changed security environment with a non-traditional enemy. Published by Secretary of the Navy Gordon England, CNO Admiral Vern Clark, and CMC General James Jones, *Naval Power 21* confirmed the direction taken by the Navy and Marine Corps since the end of the Cold War, with even more emphasis on dispersed and flexible forces engaged as far forward as possible.

The specific Marine Corps contribution to *Naval Power 21* was the capstone *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, which confirmed that maneuver warfare wedded to expeditionary power projection would be the central tenets of amphibious warfare in the future. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, what seemed most useful to the Marine Corps were scalable, interoperable, combined-arms Marine task forces. Such flexible force packages could engage in peacetime to shape the international environment and yet respond quickly across the combat spectrum from crisis control to outright combat.

The World After 9/11 – Naval Transformation Confirmed



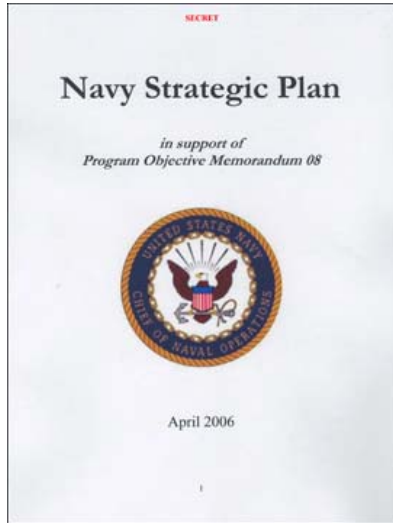
- **Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities**
- Return to a global perspective post 9/11
- *Sea Strike* – projecting power ashore
- *Sea Shield* – defending forces at sea
- *Sea Basing* – the independence of the sea
- *Force Net* – integrated information network
- Dispersed capability packages
- **Expeditionary strike force concept**
 - Carrier Strike Groups
 - Expeditionary Strike Groups
- Modular, scalable force compositions
- Operational Maneuver from the Sea remains the keystone Marine concept

14

Published about the same time as *Naval Power 21* but much better known and more influential, *Sea Power 21*, signed by CNO Admiral Vern Clark, returned to a global focus, but with no substantive change in the capability sets determined necessary in the previous years' work. For amphibious Marine forces, the keystone concept remained Operational Maneuver from the Sea. Dispersed combat power was seen as essential, with a forward-deployed capability to respond to the new disaggregated and non-traditional threat posed by international terrorism.

By this time, the concept of the Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) had been developed. The MEU (SOC) normally deployed aboard an Amphibious Ready Group augmented with strike-capable surface warships and submarines. This group was capable of prosecuting Sea Strike missions in lesser-threat environments. The ESG also has more sophisticated command and control capabilities, especially in providing the C2 for a Joint task force.

Today's Naval Strategy builds on Sea Power 21, Marine Corps Strategy 21



- Written to support POM 08
- Recognizes new naval missions
 - Global War on Terrorism
 - Shaping and Stability Operations
- Same principles outlined in Sea Power 21
- Future marked by uncertainty, complex contingencies
- Long-term struggle against a committed ideological opponent
- Enemy unpredictable, diverse, networked
- Irregular, increasingly unrestricted conflict
- We require dominance of open ocean, littoral, coastal, internal water
- Ability to influence events ashore

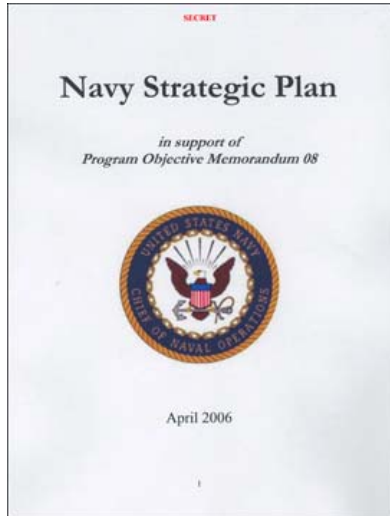
15

The *Navy Strategic Plan* of April 2006 (NSP) is the official strategy of today's Navy, signed by CNO Admiral M.G. Mullen, and intended to inform investments for the future. In particular it aims to provide mission-level guidance to those staff elements responsible for the development of the 2008 budget submission. Therefore, it links the higher-level guidance of the National Command Authorities with the Navy's PPBE process.

The NSP recognizes that in the few short years since 9/11 the U.S. Navy has had to embrace new missions – in particular, the Global War on Terrorism, and Shaping and Stability operations to prevent the spread of radical ideologies and prepare the battlefield when dissuasion fails. The specific principles in the strategy are not greatly different from what was articulated in *Sea Power 21*. (The high points are outlined on this slide.)

Important in the Navy Strategy is understanding that the Global War on Terrorism is a long-term struggle against a committed ideological opponent. This means that it will require patience, consistent resolve, U.S. interagency cooperation, and the help of willing partners internationally. The GWOT will also require a broader range of mission sets for both the U.S. Navy and the Marine Corps. In particular, the Combatant Commander needs forces that can respond to a variety of different and non-traditional threats while still maintaining conventional campaign capabilities.

Distributed, Networked Operations the Overarching Global Naval Concept



- Provide persistent forward presence
 - Conduct proactive shaping and TSC
 - Disrupt, attack terrorist networks
 - Posture for conventional campaigns
- Dissuasion, deterrence important by-products of forward presence
- Enhance partner nations' maritime security capability by interaction
- "Non-traditional" missions (CT, HA/DR, PK) no longer lesser included subsets
- Must have a capabilities-based approach to force shaping/sizing
- Maximize interdependence with Marines
- Strategic speed and flexibility come from force posture, packaging, reach, surge

16

The specific bullets on this slide reinforce the fact that the Navy's overarching global strategy for addressing the security challenges of the new world environment remains the conduct of distributed, networked operations with force packages characterized by flexibility and a scalable range of combat capabilities.

As stated on the previous slide, the capability to conduct proactive shaping and Theater Security Cooperation tasks while postured to disrupt and attack terrorist networks when they are identified will be invaluable to future Combatant Commanders. As the *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) 2006* makes clear, what we in the past have thought of as "non-traditional" mission sets – e.g., counter-terrorism, humanitarian affairs, disaster relief, counter-piracy, peace-keeping, and peace enforcement – are no longer appropriately considered lesser included subsets of the ability to conduct major combat operations. Rather, they are required capabilities in themselves.

What this means for the future is that every naval platform and force package provided to the Combatant or Joint Force Commander must have relevant capabilities for prosecuting the GWOT, provide an appropriate measure of regional if not global transnational deterrence, and help execute conventional campaigns as well.

The Bottom Line; Moving from Naval Strategy to Capability



Post Cold War Navy and Marine Corps strategy sought to provide Geographic Commanders forces with the capability to:

- Provide regional stability instead of global war with the Soviets
- Remain forward deployed for extended periods of time
- Be easily sustained in extended operations
- Operate easily in an atmosphere of declining overseas infrastructure and a smaller force reconstitution base at home
- Organize into smaller, more modularized packages with the inherent flexibility to rapidly shift focus
- Provide “useful” presence – operations at the low end of the conflict spectrum where peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance missions lie – and still possess the capability to shift quickly to a high-end deterrent role
- Provide persistent surveillance of critical areas
- Provide smaller-scale forces with the capability to expand rapidly but keep their essential organization as they become increasingly capable combat forces

17

It took some time, but the requirement to change U.S. national defense strategy eventually become clear to everyone, from the people working on strategy in the Service headquarters, to the Combatant Commanders and their staffs. The end of the Cold War meant a necessary shift in the kinds of forces the United States deploys forward and in the customary operating patterns of those forward-deployed and forward-based forces. What, then, did that shift in strategic emphasis tell us about capability requirements?

This is the first of two slides distilling the force planning guidance contained in the several naval strategy papers and official documents articulating the shift in strategy over the course of the decade of the 1990s into sets of concrete capabilities, which, in the aftermath of 9/11, remain relevant for today.

The Bottom Line; Moving from Naval Strategy to Capability



Navy and Marine Corps strategic capabilities continued:

- Easily accept additional reinforcing structure from the rear and thus transition to high-end combat-capable units
- Operate effectively in the Joint environment and in combined operations with other countries' militaries
- Operate effectively and confidently in the littoral environment
- Be expeditionary in training, equipment, and mindset
- Respond swiftly and on short notice, combining both the habit of forward positioning with the organization and command structures for rapid response
- Be on hand with sufficient capability to control a crisis
- Operate effectively against irregular, non-state threats
- Provide a visible, useful force to help shape the environment
- Contain organic mobility to enable maneuver across more than one medium
- Network dispersed components, leading to knowledge superiority

18

The above slide and the previous one convey a clear message: the global security environment following the Cold War and even more so, the one right after 9/11, required an emphasis on self-sufficient, flexible, task-organized forces. What was required were force packages that could operate across the spectrum of conflict from cooperative, other-than-war operations with partner nations, through counter-insurgency, to conventional crisis response suitably reinforced by surge forces from the rear.

Next we analyze whether these capabilities are consistent with the 2006 Strategic Defense policy guidance.

Briefing Outline

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19

With that knowledge of how the of U.S. naval strategy evolved in the decade following the end of the Cold War and immediately following the events of 11 September 2001, we now turn to the view from the top: the defense guidance from the Secretary of Defense and the President. We will also look carefully at the results of the most recent *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR), completed in February 2006. The QDR is the definitive guidance from the Defense Department's senior leadership as to where the department is and where it needs to go.

Our goal in his section is to derive a list of required capabilities for comparison to the naval strategy capabilities.

“The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America” – March 2005



- An active, layered approach for the defense of the nation
 - Defenses must be forward where possible
 - We must adapt flexibly to the unpredictable
 - Capabilities-based approach required
- New challenges replace traditional forms of warfare
 - Irregular, catastrophic, disruptive – the ‘Quad Chart’
- Require strategic access to key regions – global freedom to act
- Strengthen alliances and partnerships – TSC, enabling opns
- Prevention is a critical component of an active defense
 - Security Cooperation is essential to shaping
 - Forces forward as required for active deterrence
 - Forward for HA/DR, peace operations

We seek a secure international order favorable to freedom, democracy, and economic opportunity

20

The *National Defense Strategy* is signed by the Secretary of Defense and represents the Department’s overall approach to confronting the challenges of the changed international security environment facing the United States today. In this document we do not find details about requirements that would translate directly to a Combatant Commander’s desired lineup of forces; however, the strategic objectives and implementation guidelines provided do imply the kinds of capabilities we need to position forward under current conditions.

The defense of the nation must begin as far forward as possible, which means that expeditionary forces that are deployed in critical regions must have great flexibility of engagement capacity. As always, we need to keep our freedom of action by operating in the open areas – not dependent on transient national permissions or an increasingly sparse network of U.S. bases overseas. At the same time, we intend to continue building on partnerships and critical strategic alliances, mindful that the task before us is too big for a unilateral U.S. effort.

In this *National Defense Strategy* that the lexicon of emerging challenges is laid out in detail: traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive. It is the rise of irregular challenges, dramatically illustrated by the current global extremist ideology of the Jihadist terrorists, that is most pressing. In this, the most valuable assets to the GCC are security cooperation and forces that can conduct HA/DR and peace operations while maintaining crisis response capability.

The National Defense Strategy
Recognized Key Operational Capabilities



- Better integrated intelligence capabilities
- Freedom of action from secure, protected bases
- Maritime advantage in the global commons
- Projected and sustained forces in distant environments
- Operational maneuver from strategic distances
- Network-centric operations – joint, interoperable C2
- Sustained irregular operations over long periods
- Increased capacity of partners with common interests

Global posture change moves most rapidly deployable capabilities forward while heavy forces return to the United States

21

Although the *National Defense Strategy* is broad and strategic, a careful reading yields the set of operational capabilities shown here. Better intelligence has been mentioned in nearly all the strategy documents covered thus far, and persistent sources of ISR are essential to the global war on terror. It is clear from this list that independent operations, free of extensive logistic trains and able to come from the sea, are most useful to commanders who have distant and often ungoverned spaces in which to operate. Coupled with freedom to act guaranteed by operating from what is called the “global commons” is the capacity for irregular operations over extended time periods – a clear necessity for the Long War.

The *National Defense Strategy* discusses military presence abroad and makes it clear that we are moving to a combination of tailored and reduced forces based overseas, augmented increasingly by rotational force packages. Four regions of the globe are singled out for continued U.S. presence: Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asia Littoral, and the Middle East/Southwest Asia regions. The permanent presence of U.S. forces in these critical regions helps assure our partners while dissuading military competition and deterring aggression. Because our permanent basing structure overseas is shrinking, an increasing premium is put on readily deployable forces that, once in theater, make minimum demands on the logistics and basing infrastructure while providing a range of capabilities for shaping and “phase zero” actions as well as crisis response.

“The National Security Strategy of the United States of America” – March 2006

- High level security strategy signed by the President
 - Updates and reinforces the National Security Strategy of 2002
 - Reinforces the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review
 - Defense Department transformation to better balance its capabilities against threats in four “domains”
 - Traditional
 - Irregular
 - Catastrophic
 - Disruptive
- } Areas where our enemies are likely to pose asymmetric challenges in the immediate future.

We are in the early years of a long struggle in which the U.S. must lead the international effort against global extremism

22

Another high-level document with national guidance for defense organization and prioritization of resources is the *National Security Strategy*, signed in March 2006 by the President. Again, in a national-level document of this scope, specifics on force requirements at the Geographic Combatant Commander level are elusive. The *National Security Strategy* in particular is geared to national-level strategic goals such as helping create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. This presidential strategy makes it clear that the primary emphasis of the U.S. Defense Department over the coming several years will be the Global War on Terror.

The *National Security Strategy* does reinforce the 2006 QDR (discussed in the next several slides). In particular, the Defense Department is cited as transforming itself to better balance its capabilities across the four categories of challenges introduced in the *National Defense Strategy*: traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive. The point is that our force structure and capability “tool chest” must shift from coping with the traditional to addressing the irregular. Our tools must now include the sorts of counter-insurgency capabilities required for the long war against global extremism.

The Quadrennial Defense Review – Feb 2006



- Based on March 2005 National Defense Strategy
 - The QDR operationalizes that strategy
- Reflects the thinking at the top of Defense and State
 - Both civilian and military
- Served as programmatic input for 2007
- Set the priorities to change the mix of U.S. military capabilities in key areas

Moving from 20th century processes to 21st century mobile, expeditionary operations – against irregular, asymmetric threats

23

Turning now to the *Quadrennial Defense Review*, published in February 2006, we can examine how our senior defense leadership envisions operationalizing the national-level strategy articulated in the previous two publications.

Most importantly, this most recent QDR quite clearly seeks to set the priorities for a change in the mix of U.S. military capabilities in key areas. Essentially the objective is to make U.S. military forces more agile and more expeditionary. The technological basis for doing so lies in a combination of dramatic improvements in information management and in precision weaponry, both of which allow equal (or in some cases even greater) combat power from fewer weapons platforms and combatants.

Another significant change, already well underway, is the adjustment to the U.S. global military force posture. Specifically it is moving away from the static defensive structures of the Cold War, increasing the emphasis on rotational forces, and improving its capacity to surge globally from concentrations in the rear.

- Non-traditional and asymmetric threats have gained in importance
- The 'Long War' against Islamic militancy and global extremism will determine future operations
- Dispersed non-state networks confront us
- Uncertainty in threat origins, surprise the only certainty
- Decentralized network of threats is a challenge
- Predominance of irregular warfare a certainty

"Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have seen." – President Bush

In the previously examined publications, much has been said about the changing face of the military threat to U.S. global interests. The QDR seconds these conclusions. Greater emphasis must be given to the war on terror and to irregular warfare activities in general, which includes the long-duration unconventional warfare understood in the concept of the Long War. This also includes military support for stability operations and the shaping activities associated with Theater Security Cooperation (TSC).

The dispersed nature of the global terrorist threat in particular demands a decentralized response, which means force packages that can be separated into individualized modules that will be self-sufficient in often isolated and remote regions. The prevalence of irregular warfare in future conflicts has been noted by virtually all of the reference material covered thus far, and the QDR emphasized this aspect as a certainty.

Bottom Line; Capabilities from National Guidance



- DoD must become more agile as a hedge against uncertainty
- Speed of action early in a crisis will be essential
- Build partnership capacities – enable our friends
- Increased freedom of action, better mobility
- Maritime advantage in the global commons
- Transition quickly from deterrence posture to HA/DR
- Better intelligence, more HUMINT, persistent surveillance
- SOF capabilities to locate, tag, and track terrorists
- Better language and cultural awareness
- Projected and sustained forces in distant environments
- Counter-insurgency and unconventional capability, including urban warfare and riverine expertise
- Ground forces modular, self-sustaining
- Increased capability for time-sensitive operations
- Network-centric operations – joint, interoperable C2

25

This list of required capabilities is taken from national strategic guidance and the 2006 QDR in particular. Many of the individual capabilities listed here have been seen before in this examination – the QDR codifies them and directs that they be made programmatic by the Services as well as inherent in the forces provided to the Geographic Commanders based forward.

The Force Planning Construct, expressed in the 2001 QDR as the “swiftly defeat” strategies for overlapping conventional military campaigns, has now been altered to conform to the current estimate of the more serious threat to our security. The Department of Defense will henceforth divide its activities into homeland defense, irregular (or asymmetric) warfare, and conventional campaigns. In all three of these categories, the Department is enjoined to increase its capabilities to conduct operations against enemies who employ asymmetric approaches.

In essence, the vision at the top of the U.S. defense establishment is that we are now entering a period of long-duration, complex operations involving not only our military but other government agencies and international partners. These counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations will be waged simultaneously in multiple countries, relying on a combination of direct, visible, and indirect, clandestine approaches. Besides the obvious need for persistent surveillance and actionable intelligence, we will need global mobility, rapid strike capability, and forces tailored for sustained unconventional warfare – all while maintaining the conventional capability to provide deterrence where necessary and to interact with partner nation militaries in a way that improves their capacity.

While the need for conventional capability is understood, the QDR unquestionably recognizes irregular warfare as having emerged in the post 9/11 world as the dominant form of warfare confronting the United States, its allies, and its partners.

Briefing Outline

- Design and assumptions
- Development of Naval Strategy
- Strategic defense policy guidance - 2006
- **Synthesis**
- GCC requirements (classified appendix)
- Comparison
- Way ahead

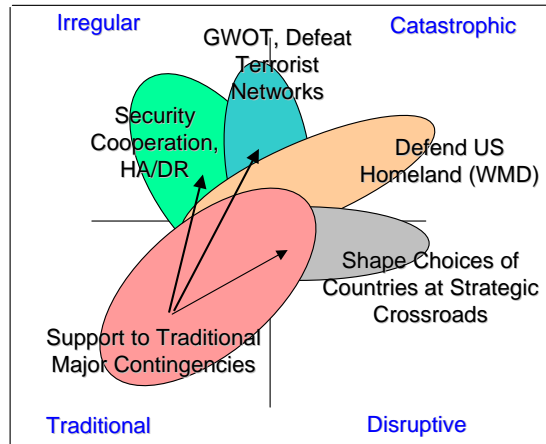
26

We began by exploring the development of naval strategic doctrine over the crucial decade of the 1990s as the country came to grips with the uncertainties attendant to the end of the Cold War. We have showed after the events of 11 September 2001, the Navy reinforced the direction it had taken over the previous decade, and confirmed its maritime and amphibious strategies in the 2006 Navy Strategic Plan. We extracted capability sets from both historical development and contemporary naval strategy. We then examined national strategic guidance, culminating in the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, and out of that guidance condensed similar capability sets. Our objective now is to synthesize the two lists of capabilities.

Capabilities Synthesis; the Strategic Guidepost



Four areas where our enemies are likely to pose asymmetric challenges in the immediate future. The Venn circles are military operations to contend with these threats.



27

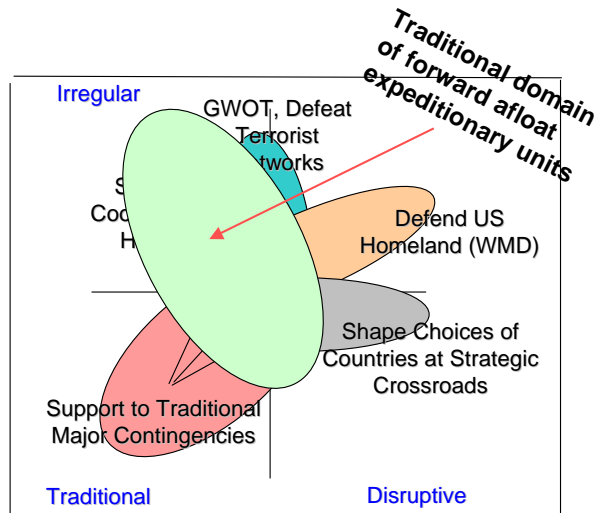
To help us synthesize naval strategy with national guidance, we borrowed the above diagram from the 2006 QDR. This diagram, now popularly known as the “quad chart” shows how the Department of Defense is shifting its “tool kit” of capabilities to address threat areas that are more likely in the new international environment. The 2006 QDR built on the strategic foundation of the 2005 *National Defense Strategy*, which recognized that our future enemies are more likely to pose asymmetric threats than conventional ones. The QDR refined and extended those changes into programmatic elements of force composition and summarized the new vector in this chart.

The important message for this analysis is that the conventional capabilities of our forces are henceforth going to be shifted primarily up and to the left in this diagram – increasing the emphasis on irregular conflicts to deal with global terrorism and on shaping and phase zero operations, while maintaining the ability to defend ourselves conventionally. In synthesizing the sets of force capabilities derived from historical strategy development and national guidance, we have used this chart as a guidepost to ensure that our bottom line remains consistent with this fundamental strategic shift.

Capabilities Synthesis; the Strategic Guidepost



Four areas where our enemies are likely to pose asymmetric challenges in the immediate future. The Venn circles are military operations to contend with these threats



28

This slide points out the area most suited to the capabilities of forward afloat naval expeditionary forces. Since the Navy and Marine Corps strategists began making changes at the end of the Cold War, naval expeditionary forces have been moving in the direction of smaller-scale, forward and distributed operations against asymmetric and irregular threats while maintaining the capability to operate conventionally within the limits of their size and equipment.

In the two following slides we show the synthesized lists of the force capabilities that are required for operating up and to the left in this diagram.

*Synthesis: Service and National Guidance
yield a Mix of Capabilities*



Post 9/11 and the Long War require forces to:

- Operate from a sea base, or assured use of the global commons
- Engage as far forward as possible in the theaters
- Operate successfully and with effect in a dispersed condition, remaining netted and sustainable in distant environments
- Operate easily in an interoperable, scalable mode with friendly nations, increasing the capacities of those nations, especially their maritime security capabilities
- Organize in a modular way, providing as wide an array of capabilities up and down the scale as possible
- Reorganize and composite in unusual ways in response to a highly unpredictable and diverse threat
- Operate easily in declining overseas infrastructure and a smaller force reconstitution base at home
- Dominate across the spectrum in the maritime environment, from the open ocean to the littoral and rivers, including power projection from brown water
- Move around rapidly with low support overhead and modest logistical tail, yet be robust enough in combat capability to influence events ashore

29

How do contemporary national security and defense strategy and the 2006 QDR alter the sets of capabilities required at the end of the Cold War? (These are listed on slides 17 and 18.)

This slide and the one that follows list the set of capabilities synthesized from the national strategy documents and defense review analyzed in the previous several slides and the historic development of naval strategy. Clearly the direction taken by Navy and Marine Corps strategy was the correct course for the path we are now on with the changed international security situation of the new century. The list and the one that follows refine, extend, and combine the capability sets coming out of the previous decade's strategy development.

*Synthesis; Service and National Guidance
yield a Mix of Capabilities*



- Respond rapidly with the flexibility to disrupt and attack terrorist networks, yet remain postured for conventional combat
- Provide distributed, persistent sources of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
- Assist in the GCC's widely dispersed, highly interactive Security Cooperation strategy – "useful presence"
- Disperse and operate efficiently, then aggregate and expand quickly
- Task organize by capabilities, not doctrine, being joint and interoperable
- Maintain freedom of action and independence in changing circumstances
- Sustain irregular warfare over extended periods of time
- Provide the GCC with highly mobile, expeditionary capabilities
- Plan on the fly and provide speed of action early in a time-sensitive crisis
- Provide strong unconventional capabilities in counter-insurgency and CT
- Provide modular, smaller but capable, ground forces that are largely self-sustaining
- Operate from an Afloat Forward Staging Base with SOF forces

30

This slide completes our extended list of force capabilities inherent in today's naval strategy, national defense guidance, and quadrennial review. We now need to confirm these conclusions from the operational perspective of the Combatant Commander. This we do in appendix A to this briefing. (The appendix is in a separate volume, due to its security classification.)

Briefing Outline

- Design and assumptions
- Development of Naval Strategy
- Strategic defense policy guidance - 2006
- Synthesis
- GCC requirements (classified appendix)
- Comparison
- Way ahead

31

For completeness in this briefing, we will present an unclassified summary of our findings in the next slide.

We will then compare the synthesis presented in the first part of this report with our analysis of the GCC perspective. We will conclude with a brief discussion of the way ahead for the project.

Bottom Line: The GCC view Supports Strategy and Guidance



- From what we can see, the Combatant Commander requires flexible expeditionary forces – scalable, mobile, forward
- His first priority is the “Long War” against global terrorism
- Rising importance of Security Cooperation and enabling capacities of partner countries
- Shaping and the concepts of Phase Zero are increasingly important
- Rapid employment in crisis seems imperative
- Capability requirements will be assessed against 7500 series CONPLANS
- Distributed operations critical to success – networked modules
- Long-duration irregular warfare campaign now beginning
- GCC can accept increased risk in traditional capabilities
- Imperative to interdict movement of WMD across theaters
- Amphibious capability required early in remaining GCC OPLANS
- Reduce permanent presence of U.S. forces in some areas

32

After examining the requirements from the Combatant Commander’s operational perspective, our assessment is that the set of capability requirements developed out of our analysis of naval and national guidance is sound.

The GCC requires conventional forces forward as he always has, but today he is more in need of flexible forces that can move rapidly and respond to a variety of taskings. The rising importance of Security Cooperation activities and the concepts of shaping and phase zero make scalable and modular forces more desirable. The GCC needs forces that can disperse across an AOR to conduct training exercises with partner countries, to provide humanitarian assistance, and to perform other functions well to the “left” of conflict resolution – yet be able to aggregate and respond rapidly back to the “right” on the conflict spectrum.

It is safe to say that as the Combatant Commanders refine their subsidiary theater campaign plans for the WOT, force capabilities in general will come more and more to be evaluated against our plans to counter global terrorism. It will no doubt take some time to make the shift away from our long standing conventional organization and force rosters. As the 2006 *Strategic Planning Guidance* makes clear, however, we are now at the point where the services and the Geographic Commanders they support can afford to adjust their traditional risk calculus in favor of force compositions with the characteristics that are shown on this slide and listed in the main section of this briefing.

Comparison of Strategic Capabilities and GCC Requirements



- CPG and SPG both provide direction consistent with strategy and national guidance
- SPG risk guidance emphasizes capabilities previously synthesized
- GCC Security Cooperation requirements dovetail with direction taken in DOD and services
- Long War priority, need for distributed operations in irregular environment consistent as well
- GCC plans and regional strategies rely heavily on capabilities developed in national guidance
- Real-world set of requirements well matched with forward afloat expeditionary force capabilities

33

A comparison of the required capabilities implicit in the developed naval strategy and the national strategic guidance with the requirements of the GCC shows the two to be consistent. The *Contingency Planning Guidance* provides the GCC with planning direction that echoes the capabilities in the national defense strategy, especially about the value of wider ranges of options, rapid employment, and security cooperation. The *Strategic Planning Guidance* provides direction to the GCC on prioritizing his joint capability portfolios that comes directly from the conclusions reached by the 2006 QDR. Similarly, the discussions and guidance on risk are nearly the same in the SPG and the QDR.

The regional strategies at the GCC level are also consistent with the future threat estimates and strategic environments described in national guidance and the development of naval strategic thought. The centrality of the CONPLAN 7500 family of campaign plans to regional force posture and employment priorities is mirrored in both sources.

Lastly, the real-world CENTCOM requirements, as shown in appendix A, compare well with the capabilities of flexible, forward-deployed force packages articulated in the national guidance.



The Way Ahead

- Define MEU (SOC) baseline capabilities
- Confirm future threat estimate and strategic environment
- Compare MEU baseline capabilities with synthesized list of required capabilities
- Identify mismatches and capability gaps
- Analyze implications and develop options
- Publish results, including recommendations for change

34

In the remainder of this study, we will determine whether the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) as currently configured, trained, and deployed, is still the right force to provide this new set of required capabilities to our forward-based Geographic Combatant Commanders.

We will begin by defining the MEU baseline capabilities: What is the complete set of tools in that particular toolchest? At the same time, we will continue to refine the perspective from the GCC, conducting interviews and evaluating the regional strategies produced by the commanders in the field. The heart of the study will then be the comparison of the MEU capabilities baseline with our synthesized and refined list of required capabilities. To the extent they exist, we will identify mismatches and gaps between the two.

Finally we will analyze the implications of our research and develop options for enacting any changes that will help make the MEU (SOC) more relevant to the changed international security situation.

