



# *A New* **Naval ERA**

**By Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, U.S. Navy,  
and General James F. Amos, U.S. Marine Corps**

**How does a maritime nation create an insurance policy against the unpredictable hazards of a changing world? With a Navy-Marine Corps team dedicated to redefining the contours of tomorrow's naval force today, that's how.**

**W**e are faced today with an uncommon array of military challenges and opportunities. At home we are experiencing financial constraints as our nation seeks to get its fiscal house in order. Overseas, instability continues in the Middle East and North Africa, Iran pursues nuclear weapons, and maritime territorial disputes persist in the East and South China Seas. At the end of more than 12 years at war, the continuing drawdown of our troops in Afghanistan provides an opportunity to reset our force and refocus our efforts on emerging challenges. We intend to leverage this

combination of factors to revise how our Navy-Marine Corps team trains, operates, and fights.

We have been here before. In fact, we have been here repeatedly throughout our history. Between the two World Wars, treaty limits on the number of battleships and improvements in aviation technology drove development of the aircraft carrier—creating the ability to project power over the long distances of the Pacific theater. The same period sparked new ideas for maneuver at sea and led to the development of amphibious capabilities. In the Korean War, we demonstrated the asymmetric advantage that rests with a force that can use the sea as maneuver space to repeatedly outflank a land-bound opponent. Later, the Cold War produced maritime strategic concepts and sea-control capabilities focused on countering the blue-water maritime threat posed by the Soviet Navy. And in the aftermath of the Cold War, we shifted our operational focus to expeditionary capabilities that could influence events ashore as described in the maritime strategies . . . *From the Sea* and its encore, *Forward . . . From the Sea*. Our shared naval heritage is not to *push back* on the trends we encounter, but instead to *leverage* the opportunities they present.

We understand that this is a time of unsettling change for our military. Like our predecessors, however, we will use this situation as an opportunity to shape the future naval force to sustain its relevance and affordability. We are optimistic about our ability to do this because our visions as Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps are already closely aligned. We both see a future naval force that thinks together, plans together, trains together, and deploys together on a wide range of ships.

Our forces will combine surface, undersea, aviation, expeditionary, cyber and space capabilities; we will deploy them in flexible packages that can be applied to many different contingencies.

Like today, our future naval force will be *where* it matters, *when* it matters, by maintaining a robust forward presence and appropriate readiness. Where our diplomatic interests are threatened or our citizens are at risk, this integrated naval force will provide the ability to intervene. It will create options for operational commanders and buy time for national decision-makers. This naval force will be essential for preserving peace, building partner capacity,

providing humanitarian relief, and preventing war through the deterrent effect of credible combat power. Where conflict escalates, naval forces will have the tools necessary to gain access from the sea, to fight, and to win.

The Department of Defense is embarking on a review of our strategy, investments, and objectives in the context of the emerging fiscal and security environment. We will similarly think anew about how we fight as a naval force. The nature of warfare as a competing clash of wills may not change, but the evolution of its character is relentless. We can expect our foes to be cunning and creative; they will take every action to exploit our weaknesses and limit our strengths. We must be just as wily, just as cunning—developing and employing the asymmetric capabilities of a naval force that can fight across traditional domain seams. In the coming era, it will be necessary to out-think our enemies as much as out-fight them.

### Security Challenges in a Maritime Era

We are a maritime nation. Our prosperity and that of our partners and allies is underpinned by global systems of trade, finance, information, and security that depend on free access to the “commons”—ungoverned spaces on the sea, in the air, in space, and in cyberspace. Our Defense Strategic Guidance, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, stressed the importance of the commons and informs our effort to reevaluate how the Navy and Marine Corps will operate and fight in the future.

The ability to efficiently move large quantities of goods and commodities makes sea lanes the most heavily used and most economical routes of trade. Cyberspace, in the physical form of undersea fiber-optic cables, carries an even greater value for trade through financial transactions and information. These routes converge at strategic maritime crossroads such as the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca or the Suez Canal. In these waters, and the littoral regions that surround them, political instability or regional aggression can threaten our citizens, allies, or interests.

The maritime crossroads and littorals are areas of increased economic, political, and cultural activity where nations, communities, and ideas intersect—making them frequent locations for friction and conflict. Because of their importance to global economics and security, even small-scale disruptions at the crossroads can have effects that are felt globally. For example, the Arab Spring and ongoing Syrian violence arose in part from the intellectual and economic trends at maritime crossroads throughout the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf, while the

U.S. NAVY (DANIEL VIGAMONTI)  
Sailors and Marines man the rails of the amphibious assault ship USS *Peleliu* (LHA-5) while entering Hong Kong on 15 April. Adapting to the world's evolving challenges, the Navy-Marine Corps team continues to refine and hone its capabilities. “Like today,” the authors write, “our future naval force will be *where* it matters, *when* it matters, maintaining a robust forward presence and appropriate readiness.”



instability these events create ripples throughout the global political and economic system. Our diplomatic facilities in the littorals are highly visible targets in an environment where victory is sometimes measured in media ratings. Pirates, traffickers, and terrorists exploit the concentration of shipping and other traffic at the maritime crossroads and in the littorals to steal, hijack, or coerce their prey.

Maritime crossroads and our allies near them are vulnerable to military and economic disruption by regional actors seeking to shift balances of power. The development and proliferation of advanced conventional weapons, including long-range precision-strike and sea-denial capabilities, are designed to challenge the ability of the United States or its allies to project power in defense of our shared interests. We will not allow that to happen. Responding to these challenges must be reflected in our force design and strategy.

### A Team Sport

Historically, naval forces have existed for two purposes: to control the seas, and to use that control to project power ashore. The mandate for both of these purposes contin-



Marines assigned to the 4th Marine Regiment drive their amphibious assault vehicle from the amphibious dock landing ship *USS Germantown* (LSD-42) toward Hat Yao Beach during Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Thailand, held annually to strengthen Southeast Asian relationships and enhance force readiness. It is one of an array of Navy-Marine Corps exercises "focused on gaining improved integration of U.S. and international capabilities."



ABOVE LEFT: U.S. MARINE CORPS (DANIELLE M. BACON); ABOVE RIGHT: U.S. NAVY (LARRY M. KING)

When things heat up, it helps to have "a naval team that is smoothly integrated and easily adaptable to new situations": March-April 2011 found the Navy and Marine Corps engaged in simultaneous operations at flashpoints around the world, from relief efforts on behalf of tsunami-ravaged Japan to military actions on multiple fronts. Above left: A CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit takes off from the flight deck of the *USS Kearsarge* (LHD-3) during Operation Odyssey Dawn, the attack on Libya. Above right: F/A-18F Super Hornets take off from the *USS Enterprise* (CVN-65), en route to provide close-air support in Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom.

ues. This effort is a team sport, and the Navy and Marine Corps are full of all-star players. The fiscal and security challenges in this new era demand we do a better job of operating and fighting as a team.

Achieving our shared vision of the future naval force requires analysis and new thinking about the ways and means of employing naval power. Now more than ever, the Navy-Marine team must better integrate its capabilities to be effective.

The principle of single-battle describes the linkage of every action in a campaign to a common objective. Future naval leaders will not confront events in the littorals as carefully segregated specialists, but instead will combine all the tools of naval power projection into campaigns designed to present our enemies with a series of dilemmas.

The changing set of challenges in the emerging security environment requires a naval team that is smoothly integrated and easily adaptable to new situations. We must replace rigid command

structures that are ad hoc, aren't scalable, and don't support widely dispersed operations with more flexible structures. We will need to develop integrated operating concepts for our forces, field them with more compatible equipment, and then deploy them in innovative force packages. A "one-size-fits-all" approach to naval-force packaging must be evaluated against our most-likely security challenges. Creativity and original thought must be encouraged.

We need to remove seams that have an impact on our ability to fight as a naval team. We will complement more flexible command structures with habitual Navy-Marine Corps relationships that allow naval groups and task forces to more rapidly adapt and employ all the capabilities at their disposal. Marine planners must understand Fleet operations and the challenges of maintaining the readiness of capital ships—and how our preparation for and conduct of expeditionary missions are affected as a result. Navy staffs, especially those who employ our amphibious capabilities, will have to understand and practice employment of Marine capabilities across the range of military operations. From our perspective, the naval force of today is short of that standard.

### Exploiting the Changing Environment

Fortunately, the most pressing challenges our services face require intellectual effort and cultural change rather than large programmatic adjustments. Our initiatives will require some investments to support more effective Navy-Marine Corps integration, but the cost will be well within our anticipated budgets. Our situation bears a striking parallel to the period between World Wars I and II. During that time, the Navy turned to the General Board to guide the Fleet's effort to develop new capabilities and experiment with new concepts to employ air power and submarines. Today, the Naval Board of senior leaders from the Marine Corps and the Navy meets regularly for much the same purpose. It will oversee our intellectual effort to achieve shared warfighting development in the naval services.

We do not have to go far to find imperatives for innovation and improvement of our naval warfighting capabilities. Here are some priority examples that the Naval Board, and our innovators across the force, will consider:

- Assess our force-design and deployment models through the lenses of forward presence, deterrence, and crisis response in order to better align the core capabilities of the

naval force to be immediately relevant to the geographic combatant commanders. We will evaluate and experiment with Marine detachments on ships other than amphibious vessels such as afloat forward staging bases (AFSB), destroyers, littoral combat ships (LCS), mobile landing platforms (MLP), and joint high-speed vessels (JHSV). We will also explore the integration of shore-based Marine detachments, small craft, and riverine operations into our delivery of naval forces.

- Create better linkages between our Marine and Navy theater-component commander staffs to gain unity of effort within the naval force. As part of this effort we will also evaluate combined Navy-Marine Corps staffs at maritime operations centers to produce more responsive mechanisms for the deployment of naval forces. A combined effort will be necessary to craft maritime campaign plans as described in the new Maritime Security Cooperation Policy recently approved by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. Under this plan, maritime component commanders will articulate their needs for day-to-day theater shaping



A sailor assigned to Beach Master Unit 1 directs vehicle roll-off from an air-cushion landing craft at Camp Pendleton, California, during Dawn Blitz, the annual exercise devoted to reinvigorating the core competency of amphibious operations and enhancing interaction between the Navy and Marine Corps. As part of the ongoing effort to "build our own Fleet experience and that of our partners," the next Dawn Blitz will include Japanese forces.

and crisis response in the form of integrated naval force packages as opposed to individual units.

- Improve the ability of our expeditionary forces to address the need for widely dispersed presence while still being able to aggregate for larger-scale operations. Split amphibious-ready-group (ARG) operations are routine today, but their logistics support and command-and-control systems and processes are ad hoc. Our amphibious ships are not equipped with the right communication and self-defense systems for independent operations, and many of the capabilities of the Marine expeditionary-unit/

ARG team are not severable to create smaller formations with equivalent capabilities. Our naval command-and-control organizations are not well designed or practiced at scaling up from independent operations to large-scale contingencies—especially those that involve traditional “Navy” forces such as carriers along with traditional “Marine” forces such as amphibious ships, and Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTF). We will identify the right equipment and loading for our amphibious ships to support independent operations. We will experiment with

forge persistent linkages between our operating forces, fleet training groups, concept developers, and warfare-development centers. Continuous and highly visible interaction across both services will replace episodic interaction. This linkage will be reinforced with organized campaigns for progressive wargaming, experimentation, and exercises. Increasing the frequency of our warfighting-development interactions among professionals from a variety of communities will serve as an additional catalyst to innovation.



An aviation boatswain's mate directs the landing of an AV-8B Harrier from Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 542 on the flight deck of the *Kearsarge* during Bold Alligator, the large-scale annual exercise representing the Navy and Marine Corps' revitalization of the full range of amphibious operations. The authors envision “a future naval force that thinks together, plans together, trains together, and deploys together on a wide range of ships.”

both the carrier strike group's composite-warfare commander and MAGTF command-and-control constructs to find the most effective methods for a range of power-projection options.

- Develop new approaches for large-scale Marine expeditionary crisis-response operations that address shortfalls in the size of our traditional amphibious-ship fleet and provide more flexibility in how we organize, load, and offload people and material. The naval team must have concepts and training that support smooth and practiced scalability of the expeditionary elements of the Fleet. We will incorporate new platforms such as the LCS, AFSB, MLP, JHSV and large medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ships into our concepts for these operations. This has implications for our command-and-control arrangements, our organization—and for how we equip these new platforms.
- Combine some elements of our concept-development and training-and-education organizations to support more effective innovation and experimentation within the naval force. Building on our current effort with the Navy Warfare Group and the Marine Corps' Ellis Group, we will

- Build our own Fleet experience and that of our partners through major exercise series including Rim of the Pacific, Bold Alligator, and Dawn Blitz. For example, the next Dawn Blitz exercise will include Japanese forces. We will guide these events with the concept-development and experimentation work above. Each exercise will use service-coordinated objectives that are clearly defined, progressive in development, and focused on gaining improved integration of U.S. and international capabilities.

Defining and achieving our vision for future naval operations will be iterative, building on concept development, experimentation, and operational experience. Like pursuing a track at sea, we will be affected by set and drift, forces that will take us off our de-

sired course. We must gain the institutional and personal resilience that enable us to embrace new opportunities and seek solutions despite the currents that might work against us.

History has many examples of how our naval forces innovated operationally and technologically to win. As the nation adjusts its military to new strategies and new levels of defense investment, the Navy-Marine Corps team will play an even greater role in forward presence, crisis response, regional deterrence, and building the foundations of collective security for the global maritime commons. Our ability to swiftly respond to the demands of a wide range of contingencies makes us an indispensable element of the joint force. As naval service chiefs, we are fully committed to the changes necessary to adapt to the emerging fiscal and security environment. Together, the Navy and the Marine Corps will remain forward-deployed, ready for crisis, and engaged to preserve the peace. ✪

Admiral Greenert is the Chief of Naval Operations.

General Amos is the Commandant of the Marine Corps.