

The background of the entire page is a composite image. The top half shows two Marines in desert camouflage uniforms and helmets, looking down at a piece of paper. The middle section features a large, stylized title. Below the title, a white helicopter is shown in flight. The bottom half of the image depicts three Marines in woodland camouflage uniforms in a grassy field; one is standing and talking on a radio, another is kneeling, and a third is lying on the ground with a rifle.

THE LONG WAR

**SEND IN THE
MARINES**

January 2008

**A Marine Corps Operational
Employment Concept To Meet An
Uncertain Security Environment**

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SEND IN THE MARINES

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Employment Concept To Meet An
Uncertain Security Environment

Forward

Marines,

Our Marine Corps is fully engaged in a generational struggle against fanatical extremists; the challenges we face are of global scale and scope. This is a multi-faceted Long War, and it will not be won by one battle, in one country, or by one method. As the demands of combat operations in Iraq diminish, our Corps will continue to face adversaries that threaten our national interests and oppose our way of life. While our Marines and Sailors in combat remain my number one priority, an essential supporting effort must be to prepare for the next phase of this conflict.



Although we will continue to develop our full spectrum capabilities, this war will place demands on our Marines that differ significantly from those of the recent past. Paramount among these demands will be the requirement for Marines to train and mentor the security forces of partner nations in a manner that empowers their governments to secure their own countries. The validation of building partner capacity efforts has already been proven in Iraq and Afghanistan. The introduction of a new force capability, the Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force, and the reemphasis of the capabilities of the Marine Expeditionary Unit represents our Corps' commitment to the Combatant Commanders in this particular arena.

The Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force will challenge some long-standing practices within the Marine Corps. Among these changed practices is the implementation of a regional focus for units that source this new capability. Through this initiative, changes to manpower policies will enable the development of linguistically adept, culturally aware units for training foreign military forces across the globe.

Our Corps serves as the Nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness – a “two fisted” fighter able to answer the call when needed. The innovations outlined in this force employment concept will rebalance our Corps and provide an approach that organizes, equips, trains, and employs the force to meet the challenges of the future. Long the vanguard for our Nation's defense, our Corps continues to provide the force of choice to answer our Nation's call to action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James T. Conway".

General James T. Conway
United States Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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Introduction

Since 1775, our Corps has answered the Nation's call to defend our freedom, deterring and defeating enemies bent on the destruction of our way of life. When war came to our shores on September 11, 2001, Marines quickly moved to the forefront of the fight for freedom – from conducting conventional combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to assisting our allies to overcome their regional security challenges. Our successes have been many, and our newest generation of Marines have added proud chapters to our rich history of uncommon valor and soldierly virtues. But our recent experiences have also uncovered limitations and inefficiencies within our Corps; these challenges arise from a changing operational environment that features a resolute and clever enemy. This new operating environment has witnessed the return of a more primordial form of warfare in which our enemies employ irregular forces in place of uniformed, conventional military forces. The re-emergence of this pronounced, irregular threat heralds an additional challenge and requires the Marine Corps to make adjustments to the way the Marine Corps organizes its forces to fight our Nation's foes.

Eight years into the 21st Century, these irregular security threats are increasingly more the



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norm than the exception. These threats include state and non-state actors, such as ideological extremists, ethnically-based militias, and transnational criminals that present particularly daunting security challenges in parts of the world where limited state reach and weak governing structures are present. The Marine Corps' well established proficiency in conventional warfighting does not fully provide the range of capabilities required to adequately address these threats. These irregular enemies exist and operate within the very fabric of cultures and societies, seeking ends that are often difficult to deter or defeat through conventional force of arms. We expect that this trend toward irregular security challenges will only increase.

The Marine Corps has faced these kinds of opponents before. From the Philippine Insurrection and the numerous small wars in Central America, to the counterinsurgency challenges of the Vietnam War, we have cataloged extensive lessons based on experience fighting irregular opponents. Major conventional combat operations such as those experienced during World War I, World War II, Korea, specific battles in Vietnam,



and Operation Desert Storm are currently more the exception than the rule. As such, the Marine Corps must continue to be a balanced, general purpose force, capable of operating at the lower end of the operational spectrum, while retaining the agility to rapidly shift across the full range of military operations and be simultaneously successful at the high end of the spectrum.

This recognition has led the Marine Corps to make several adjustments to how we train and prepare for combat. Marine Corps training has incorporated the challenges of combat operations within the populations where the irregular opponents operate. Training and Education Command (TECOM) initiatives, such as the founding of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) and



the Security Cooperation Education and Training Center (SCETC), have provided training venues that better prepare Marines for more effective operations against irregular opponents. The recent creation of the Career Marine Regional Studies program and the role of the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) in providing cultural intelligence are further enhancements that position our current and future leaders to better understand the environment in which they might operate.

As an expeditionary force in readiness, the Marine Corps will always maintain the ability to decisively engage armed opponents; however, we should seek to set conditions that relieve US forces of the requirement to engage in combat actions. This end state can only be attained by creating the conditions that reduce or mitigate the rise of new opponents. In achieving this end, this operating concept will challenge many long-standing paradigms and represents an approach for optimizing its general purpose forces to disrupt irregular threats of the 21st Century while preserving the capability to defeat conventional foes when required. The building of partner nation capacity (BPC) and security cooperation with our allies throughout the world will provide the design required to achieve our desired ends.

Purpose

This publication articulates the Marine Corps' concept of force employment to meet the need for counterinsurgency and building partnership capacity. It explains how the Marine Corps will support the *National Defense Strategy* (NDS) and multinational efforts in the Global War on Terrorism/Long War. This publication is nested within *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, the Naval Operations Concept 2006 (NOC)*, and *Marine Corps Operating Concepts For A Changing Security Environment, 2nd Edition*. The focus of this concept is the establishment of a global, persistent forward presence tailored to build partnership capacity for security, while adapting existing forces and creating new capabilities for an uncertain future. Through these efforts we will enable multinational partnerships to address existing regional challenges, while mitigating the conditions that allow irregular threats to proliferate.

National Strategy and an Uncertain Security Environment

The development of this employment concept outlines the Marine Corps' strategy for combating irregular enemies in support of the requirements of the NDS. The NDS identifies "uncertainty" as the defining characteristic of the present and future strategic environment. The Defense Intelligence Community remains convinced that a direct, large-scale military confrontation between the United States and another nation is unlikely for the foreseeable future¹. Few countries will seek comparable "full-capability" military forces, with most armed forces seeking asymmetric alternatives to functional capability². The US military preeminence in **traditional** forms of warfare, which we will continue to maintain, has driven our adversaries to **irregular**, **catastrophic**, and **disruptive** methods to further their aims. Together, these methods will comprise a pattern of complex irregular warfare as portrayed in Figure 1.

¹ *Joint Strategic Assessment 2006-2026*, (Washington DC, The Defense Intelligence Agency, September 2006), p. 3

² *Ibid*, p.2



Figure 1

The methods used within these forms of warfare seek to avoid a direct confrontation with our military while attacking vital national interests at home and abroad. The employment of terrorist tactics at home and abroad, such as the use of weapons of mass destruction against commercial interests or population centers are intended to create an environment of instability, doubt, and fear among our allies and citizens at home. Combating these adversaries requires a holistic approach that shapes the world environment by confronting the underlying conditions that foster the growth of radical ideologies, by deterring those who might already possess the means to attack us, and by disrupting opponents intent on attacking us.

Strategic Objectives of National Defense Strategy

- Secure the United States from direct attack
- Secure strategic access and retain global freedom of action
- Strengthen alliances and partnerships
- Establish favorable security conditions

Figure 2

The NDS identifies four strategic objectives that must be attained in order to effectively defend our national interests. These objectives are outlined in Figure 2. Due to the complexity of the global security environment, these objectives challenge our military to be agile, adaptable, and capable of operations across a wider spectrum than previously required.

Continuum of Military Operations

- **Phase 0:** Shape the Environment. This phase involves those joint, interagency and multinational activities conducted on an ongoing, routine basis to assure or solidify friendly relationships and alliances and/or deter potential adversaries.
- **Phase 1:** Deter the Enemy. This phase focuses on deterring specific opponents by demonstrating the capability and resolve to apply force in pursuit of U.S. interests. These actions will likely build upon Phase 0 activities and may include a show of force or initiatives that would facilitate deployment, employment, and sustainment of additional forces within the region.
- **Phase 2:** Seize the Initiative. Hostilities commence during this phase. Combat power is applied to delay, impede, halt, or dislodge the adversary as well as to gain access to theater infrastructure and enhance friendly freedom of action. Concurrently, assistance is provided to relieve conditions that precipitated the crisis in order to promote stability.
- **Phase 3:** Dominate the Enemy. The focus during this phase is on the exploitation, pursuit, and destruction of the enemy in order to break the opponent's will for organized resistance. Stability operations will also be conducted as needed to facilitate transition to the next phase.
- **Phase 4:** Stabilize the Environment. The priority during this phase will be on stability operations, the reconstitution of infrastructure, and the restoration of services. This phase concludes with the transfer of regional authority to a legitimate civil entity.
- **Phase 5:** Enable Civil Authority. Legitimate civil authorities are enabled in their efforts to provide essential services to the populace. These activities include required coordination activities by U.S. military forces with multinational, interagency, and non-governmental organizations while promoting a favorable attitude among the populace toward U.S. and host nation objectives.

Figure 3

In 2004, the Secretary of Defense directed that a broader continuum of operations be considered to address the entire security environment. As defined in Figure 3, this revised continuum of military operations incorporated two new phases, Phase 0 “shaping the environment” and Phase 5 “enabling civil authority”. These new phases typically involve activities consistent with the lower end of the military operational spectrum.

The operational employment concept described in this publication implements initiatives within the Marine Corps that will better enable our Marines to conduct operations in the first two and last phases of this continuum of operations. Marines have proven, time and again, that they possess the unparalleled ability to seize the initiative, dominate the enemy, and stabilize the security environment. However, long experience has shown that conventional military operations alone are not sufficient to defeat the irregular opponent. Greater efforts must be directed toward shaping the environment to confront the underlying conditions that are counter to the prospects of winning the ideological struggle.

The Operating Environment and Emerging Strategic Missions

The *Marine Corps Midrange Threat Estimate: 2005-2015* provides insights into the causes, locations, and potential adversaries in future conflicts. The growing trend toward violent, transnational extremism is deemed to be the most significant destabilizing factor in many parts of the world today. For the foreseeable future, irregular warfare will be the method of choice of these extremists³. Several other drivers of instability, however, continue to threaten our national interests, as portrayed in Figure 4.

These drivers of instability foment chaos and human suffering, leading to frustration, discontent, and anger for the millions who live in these deteriorating environments. Without any viable alternatives, the increasingly young, disenfranchised populations in the developing world may seek outlets for this frustration through identification with extremist ideologies, ethnic polarization, and criminality. Although the solution to these conditions will not rest solely with the military, the

³ MCIA-1586-001-05, *Marine Corps Midrange Threat Estimate: 2005-2015* (Quantico VA: Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, August 2005), pp. 33-37

Mid-Range Threat Assessment

Future global threat environment will be characterized by the following drivers of instability:

- Terrorism / Irregular Warfare
- Ideological / Religious Extremism
- Poorly / Ungoverned Spaces
- Globalization
- Economics / Poverty / Health Crisis
- Natural Resource Competition (water, energy, etc.)
- Science & Technology competition / advancements
- Changing Demographics (“youth bulge”, aging populations, etc.)
- Environmental Factors (climate change, natural disasters, etc.)
- Crime

U.S. Military operations in the 21st Century will likely focus on neutralizing asymmetric threats

Figure 4

Marine Corps will likely have a prominent role in seeking to mitigate the instability that could impact our national interests. The best way to militarily address these drivers of instability and their effects is to mitigate the underlying conditions that make them possible. This critical segment of the struggle for influence is executed through the shaping and the enabling of civil authority/governance phases of operations.

Components of shaping the environment include enhancing the security capacities of partner nation security forces and alleviating the underlying conditions that give rise to instability. Collectively these efforts are referred to as building partner capacity (BPC). The primary military effort of BPC focuses on building partner nation security capability and capacity. These efforts are designed to increase the

professional competency and proficiency of partner nation security forces aimed toward enabling them to address their own internal and regional security problems. Security cooperation and security assistance constitute the Marine Corps' efforts to build and augment partner nation security capacity. Measures taken within this effort include bilateral training, professional military education, military equipment sales, and advising.

The secondary military effort of BPC seeks to relieve some of the conditions that contribute to instability. Civil-military operations (CMO) constitute the Marine Corps' efforts to promote positive interaction between governments and citizens. Activities within this effort include the provision of infrastructure improvements, humanitarian civil assistance, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and strategic communication. Marines will conduct civil-military operations alongside and in support of host nation military forces and government entities as a means of strengthening their commitment and the impact of their efforts. Advancement of these efforts leads to increased regional security and stability as individuals are empowered and governments are emboldened to eliminate systematic oppression, injustice, and corruption. In some cases, activities performed by Marines will be designed to increase the legitimacy and reach of weak governments. In other cases, these activities can serve as a catalyst to cause modification in the behavior of corrupt governments or governments that are unresponsive to the needs of their people.

In every effort, the ties between populaces and responsive governments will be strengthened as progress compels citizens to take an increased role in the advancement of their community's security, stability, and prosperity. These efforts not only help moderate the effects of unstable environments, they build goodwill toward our country.

These two components of shaping the security environment also serve to effectively dissuade potential threats by reducing their influence and eliminating their sanctuaries.

By providing a persistent, forward presence tailored to the needs of regional combatant commanders (CCDRs) at the lower end of the range of military operations⁴, the Marine Corps will enable CCDRs to engage in the unstable regions of the globe where United States

presence and capacity building efforts will make a difference. Doing so will enable the CCDRs to influence conditions as part of an overarching national campaign to reduce the impact of these drivers on our national interests.

Based on the assessment provided by the *Midrange Threat Estimate*, the Marine Corps can expect to conduct operations along the littoral regions that include:

- Stability and Support Operations
- Small Wars and Counterinsurgency
- Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Relief, and Nation Building
- Peace Operations
- Combating Terrorism
- Counterproliferation and Nonproliferation
- Combating Drug Trafficking and Crime
- Noncombatant Evacuation Operations

These missions will invariably be episodic and in reaction to events taking place across the globe. However, proactive measures will also be employed that will see Marines engaging with foreign militaries, security organizations, and foreign governments, not as opponents, but as partners. These activities are designed to foster security cooperation and provide



partner nation security organizations with the required tools and abilities to forestall and address problems within their own country and region. This increase in the security capacity of our partner nations strengthens their legitimate governments' efforts to create secure and stable regional conditions favorable to US national interests and like minded nations. This empowerment then reduces the requirement for US force commitments in these areas, resulting in greater flexibility of employment options for finite US military assets.

4 JP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington DC, Department of Defense), p. I-13

5 MCIA-1586-001-05, *Marine Corps Midrange Threat Estimate: 2005-2015* (Quantico VA: Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, August 2005), pp. 33-37

Description of the Marine Corps Challenge

Since its inception, the Marine Corps, in partnership with the Navy, has provided forward deployed combat forces to achieve our national security objectives. Sea or land-based, forward-deployed, task-organized, combined arms air, ground, logistics teams have long been a cornerstone of achieving these objectives. Traditionally, these forces have focused primarily on the higher end of the range of military operations. As previously outlined, the methods used by our

adversaries will differ from the wars that our Corps fought through the latter half of the 20th century. There will be fewer high-spectrum combat operations that require our Marines to bring the full force of our combined arms capabilities to bear. The majority of operations will be to engage



our adversaries through shaping and deterrence activities. Our Corps must seek to posture our Marines where they can most effectively engage in these operations while still maintaining full spectrum combat capability. Excluding Phase 5, our Corps is currently optimized for operations higher on the phasing model. This must change. Although we will not compromise our ability to fight and win our Nation's battles, we must focus training to better address the complex challenges we now face.

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How the Marine Corps will meet the Long War Challenge

Throughout the 1990's and early into this century, the Marine Corps' authorized end-strength has been 179,000 active duty Marines. With the advent of sustained combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, our senior leadership recognized that additional personnel strength was required in order to conduct effective, sustained, and repetitive deployments that have characterized this war. Significant augmentation from reserve Marines helped to mitigate the strain of an increased deployment cycle on the under-strength active component. In 2006, the President approved increasing the Marine Corps active component end strength to 202,000 (202K). This increase in force structure will provide additional resources to fight the Long War. As of 1 October 2007, the Marine Corps had reached its first milestone: active duty end strength of 184,000. This end strength will continue to increase in the coming years.

The Marine Corps of today reflects the lessons learned in ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 2005, many of our operating force units have experienced a deployment tempo that has seen them deployed abroad as much as they have been at home. This deployment – to-dwell rotation cycle, on a ratio of 1:1, is not sustainable for the long term, and is in contrast to the pre-OEF/OIF deployment rotation cycle in which Marine units deployed on a 1:3 deployment to dwell ratio.

In the future, the increased requirement for forward deployed Marines requires that operating forces establish a force posture and forward deployment concept to satisfy the demand of the Long War. To sustain these requirements, the Commandant has directed that the active component Marine Corps be postured to support a 1:2 rotation cycle that will have operating forces deployed half as long as they will be at home. With the increase in force structure, this 1:2 rotation cycle will enable units to be forward deployed in a manner that provides more effective and sustained deterrent effect against our adversaries while simultaneously providing CCDRs with greater force deployment options for rapid crisis response. The 1:2 deployment-to-dwell rotation cycle is more sustainable for our families as well.

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Historically, this 1:2 deployment to dwell rotation cycle has provided a predictable and sustainable deployment paradigm that has allowed a high quality of life for Marines and their families. This 1:2 deployment to dwell cycle is a mid-term goal. Ultimately, as conditions allow, the active component Marine Corps will return to a 1:3 deployment to dwell cycle.

The reserve component will continue to constitute a crucial force provider with reserve forces deploying at a 1:5 deployment-to-dwell rotation cycle. With high demand skills ideally suited for both BPC and combat operations, units from Marine Forces Reserve will continue to operate as part of the total force, integrating with active component units and conducting operations to fulfill the demands of the Long War.

Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) will continue to serve with the US Navy on amphibious shipping and deploy from each of the Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF) to operate along the littoral regions of the globe as part of the Navy-Marine Corps team. These MEUs will be the vanguards of the Marine Corps, providing a short-notice, first-responder capability to address the kinds of missions identified in the Midrange Threat Estimate. The MEUs will also provide forces for theater security cooperation activities on an episodic basis.



Additionally, a greater Marine Corps forward-deployed presence will be achieved in the Western Pacific through the return to a balanced mix of permanently forward based forces and forces sourced through the reestablishment of the Unit Deployment Program (UDP). These forces will be positioned to create, strengthen, and preserve regional partnerships, deter aggression and when required respond to crisis.

Finally, a new task organized unit, specifically designed to address BPC requirements, will be introduced. That unit is the Security Cooperation Marine air-ground task force (SC MAGTF).

Emerging Marine Capabilities Security Cooperation Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SC MAGTF)

The Marine Corps will always maintain the ability to answer any contingency in any clime or place. However, the demands of the Long War require the introduction of a new capability provider – the SC MAGTF. Similar to a MEU, but task organized for security cooperation and civil-



military operations, the SC MAGTF will have capabilities, mobility, and sustainability commensurate with its requirements to provide training to less developed military forces. Figure 5 shows how the SC MAGTF is comprised of a ground combat element (GCE), a logistics combat element (LCE), and an aviation combat element (ACE). The MAGTF concept that has long been a foundation for Marine Corps success will be maintained.

The GCE will normally provide the core of the SC MAGTF with the majority of security cooperation training and operations provided by Marines coming from the infantry battalion. The LCE will tailor its combat service support functions to the SC MAGTF, but with additional civil-military operation capabilities such as enhanced



engineering, additional medical and dental support, and transportation tailored for the environment in which the SC MAGTF will operate. The ACE will task-organize for specific requirements but principally focus on providing mobility, reconnaissance, and multidimensional force protection to assure freedom of

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action to project and operate in remote, austere environments. Additional capabilities such as civil affairs, operational law, veterinary services, information operations, and interagency liaisons can also be sourced to meet mission requirements.

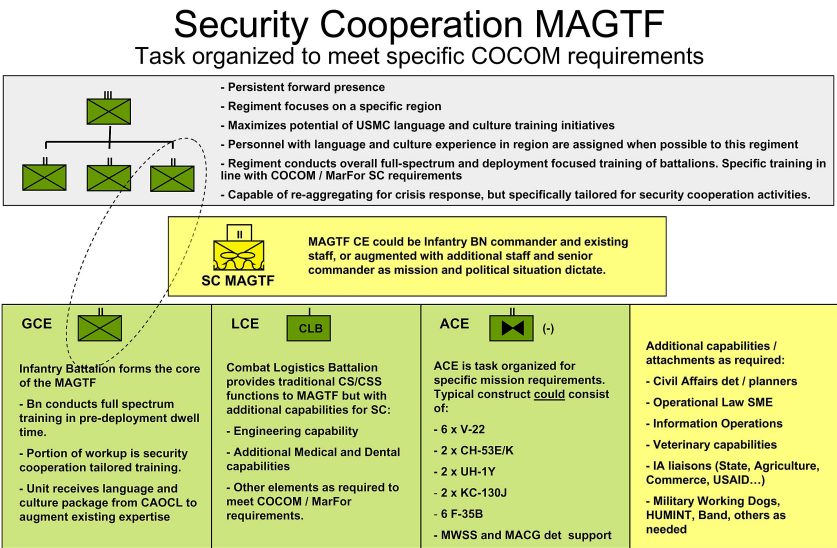


Figure 5

The SC MAGTF will be tasked with building partner nation security capacity and supporting partner nation security efforts in a specific regional area. Standing SC MAGTFs will support three regions – Africa, Southwest Asia, and South America. Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) will continue to conduct civil-military operations and security cooperation activities with organic forces stationed and forward-deployed in the US Pacific Command (USPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR). In order to prepare for operations in these diverse regions, designated infantry regiments, combat logistics battalions and Marine air groups will adopt a specific regional orientation with specialized manpower and training. Tables of organization for units that source the SC MAGTF will be coded with billets that facilitate the assignment of foreign area officers (FAO), regional affairs officers (RAO), linguists, and other personnel with regional expertise. Units that source SC MAGTFs will be staffed with Officers and NCOs with an academic background in specific micro-regions in order to take full advantage of these unique capabilities.

Lastly, Marines who are native speakers of languages endemic to these regions will be identified during entry level training, for assignment to units that source the SC MAGTF.

Regionally oriented regiments, logistics battalions, and aircraft groups will have the responsibility of training and preparing the units that are sourced for the SC MAGTF. Furthermore, these units will conduct required coordination with the MARFORs sponsoring the security cooperation training events and host nations receiving the training. Finally, the regiments, logistics battalions, and aircraft groups will provide command representation as required and additional personnel and equipment requirements to support SC MAGTF events in their respective theater of operations.

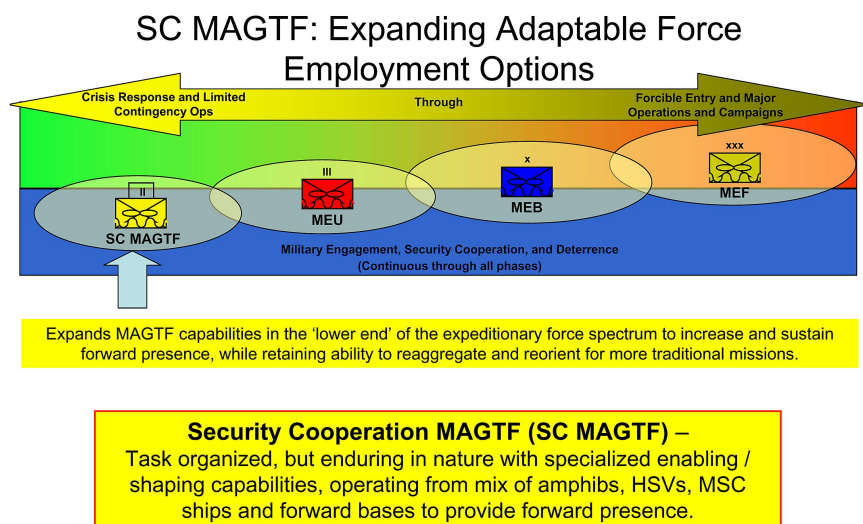


Figure 6

The SC MAGTF will provide the CCDR with a flexible, expeditionary force employment option that further augments the traditional capabilities provided by the Marine Corps. Figure 6 shows how the SC MAGTF will be specifically tailored to provide capabilities to successfully shape the environment and enable partner nations to secure their own countries and regions.

The tradition of excellence in combined arms, expeditionary, and high spectrum combat operations will remain fundamental to the units that comprise the SC MAGTF. Training events such as combined arms exercise (CAX), mountain warfare training, and amphibious exercises will remain basic to these units' training regimen. However, specialized training in culture and language will also be provided to the infantry, logistics regiments, and aircraft groups sourcing the SC MAGTF by the CAOCL and SCETC. This specialized training will ensure our SC MAGTF personnel are more effective working with their foreign counterparts. Unlike special operations forces, the Marines of the SC MAGTF will remain general purpose military forces capable of the same tasks as their peers in other Marine battalions and squadrons. Prepared in this manner, the Marines and sailors of the SC MAGTF will be trained to conduct BPC while maintaining the critical skills necessary to conduct combat operations across the high end of the war-fighting spectrum.

Following its pre-deployment training, the SC MAGTF will deploy to a forward operating site (FOS) in an assigned theater. From this FOS, the SC MAGTF will disaggregate by further deploying task-organized forces to locations throughout the region. Some of these forces will deploy directly to training sites. Others may deploy to Navy amphibious shipping aboard new Global Fleet Stations (GFS)⁶ while the remainder might deploy to Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs) for follow-on deployment to their training sites. As portrayed in the *Naval Operations Concept 2006* and *Seabasing*⁷, SC MAGTF personnel deployed aboard GFS shipping will provide a particularly versatile forward presence for the CCDR and constitute a self-sustainable, persistent forward presence capable of being positioned to meet a variety of BPC requirements with no requirement for a land-based footprint.



6 For more detail on *Global Fleet Stations*, refer to *Naval Operations Concept 2006*

7 MCWP 3-31.7 *Seabasing* (Quantico VA, Marine Corps Development Command, August 2006)

Once deployed on the ground, SC MAGTF personnel can be supported by surface and aerial intra-theater lift assets such as the high speed vessel (HSV), KC-130, and the MV-22 Osprey, capable of in-flight refueling for long distance flights. Maritime pre-positioning ships (MPS) will provide further operational



support through the debarkation of required mission essential equipment to support operations ashore. These MPS assets will be particularly capable when operating in conjunction with the GFS. Organic Marine contracting personnel and linkages with interagency support from organizations such as the Department of State will facilitate logistical support on the ground. Networked through an architecture of computer, satellite, and long-range radio assets, the detachments of the SC MAGTF will constitute distributed operations at the strategic and operational levels.



In addition to providing crucial BPC capabilities, the SC MAGTF will provide critical “eyes forward” in areas not previously accessible to US military forces. Maintaining a persistent, low-visibility global presence, the SC MAGTF will constitute a operational reconnaissance asset that enables the CCDR

to better maintain situational awareness and influence in his AOR. Deployed or disaggregated SC MAGTF elements will be capable of assuming some missions traditionally associated with special operations forces (SOF). As required, the Marines of the SC MAGTF will be available for assisting in the development of civil society in ungoverned and under-governed spaces, denying sanctuary to an enemy, conducting operational preparation of the environment, waging ideological warfare, and interdicting terrorists and other irregular enemies⁸.

⁸ *Multi-Service Concept for Irregular Warfare* (Quantico VA, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, August 2006), p. 25

Through rapid access to pre-positioned equipment, the SC MAGTF will be positioned to provide the CCDR with potent, forward deployed combat forces. In the event of crisis, the theater MARFORs will possess the ability to rapidly assemble the distributed SC MAGTF assets to provide a scalable, tailored capability able to meet the CCDRs security requirements. From local crises such as a NEO or a humanitarian situation to major combat operations (MCO) in other CCDR AORs, the forward deployed SC MAGTF will constitute an initial capability to respond to tasking and if required rapidly assimilate additional forces or capabilities to stabilize the situation.

Vignette: SC MAGTF and Distributed Operations at the Strategic and Operational Levels

The year is 2010. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have stabilized to a steady state wherein the force commitments are reduced and combat advisors conduct routine capacity building missions in support of indigenous military forces. However, Africa has continued to experience steady economic decline with crushing poverty, government corruption, epidemic level medical emergencies, and ethnic conflict creating conditions that threaten US interests and regional security. The US Government has taken the lead for the international community in an effort to bring the continent out of this state of continuous crisis. The Marine Corps, as our Nation's Force in Readiness, is poised to address the security aspects of these challenges.

1st Battalion 2nd Marines (1/2) is slated to deploy as SC MAGTF 1/2. The battalion acts as the core of the SC MAGTF and is supported by an attached composite squadron consisting of (2) KC-130J, (6) MV-22B, (4) CH-53E, and (6) F-35B. The battalion is further supported by a detachment from Marine Logistics Group 2, which provides robust logistics, transportation, and engineering capabilities, as well as enhanced medical and dental care for ENCAP/MEDCAP/DENCAP support. Digital and satellite communications assets are provided by 8th Communications Battalion which facilitates long distance communications across the vast expanses of Africa. Finally, military police, intelligence, information operations, and civil affairs detachments round out the SC MAGTF capabilities.

Following its pre-deployment training which included combat training and specialized training for security cooperation, SC MAGTF 1/2 deploys via USTRANSCOM allocated aircraft to a forward operating base at Rota Spain. From this location, the battalion command post is established. The main body of the battalion has been preceded by an advance party who conducts liaison with MARFORAFRICA and theater Marine Advisors. Similar to WESTPAC UDP, a battalion equipment set, specifically tailored for the SC MAGTF mission, has been pre-positioned in Rota, which is further able to be augmented by equipment from MCPP-N or offloaded from MPS-1 shipping.

Upon arrival and orientation, the SC MAGTF embarks Alpha company reinforced with (4) MV-22B and an engineering detachment aboard naval shipping for employment as part of the 6th Fleet's GFS. The battalion's Bravo command element with Bravo Company, civil affairs, intelligence, and military police detachments, and (4) CH-53E flies via KC-130 to Sao Tome, a Partner Nation Location, where a forward command post is established from which reinforced platoons are deployed to partner nations in the vicinity via intratheater connectors. Weapons Company, with elements of H&S Company, deploys platoon sized elements to destinations directly from FOS Rota. The F-35B detachment remains forward based in FOS Rota, capable of supporting SC MAGTF elements across the continent due to its in-flight refueling capability. Charlie Company remains in reserve and facilitates a rotation of forces with Bravo and Weapons Companies. The battalion commander and select members of his staff deploy via commercial or military aircraft to inspect and supervise the operations of his subordinate units. As required, the Commanding Officer of 2nd Marines, as well as members of his staff, also support the SC MAGTF mission by deploying to selected high visibility training and exercise events.

The disaggregated elements of SC MAGTF 1/2 conduct a range of sustained bi-lateral training, foreign internal defense, and capacity building activities aimed at improving the professional competencies of selected African militaries while providing a visible forward presence that provides economic stabilization in several key regions on the continent. Such activities include training with the Liberian military aimed at professionalizing the small country's ethnically fractious military, bi-lateral training with a composite African Union (AU) battalion destined for peacekeeping duty in Somalia, and combined humanitarian operations with Kenyan and United Nations forces in coordination with the World Food Program (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), and other non-governmental organizations aimed at alleviating the human suffering caused by prolonged drought conditions that threaten to destabilize the country.

Three months into the battalion's deployment, a crisis erupts in a small West African country. Following the collapse of the country's government and ensuing violence by ethnic militias, the US ambassador calls for reinforcement of the embassy and the evacuation of all American citizens (AMCITs). Within hours of this request, two platoons from the SC MAGTF, supported by F-35B's sorted from Rota, fly from the GFS on MV-22 to secure the embassy compound while the rest of the company flies in from Liberia in MV-22 later in the day.

The situation in the country continues to deteriorate requiring additional Marine forces to evacuate AMCITs and third country nationals from outlying sites. Other elements of the SC MAGTF are flown in from locations in West Africa and directly from Rota via KC-130. The Marines of SC MAGTF 1/2 stabilize the situation to a sufficient degree until a MEU arrives on station, relieving the SC MAGTF Marines to return to their previous responsibilities.

As SC MAGTF 1/2's deployment nears its conclusion, the Marines of the battalion are looking forward to returning home. Justifiably proud of their accomplishments, their deployment has been an unqualified success. However, events on another continent far from Africa will see the Marines of the SC MAGTF 1/2 called to yet another crisis. Following an unusually difficult winter, civil uprisings supported by break-away military factions bring the government of the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the brink of imploding. In an effort to elicit an international response that would pressure the Kim regime, break-away factions initiate an artillery bombardment against US and UN military targets in the Republic of Korea (ROK). Shortly after the bombardment, combat forces of the DPRK cross the 38th Parallel.

The resulting deployment of US forces to support the ROK is massive. Among the units required for the looming conflict is 1/2. Within hours, an advance party departs Rota for Pohang in the ROK. Elements of Alpha Company fly immediately from their sea base to reconstitute with the rest of the company in Liberia. Once consolidated, the company flies via MV-22 to Mali where KC-130's facilitate their follow-on movement to Rota 48 hours later. The 81mm mortar platoon and Scout-snipers move with Alpha Company directly to the FOS. Weapons Company elements operating in East Africa are flown via commercial airlines to Seville in Spain, and then moved with ground transportation to Rota for link up with the rest of the battalion.

Bravo Company's reconstitution from Ghana and Nigeria moves with equal rapidity. Boarding an HSV from Accra, and flying via CH-53 from Jaji, the platoons that had previously been conducting capacity building training arrive in Sao Tome within 24 hours. From there, the company flies via KC-130 to Rota, arriving within 48 hours.

Simultaneous to these efforts to reconstitute the battalion, cold weather equipment is moved via HSV from MCPP-N to Rota. This equipment is offloaded and staged for issue to the arriving Marines. Orientation briefs re-focus the Marines toward the expectation of conventional combat. NCOs and junior officers inspect and rehearse their platoons while orders are issued.

Thirty six hours after arriving in Rota, SC MAGTF 1/2 is ready to board aircraft to depart to the Korea theater of operations. Once in theater, the battalion is re-designated BLT 1/2 and is ready for conventional combat operations on the Korean peninsula.

This vignette has shown how a Marine infantry battalion with supporting aviation and logistics assets might be employed in the future across a full range of military operations. Within less than 5 days, the Marines of 1st Battalion 2nd Marines have gone from conducting capacity building, humanitarian assistance, foreign internal defense, and counterterrorism spread across several thousand miles of African territory, to a coalesced infantry battalion ready for high intensity combat operations. This vignette has shown how the use of naval sea-basing, pre-positioned equipment, and strategic distributed operations might be employed in a manner that establishes favorable security conditions, secures strategic access, and strengthens existing and emerging alliances and partnerships in an uncertain world.