**Abstract**

The Navy and Marine Corps have concentrated a preponderance of their resources on overcoming the Chinese anti-access / area denial (A2/AD) defense. The services' singular focus on A2/AD training will test and possibly exceed the limits of current equipment inventories, training capabilities and service budgets. Therefore, the Navy and Marine Corps must focus on realistic expeditionary training as opposed to solely on Anti-Access / Area Denial Joint Forcible Entry Operations (FEO) in order to manage resources and efficiently prepare a balanced "Expeditionary Force-in-Readiness."

**Subject Terms**

Training, Anti-Access / Area Denied, Contingency Operations, HADR Operations, Forcible Entry Operations
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FUTURE WAR PAPER

TITLE:
Focusing the Navy and Marine Corps' Preparation for Future Expeditionary Operations

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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Date: 4 June 2013
Executive Summary

Title: Focusing the Navy and Marine Corps’ Preparation for Future Expeditionary Operations

Author: Major Derek M. Brannon

Thesis: The Navy and Marine Corps must focus on realistic expeditionary training as opposed to Anti-Access/Area Denial Joint Forcible Entry Operations in order to manage resources and efficiently prepare a balanced “Expeditionary Force-in-Readiness.”

Summary: The Navy and Marine Corps have concentrated a preponderance of their resources on overcoming the Chinese anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) defense. The services’ singular focus on A2/AD training will test and possibly exceed the limits of current equipment inventories, training capabilities and service budgets. Therefore, the Navy and Marine Corps must focus on realistic expeditionary training as opposed to solely on Anti-access/Area Denial Joint Forcible Entry Operations in order to manage resources and efficiently prepare a balanced “Expeditionary Force-in-Readiness.”

The intent of training in an A2/AD environment would be to integrate all of the war-fighting functions across all of the domains. In the development of a training exercise, not all of the war fighting domains can be integrated and controlled. Therefore, the execution of a live-fire force-on-force training exercise against an A2/AD threat is unattainable and detracts the Navy and Marine Corps from maximizing their resources to train for a wider variety of missions that are more likely to occur.

The Navy and Marine Corps’ ability to train to contingency operations will increase their speed and flexibility in planning and execution. The diversity in training would also support the development of basic tactical fundamentals used to counter irregular and conventional threats.

In conclusion, the most important aspect to training to these missions is the ability for the Navy and Marine Corps to manage its current resources through smaller scale exercises designed against a realistic threat replication that can incorporate certain aspects of an A2/AD threat while maintaining costs within a service budget and existing infrastructure.
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Introduction

Today, the Navy and Marine Corps are redefining their training strategies to support the Nation’s refocus on the Pacific. Specifically given their concerns over China’s increasing military capabilities within the region, the Navy and Marine Corps have concentrated a preponderance of their resources on overcoming the Chinese anti-access / area denial (A2/AD) defense. Consequently, current amphibious training exercises, such as Bold Alligator and Dawn Blitz are attempting to revitalize the Navy and Marine Corps’ current capabilities and identify future requirements relevant in an A2/AD environment. The services’ singular focus on A2/AD training will test and possibly exceed the limits of current equipment inventories, training capabilities and service budgets. Therefore, the Navy and Marine Corps must focus on realistic expeditionary training as opposed to Anti-Access / Area Denial Joint Forcible Entry Operations in order to manage resources and efficiently prepare a balanced “Expeditionary Force-in-Readiness.”

A lens in which to view the global environment in 2030 is the United States National Intelligence Council’s publication, Global Trends 2030: Alternate Worlds. One notable prediction made by the Council is the possibility of a diffusion of global power and the implications that it will have on the political influence of the United States. In addition, the Council surmises that by 2030, “Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power, based upon Gross Domestic Product, population size, military spending, and technological investment.” Finally, the Council also predicts that there will be an increase in the proliferation of technology to allow “small groups to have greater access to lethal and disruptive technologies, particularly cyber instruments and bioterror weaponry, enabling them to perpetrate large-scale violence.” Combining these predictions with the prospect of an
increase in world urbanization and the continued effects of climate change on the availability of critical resources, the Navy and Marine Corps will encounter a higher frequency of contingency operations that occur primarily in the littoral environment than interstate wars.  

Although the Council's predictions also reinforce the Nation's refocus on the Pacific region, it does not account for the need to train solely for a Chinese A2/AD threat. The additional predictions are important to consider based on the unique environments in which the Navy and Marine Corps may find themselves operating in a much higher frequency in the future. As a result, considering future budget concerns and equipment shortfalls, the services should examine their alternatives to ensure that they are maximizing their training opportunities while not losing sight of the need to counter an A2/AD defense.

Analysis of Anti-Access/Area Denial Training

A2/AD represents a very complex and integrated defense employed by countries such as China or Iran and is the basis for a majority of the US National Security concerns. The importance of those concerns are specified in the National Security Strategy, which demands that A2/AD must remain on the periphery of the Navy and Marine Corps training focus.

The Department of Defense document, Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), briefly describes the A2/AD solution as a "cross-domain synergy: complementary, vice merely additive employment of capabilities in different domains such that each enhances the effectiveness and compensates for the vulnerabilities of others." For example, the employment of air power would defeat anti-ship weapons while naval power would support the neutralization of those air defense systems.

The JOAC also includes several precepts that are required to overcome an A2/AD defense. The precepts include the advance preparation of the operational area, consideration of
basing options, exploitation of one or more domains and creation of local domain superiority. The JOAC precepts can simply be described as the forcible entry of a landing force through the coordination of the organic capabilities of the amphibious force that result in the expeditious buildup of combat power ashore. In short, training to the complexity of the A2/AD defense through the relatively simple JOAC strategy is difficult to achieve when attempting to organize resources in a fiscally constrained environment.

**A2/AD Training Problem**

Although the environment is well defined and a joint strategy focuses the forces on a common goal, A2/AD training is unsupportable by the Navy and Marine Corps based on a multitude of factors. First, the level of exercise design required to simulate the A2/AD threat and create a realistic scenario is unachievable. Second, the personnel and equipment required to execute an A2/AD forcible entry operations are not available in the current or proposed Navy and Marine Corps force structure. Finally, the time required to shape and integrate cyberspace, space, and conventional fires prevents their actual employment in training despite that each are integral in a forcible entry operation.

To begin with, the ability to design an A2/AD exercise that incorporates an integrated defensive structure with the potential of force-on-force and live-fire training is unachievable due to training range requirements, exercise control capabilities, and threat simulation. First, the range required to simulate an A2/AD threat needs to incorporate hundreds of miles of ocean, coastline, airspace and ground maneuver space. The range requirement would need to support the maneuver of both friendly and enemy forces while integrating the capabilities of future long-range weapon systems and stealth technology.
The combining of current regional US ranges, such as those found in California, Alaska and Nevada, do not support the size and freedom of maneuver required to simulate an A2/AD environment. In addition, the restrictions found in both civilian airspace and commercial sea lines of communication prohibit the availability of unrestricted airspace and coastline for combined air and amphibious operations.

Next, the establishment of an exercise control group is an important element in the overall design of the exercise. The exercise would require constant monitoring through a robust communication and control network in order to monitor both friendly and enemy force maneuvers. Similarly, the capability to inject realistic threat responses and receive inputs from every exercise participant would increase the training experience through the management of risks involved during the exercise. Currently the training ranges that have developed this level of control cannot support the full integration of a joint force with its associated freedom of movement in all of the domains. Finally, range administration infrastructure, such as range control and range maintenance is also very costly and requires a large support structure of personnel and equipment.

Third, threat simulation requirements are unachievable due to a lack of modern simulated or actual threat systems, as well as trained subject matter experts to simulate current threat tactics, techniques and procedures. Examples of anti-access (A2) methods by enemy intelligence and reconnaissance assets would include cyber, special operations, space, and aviation assets. Each of the threat assets are difficult to replicate or even simulate based on the restrictions of training ranges and availability of assets that are required.

In addition, realistic enemy A2 command and control reactions would determine the enemy’s area denial (AD) techniques that are employed to counter the forces attempted
penetration. The AD techniques would include mines, small craft, surface-to-air systems, anti-
ship missiles and conventional ground forces. The knowledge of the enemy’s capabilities and
their actual simulation is difficult to incorporate into an actual exercise to create a realistic
A2/AD environment. Therefore, any exercise attempting to simulate an actual A2/AD
environment would be unsuccessful.

Fourth, the equipment and personnel are not available in the Navy and Marine Corps’
inventory to train against a modern A2/AD threat. Equipment shortfalls for training include
fixed and rotary wing aircraft, amphibious assault vehicles and amphibious shipping. The
equipment shortfalls alone prohibit the employment of a full Marine Expeditionary Brigade
(MEB) ashore in training based on continuous deployments abroad and current equipment
maintenance cycles. In addition, the lack of trained personnel to fill units to their full strength,
support exercise control, threat forces and support staffs inhibit the training opportunities of the
operating forces and therefore make the training ineffective.

Finally, political pressures from allies and regional organizations would influence the
duration of actual shaping operations. The importance of relationships with these regional
coalitions and organizations, such as the United Nations adds a complex dimension to operating
in an A2/AD environment. The political aspect in coordinating with a coalition military and the
influence it will have on the execution of an operation is also difficult to incorporate into
training.

In summary, the intent of training in an A2/AD environment is to integrate all of the war-
fighting functions across all of the domains simultaneously. Considering the difficulties and
expense in personnel and equipment to integration for training, the focus on A2/AD forcible
entry operations detracts the Navy and Marine Corps from maximizing their resources to train for operations that are more likely to occur.

**A2/AD Training Solutions**

Arguably, properly developed A2/AD training enhances the service’s ability to conquer the most complex problem and therefore allows the force to accomplish all other missions with little difficulty. Yet, the difficulties in designing and executing a realistic A2/AD exercise are impossible to overcome. Two solutions for A2/AD training are the use of simulation and war games to enhance the Navy and Marine Corps’ understanding of the A2/AD environment.

For example, A2/AD simulation is probably the most mature training forum currently used by the Navy and Marine Corps. Through simulation aviation, surface and sub-surface elements of the Navy and Marine Corps are able to focus on their specific responsibility in execution of an A2/AD forcible entry operation. The simulators can be globally linked to provide a realistic scenario to each of the participants, as well as identify command and control issues that may occur during execution. The individual simulators can also be easily modified to update threats based on intelligence gathering and can be rerun multiple times with little or no delay. The inherent flexibility in simulation would increase the learning aspects of the training, as well as provide critical feedback to all the participants in a controlled environment.

Similarly, war games can enhance the service’s education of A2/AD operations and possibly assist in the development of a viable A2/AD strategy for the future. The war games provide a focus on critical command and control friction points that may occur. Although the training would focus on higher command decisions, it also allows unit members to become familiar with the intricate details of an operational plan during the war game. Additionally, the
ease in access and control of a war game will allow for the full integration of the partner nations into the training and enhance the lessons learned for all participants.

Finally, force-on-force live-fire training against specific aspects of an A2/AD defense is achievable within current ranges and threat simulation systems. For example, aviation elements of the Navy and Marine Corps can currently perform a long-range air interdiction mission against a realistic A2/AD anti-air threat. The example is but one training opportunity that illustrates that Navy and Marine Corps units can train for their specific mission essential tasks. As a result, the increases in proficiency in these individual tasks allow for their seamless integration into future A2/AD forcible entry operations. The ability to break down an A2/AD forcible entry operation into individual tasks allows the services to incorporate that training into alternative training exercises.

**Service Training Alternatives**

In 2030, the National Intelligence Council predicts an increase in regional and intrastate conflicts, as well as the development of regionally based political organizations.¹⁰ As a result, the Navy and Marine Corps are already experiencing an increase in regional conflicts that are adversely affecting training opportunities and extending operational deployments. The National Intelligence Council also predicts a decline in interstate conflicts, which should deter the Navy and Marine Corps from training solely on A2/AD and open the aperture on other operations.¹¹ Consequently, the increase in future contingency operations demands flexibility in training and integration by both the Navy and Marine Corps.

The Navy and Marine Corps’ ability to train to contingency operations will increase their speed and flexibility in planning and execution. Comparatively, contingency operations also pose complex operational and tactical problems also found in A2/AD forcible entry operations.
Both of the operations could also have strategic significance and therefore demand focus by the Navy and Marine Corps in training.

The most important aspect to training to contingency operations is the ability for the Navy and Marine Corps to manage its current resources through smaller scale exercises designed against a realistic threat replication. The goals of contingency training would include basic tactical fundamentals, counterinsurgency proficiency and rapid planning and deployment skills across all of the war fighting functions. The exercise design can incorporate certain aspects of an A2/AD threat while maintaining costs within a service budget and existing infrastructure.

**Contingency Operations**

A rapid response capability to plan for and execute a contingency operation will dominate future deployments and provide an alternative to A2/AD training for the Navy and Marine Corps. The scope of missions that could occur demands the force to maintain a balance of skills across the full range of military operations. Specifically for the Marine Corps, the training would incorporate aspects of small wars and conventional amphibious operations and therefore bridge the gap in institutional emphasis between the two doctrines.

First, although the training would not focus solely on an integrated A2/AD defense, it would incorporate training in all five types of amphibious operations in varying degrees of threat capabilities. The flexibility in the size and scope of the training would be based on continual intelligence assessments and combatant command requirements, which would then feed into the exercise design. More importantly, the Navy and Marine Corps would participate in a complex training event that incorporated amphibious operations at a threat environment manageable by its current force structure and resources.
Next, contingency operations will vary in duration, force requirements, and more importantly, political impacts. The combining of each of these variables creates a very complex scenario, especially if the US does not retain its global maritime and air freedom of navigation. The integration of coalition partners into training will minimize future friction points with respect to command and control and assist in overcoming possible regional political sensitivities.

In addition, integration of a coalition partner in smaller deployment focused training evolutions would be desirable to develop command relationships and force familiarity for an amphibious force, such as the MEU, prior to a deployment. Coalition training also provides a possible alternative training venue for US forces to develop tactics, techniques and procedures outside of US ranges.

Interagency coordination and integration is also instrumental in Navy and Marine Corps counterinsurgency operations. Based on the National Intelligence Council perception that regional conflicts will be based on “politically dissonant, youthful ethnic minorities” globally connected through technology, interagency knowledge and expertise will need to be closely integrated with combat troops. The difficulty in integrating interagency organizations can only be resolved through training and coordinated education.

In addition, increasing the US sea-basing capability is becoming more vital as the US loses its global dominance. Operating from a sea-base limits political strain on allies to provide land bases and adds a dimension of flexibility and speed to expeditionary operations. Sea-basing capabilities in an A2/AD environment are very difficult to secure based on the expected capability of the threat. Although sea-basing in a contingency operation would be more manageable with the current Navy and Marine Corps force structure, it will also exercise the capability if required for future A2/AD forcible entry operations.
Finally, multiple contingency operations may occur at one time, affecting the force requirements and the mission type executed at one time. The Navy and Marine Corps will need to be proficient in all variants of expeditionary operations in order to provide the maximum amount of flexibility. The force requirements in a contingency operation will depend on multiple factors, such as political influences, threat, and environment. In all cases, the force will need to maneuver to the region quickly enough and with enough force to be successful. Current Navy and Marine Corps training programs, focused on the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), address many of these concerns and provides a good training template for contingency planning.

In short, the Navy and Marine Corps needs to focus its training on a manageable operation that it can currently execute with a MEU or MEB sized Marine Air Ground Task Force versus the deployment of multiple divisions that would be required for a near peer A2/AD forcible entry operation. The exercise infrastructure required for contingency operations is already available with current range complexes and training programs. Similarly, equipment and personnel are available to create a realistic exercise that will support the Navy and Marine Corps’ attempts to gain operational effectiveness for future contingency operations.

**Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

The National Intelligence Council predicts an increase in the shortages of energy, water and food in 2030 based on urbanization and global climate change. Particularly, the potential for conflict based on those shortages make humanitarian relief efforts an important aspect to the US national security. As stated before, the expectation is that the Navy and Marine Corps will continue to play a vital role in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief based on the flexibility that its maritime capabilities bring. Therefore, HADR operations will dominate future contingency operations for the Navy and Marine Corps and requires training focus. HADR may
include aspects of A2/AD, reliance on regional allies and counterinsurgency familiarity but will also exercise an often forgotten war-fighting function: logistics.

HADR operations pose many significant and unique challenges for the Navy and Marine Corps. One challenge is that the Navy and Marine Corps will participate in operations in a complex and austere environment, which could change to irregular warfare at a moment’s notice. Aspects of restrictive rules of engagement will challenge leadership and Marines, as well as civil affairs, information operations, and intelligence gathering will emerge to the forefront of the military actions and require a substantial amount of knowledge and understanding prior to deployment.

One unique aspect to executing a HADR operation is the short planning cycle and the environmental unknowns. Interagency support, coalition integration and having a sea-basing capability all assist in the rapid force deployment and buildup required in these operations. Standard logistics packages should also be tested in training, in order to counter the friction that Navy and Marine Corps forces will face in rapid deployments. In addition, a comprehensive training and education program is required in governance, medical, and infrastructure development for all of the forces.

Finally, based on the predicted operational demand in 2030, familiarity and proficiency in HADR operations is paramount for the Navy and Marine Corps. To emphasize, the Navy and Marine Corps will operate in austere environments that may limit the capabilities of aircraft such as the Joint Strike Fighter. Training will allow the Navy and Marine Corps to develop procedures that will better support HADR operations but also, allow the force to look beyond its current structure for alternative solutions. Focusing on a sea-basing capability that can sustain a
MEB sized force should be the solution to future contingency operations over current acquisition programs in stealth technology that are desirable in an A2/AD environment.

**Combining Service Training Requirements**

The predicted increase in the urbanization of the population to locations within 100 miles of a coastline and the diffusion of power throughout the world will require the US to maintain an amphibious capability. The US will also need a force that can execute Ship to Objective Maneuvers with little impact on foreign countries and a lift capability from forward operating sea or land bases. In addition, climate change will have an effect on the world coasts, weather patterns and sea-lane passages, such as in the North Atlantic. All of these factors influence the future of the Navy and Marine Corps training.

Therefore, the most important aspect of defining the training requirement is the audience that the training will support. It is imperative that the Navy and Marine Corps combine their focus and vision of the training requirements needed to train their future forces. The training should incorporate distributed operations, combined amphibious and air assault operations, counterinsurgency and forcible entry operations that requires a coordinated effort between the Marine Corps forces and their Navy counterpart.

Recently the Navy and Marine Corps have participated in multiple combat and homeland security operations, disaster relief in Haiti, joint and coalition training exercises, Noncombatant Evacuation Operations in Lebanon, anti-piracy in Somalia, and finally, Tactical Recovery of Persons in Libya. The recent operations illustrate the wide spectrum of environments that the two services will operate. In addition, joint and coalition forces have been included in the recent operations due to political or operational constraints, which signify the importance of their integration into training.
The solution for training to contingency operations and HADR is the integration of all Navy and Marine Corps fleet training events under one command. One example of a combined Navy and Marine Corps command that executed large scale amphibious operations and no longer exists is the Landing Force Training Command, Atlantic in Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, VA. As in the past, the command would develop the overall exercise design and plan for combined large force exercises in order to provide a unity of effort.

The intent of centrally commanding and decentralizing the control of the exercise is to allow different service mission essential tasks to be executed simultaneously across a large area while maximizing the efficient use of the current ranges and critical training assets. For example, a Battalion amphibious assault executed in Camp Pendleton can be simultaneously executed with an air assault from Yuma, AZ to 29 Palms, CA. In addition, special operations forces can be maneuvering at the Mountain Warfare Training Center in Nevada while a long-range air interdiction flight is being flown from a Navy carrier afloat. The key to the integration of the training is the design of the overall exercise and the opportunities it would provide the forces.

In particular, the battalion landing team assaulting Camp Pendleton would focus on forcible entry operations into an urban environment as seen in a possible contingency operation. Comparatively, the battalion air assault from Yuma, AZ to 29 Palms, CA would be in support of the amphibious assault with the execution of a noncombatant evacuation operation based on an increasing insurgency activity. Each of these battalions would be commanded by a regimental or MEB headquarters afloat or ashore, which would increase the complexity of the training while keeping within the current range and asset availability.
The ability to operate across a large training area as found in the southwest US supports possible joint task force operations, as well as divides training evolutions in order to maximize range capabilities. Dividing training evolutions versus solely focusing on MEB or larger amphibious landings allows battalion sized elements to experience a wider variety of missions that would be relevant in contingency operations. More importantly, it will not strain the already critically short training assets, such as amphibious shipping and aviation assets.

Finally, the operational tempo of the Navy and Marine Corps will not diminish anytime soon, nor will the wide range of missions they will be called upon to execute. Yet, without a service level focus, it will become increasingly more difficult to efficiently and effectively man, train and equip the Navy and Marine Corps over the next 20 years. In short, the Navy and Marine Corps training programs need to be realigned to focus on all aspects of amphibious operations, capitalizing on the capabilities and regional knowledge of our multinational partners at a MEU and MEB level.

**Conclusion**

A final assessment made by the National Intelligence Council predicts that, “Pacific and Indian Ocean basins are already the fastest-growing commercial hubs for the exchange of goods, services, and people—a trend that will intensify.” The actual employment of the force in training should be to focus on contingency and HADR operations within these two regions. Additionally, these two missions will not only occur more often than an A2/AD forcible entry operations but are far more multi-dimensional with the incorporation of restrictive rules of engagement, interagency cooperation, political sensitivities and coalition integration. Moreover, the execution of basic conventional expeditionary training exercises to support contingency
operations will provide a tactical foundation for possible employment in an A2/AD forcible entry operation.

In conclusion, the Navy and Marine Corps is responsible for carrying out their role in the Nation's National Security Strategy and its refocus on the Pacific. Proficiency in expeditionary operations is instrumental for the Navy and Marine Corps in not only contingency and HADR operations but also in an A2/AD forcible entry operation. Therefore, the training needs to be balanced, integrated and flexible in order to maximize the service training opportunities while efficiently managing the Navy and Marine Corps critical resources in a fiscally constrained environment.
Notes

1 U.S. Department of Defense, *Title 10 Armed Forces*, DODD 5100.01, Enclosure 6, December 21, 2010, 32.


3 Ibid., iv.

4 Ibid., 15.

5 Ibid., 83-97.

6 Ibid., 30-36.


9 Ibid., 17-27.


11 Ibid., 70-82.

12 Ibid., 70-82.

13 Ibid., 30-36.

14 Ibid., 31.

15 Ibid., 30.
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