1. REPORT DATE
04-08-2014

2. REPORT TYPE
Future War Paper

3. DATES COVERED (From - To)
Aug 2013 - Mar 2014

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
STANDING MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADES: DEFEATING THE DISPERSED THREAT WITH FEWER RESOURCES

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
N/A

5b. GRANT NUMBER
N/A

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
N/A

5d. PROJECT NUMBER
N/A

5e. TASK NUMBER
N/A

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
N/A

6. AUTHOR(S)
Major Jonathan C Howard / USMC

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
USMC School of Advanced Warfighting
Marine Corps University
3070 Moreell Avenue
Quantico, VA 22134-5068

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
N/A

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
N/A

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
N/A

11. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER
N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
N/A

14. ABSTRACT
In the twenty-first century, the United States will face two significant threats to its national security: a worsening fiscal crisis and globally dispersed terrorism. Despite this increase in the national debt, the U. S. government has not significantly slowed its overall spending. On the global stage, terrorism will continue to be a significant threat to U. S. interests. Terrorist organizations have grown in size, number, and sophistication during the twentieth century. Since September 11th, 2001, the U. S. has been engaged in a "Global War on Terror" to thwart the ambitions of these groups. The domestic fiscal crisis and globally dispersed terrorism will continue to dominate U. S. national security challenges for the foreseeable future. Thus, in an era of fiscal austerity, the Marine Corps should reorganize its active component expeditionary forces into standing Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) that are regionally aligned, focused, and deployed to rapidly respond to emerging crises and defeat globally dispersed terrorism.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Marine Expeditionary Brigade
Global Terrorism

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:
a. REPORT Unclassified
b. ABSTRACT Unclassified
c. THIS PAGE Unclassified

17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
UU

18. NUMBER OF PAGES
23

19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Marine Corps University / School of Advanced Warfighting

19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)
(703) 432-5318 (Admin Office)
FUTURE WAR PAPER

STANDING MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADES: DEFEATING THE DISPERSED THREAT WITH FEWER RESOURCES

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

Major Jonathan Howard

AY 2013-14

Mentor:

Approved: 

Date: 08 Apr 2014
DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED WARFIGHTING OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.
Our nation requires a Marine Corps that is ready, forward deployed and able to respond to crisis on a moment’s notice. This will not change for the foreseeable future, no matter the budgetary woes our country faces.

—General James F. Amos

In the twenty-first century, the United States will face two significant threats to its national security: a worsening fiscal crisis and globally dispersed terrorism. Domestically, the United States currently faces a fiscal crisis that is expected to continue for years to come. In October 2013, the U. S. National debt rose to more than 17 trillion dollars. Despite this increase in the debt, the U. S. government has not significantly slowed its overall spending. On the global stage, terrorism will continue to be a significant threat to U. S. interests. Terrorist organizations have grown in size, number, and sophistication during the twentieth century. Since September 11th, 2001, the U. S. has been engaged in a “Global War on Terror” to thwart the ambitions of these groups. The domestic fiscal crisis and globally dispersed terrorism will continue to dominate U. S. national security challenges for the foreseeable future. Thus, in an era of fiscal austerity, the Marine Corps should reorganize its active component expeditionary forces into standing Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) that are regionally aligned, focused, and deployed to rapidly respond to emerging crises and defeat globally dispersed terrorism.

The Department of Defense has already experienced significant reductions in its funding, which is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Consequently, the Marine Corps had to cut programs such as procurement of the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle and reduced the number of Joint Strike Fighters it will purchase. In addition to the reduction in equipment, the Marine Corps was ordered to reduce its end strength from 202,000 to 175,000 troops. Furthermore, the Secretary of Defense recently warned that the Marine Corps may be reduced to
amphibious ships that the Marine Corps relies upon for deployment. As a result, the Navy cannot support the amphibious lift requirements of the Marine Corps and this situation will worsen as amphibious ships are decommissioned at a rate faster than current funding will replace. In essence, this fiscal crisis will significantly constrain the Marine Corps’ ability to protect U. S. interests.

Terrorist organizations will continue to disperse globally which will challenge the Joint Force and the Marine Corps’ ability to protect U. S. interests. The U. S. strategic guidance in 2012 confirmed the distributed nature of the future terrorist threat around the globe. With this in mind, General Amos, the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, noted: “I don’t see any indication in the next two decades that things will settle in and be peaceful. . . . We may think that we’re done with them . . . but they’re not necessarily done with us.” Regional threats along the “arc of instability” will continue to be an active area for terrorist organizations to operate. Some countries will continue to support terrorism to achieve their political objectives while others will encourage terrorism out of their own sense of insecurity. Finally, undeveloped and ungoverned areas of the globe will lack the resources necessary to combat terrorism. Consequently, terrorist organizations will focus their activities in regions that are favorable to their operations in order to use local circumstances to their advantage as well as recruit from the local populace to support their cause. While building local support, these terrorist networks will continue to use modern communications technology to connect with other terrorist groups around the globe. Thus, these globally dispersed but regionally focused terrorist organizations will present a significant challenge to U. S. security interests abroad.
The worsening fiscal crisis and the continued expansion of globally dispersed terrorism require the Marine Corps to rethink its organizational structure and operating paradigm. According to Lieutenant Colonel McHaty of the Ellis Group, "Rising fiscal restraint and the ever changing form of war requires the Marine Corps to embrace the need for operating seamlessly with units external to the service and providing multiple capabilities in an uncertain environment." The Marine Corps can no longer maintain effective standing Marine Expeditionary Forces with a shrinking force that has a significantly reduced amphibious lift capability. Recent decisions at Headquarters Marine Corps acknowledge this, in part. For example, the Marine Corps has decided to eliminate II MEF Headquarters. However, most of the other cuts have been operating forces as an exchange for keeping division, wing, group, and numerous other headquarters elements active. But, in order to combat the globally dispersed terrorist threat in a fiscally austere environment, the Marine Corps must be able to deploy in smaller fighting formations that are regionally focused. Therefore, the Marine Corps must streamline its organization, reduce the number of headquarters, and increase the amount of combat arms units in order to cope with fiscal realities and improve its ability to rapidly respond to emerging crises arising from globally dispersed terrorism.

To understand how this concept will be implemented, it is necessary to describe how the MEBs will be organized and what mission types they will execute. The MEBs will consist of a command element (CE), a ground combat element (GCE), an aviation combat element (ACE), and a logistics combat element (LCE) (Figure 1).
The command element will be led by a Major General (MajGen) and will comprise a staff that is capable of coordinating efforts across all six warfighting functions. The MEB Commander will also carry the title of Division or Wing Commander in the event that the MEF Commander needs to aggregate his forces into a standard MEF configuration to support major combat operations (MCO). The Chief of Staff (COS) and Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (G-3) can be from any military occupational specialty (MOS). The MEB CE will have a Headquarters (HQ), Battalion (Bn) consisting of the following units: HQ Company (Co), Military Police Co, Force Reconnaissance Platoon (Plt), and an Air and Naval Gunfire Platoon. The CE will also have a Radio, Intelligence (Intel) and Communications (Comm) Bn consisting of the following units: HQ Co, Signals Intel Co, Intel Co, and Comm Co. Each MEB CE will have a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) CE embedded. This will not be a stand-alone CE, but the MEB Commander will be able to create a MEU staff (or like capability) for deployment from a combination of his own CE and his subordinate commands (Figure 2).
The GCE will be led by a Colonel from any ground combat arms MOS. The executive officer (XO) and operations officer (OpsO) can also be from any ground combat arms MOS. The GCE will be a task organized unit built around the Infantry Regiment consisting of the following elements: Headquarters and Service (H&S) Co, four Infantry Battalions, a Combat Assault Battalion (Tank Co, two Assault Amphibian Vehicle (AAV) Co, Combat Engineer Co), a Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Co, an Artillery Battalion (four cannon batteries and a High Mobility Artillery Rocket Battery), and a Reconnaissance Co (Figure 3).

The LCE will be led by a Colonel from any logistics MOS. The XO and OpsO can also be from any logistics MOS. The LCE will be a task-organized unit, which forms a Brigade Logistics Group (BLG). The BLG will be organized into three Bns: Direct Support (DS) GCE, DS ACE, and a General Support (GS) Bn. The DS GCE Bn will consist of an H&S Co, a Material Support Co, and a Health Services Co (both medical and dental). The DS ACE Bn will consist of the same companies as the DS GCE although each Co will be organized and equipped to meet the specific needs of the organization they support. The GS Bn will include the
following: H&S Co, Maintenance Co, Material Support Co, Transportation Co, two Engineer companies and a Health Services Co (Figure 4).

The ACE will be a composite Marine Aviation Group (MAG) and will be commanded by a Colonel from any aviation MOS. The XO and OpsO can also be from any aviation MOS. The MAG will consist of the following units: an Electronic Warfare Squadron, two Fighter Attack Squadrons, a Light Attack Helicopter Squadron, a Refueler Transport Squadron, a Heavy Helicopter Squadron, three Tiltrotor Squadrons, two Aviation Logistics Squadrons, a Group Support Squadron, an Aviation Control Squadron, and a HQ Detachment. The Aviation Control Squadron will have an organic Unmanned Aerial System Detachment and the HQ Detachment will have an organic Low Altitude Aerial Defense Battery (Figure 5).
In order to counter the globally dispersed terrorist threat, the Corps needs to reduce the number of HQ in its active component MEFs so that it can create more fighting formations. In this new construct, General Officer level HQ are reduced from 14 to 9. For Colonel level HQ, this restructuring reduces the number of HQ from 44 to 21. A comparison in the reduction of HQ within the LCE is not practical here due to the significant restructuring of the LCE. However, the number of Lieutenant Colonel level HQ in the GCE and ACE are overall increased by six. Notably, there is an increase in five Infantry Bns, four Fighter Attack Squadrons, six Tiltrotor Squadrons, three Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadrons, and four Aerial Refueler Transport Squadrons (Figure 6). With a globally dispersed terrorist threat, more Infantry Bns are needed to maintain a forward presence in order to deter and counter terrorist activities. Small, forward deployed infantry units will need the support of additional attack and assault support aircraft to support the mission. Further, the fighter attack and assault support aircraft will need additional electronic warfare and refueling support in order to maintain security and enhance on station capability. This is just the sort of task organization that is needed to operate in a future war environment of globally dispersed terrorism.
The mission of these newly constructed MEBs will fall into three basic categories: deterrence, crisis response, and joint forcible entry. As a deterring force, each MEB will routinely forward deploy elements of its force to the Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) for which it is assigned. The purpose of these deployments is to deter and deny safe havens for terrorist organizations by conducting security cooperation with allied forces, conducting bilateral training with allied forces, and partnering with governments, previously identified as areas of
instability where terrorism often takes root. In areas where the local governments are not friendly to U.S. actions, this unit will provide a show of force to deter belligerent activities. The size, composition, and rotation of this force will be based on the needs of the GCC for which it is assigned. Some of these forces may deploy along the lines of what is commonly thought of as a MEU, while others may deploy in smaller formations based on the needs of the situation. What is most significant is that each MEB will form a habitual relationship with the GCC and thus will develop expertise and familiarity with the operating environment.

Should the situation deteriorate, these regionally focused MEBs could deploy in whole or part in order to respond to a crisis. The MEB CE could serve as a Joint Task Force HQ or the “nucleus of a Joint Task Force HQ” until augmented by the GCC. The composition of the MEB enables it to respond to a wide range of missions including: humanitarian and disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations, raids, counter terrorism, maritime interdiction operations, stability operations, tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel, airfield and port seizure, and theater security cooperation just to name a few. While there should be a core mission set common to all MEBs, it only follows that additional missions specific to the unique situation of the GCC operating environment would direct the training and specific employment of each MEB. Not only will the routine and continual deployments of the same MEB elements to the same GCC enhance mission success, but specific cultural, language, and historically informed training would greatly enhance the MEBs’ capability to respond to a crisis when called upon.

As a crisis deteriorates further, these geographically aligned MEBs would be uniquely positioned to conduct joint forcible entry in its assigned area. As a result of its routine deployments, the individual MEB would have an enhanced situational awareness to execute joint
forcible entry operations. This situation would be significantly enhanced by the fact that the MEB would already have a portion of its force forward deployed to the theater of operations. This forward element would serve as the advanced force to set the conditions for the MEB for its successful reception, staging, onward movement, and integration into joint forcible entry operations. Not only would the MEB have a unique perspective on the operating environment, the relationships it built over time would be an added benefit. These relationships include: GCC and other service component working relationships, local governments, allied forces, and any interagency or non-governmental agencies that routinely operate in the area. The MEB's knowledge of the operating environment and habitual relationships are sure to increase mission success, and it would be uniquely suited to prepare follow-on forces for successful introduction into the theater of operations. The MEBs situational awareness could easily be passed on to other joint forces that aren't as familiar with the operating environment. Most importantly, the MEB, as the leading element in the region would act as the advanced force for additional MEBs should the situation require such an escalation.

In order to ensure the success of the MEB in the region, habitual relationships with specific GCCs are essential. In order to strengthen these habitual relationships, once the seven MEBs are formed, they should be formally assigned to specific GCCs for employment (Figure 7).

On the east coast of the U.S., two MEBs would form at Camp Lejeune and would be assigned to Marine Forces Europe and Africa Command. They would further establish operational relationships with U.S. SECOND Fleet (for deployment) and operational relationships with SIXTH and FIFTH Fleets whose responsibilities lie with U.S. European and
U.S. Africa Commands respectively. One of the MEBs would focus on security cooperation, bilateral training, and providing a crisis response force in the Northern Mediterranean. The Northern Mediterranean is a key area of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and is an area where terrorists have been active in recent decades.

This MEB would continue to strengthen relationships and cooperation with allies while denying terrorist organizations a safe haven in non-allied countries through a show of force, or by creating new allies in the region. Additionally, both MEB commanders would provide on call Joint Task Force HQ capability for U.S. European and U.S. Africa Commands respectively. In
coordination with the Navy, ensuring freedom of navigation, particularly in the numerous maritime choke points in this area, would be an important mission for this MEB. Specifically, maintaining and strengthening ties with Spain, where terrorist organizations have been active for more than three decades, deters continued terrorist activities and maintains navigation through the Strait of Gibraltar. Turkey, another key ally in the region, has had an increase in terrorist activity in the last decade (particularly Hezbollah). Denying terrorists freedom in Turkey maintains the gateway to the Black Sea and reduces Russia's influence. Another key ally in deterring Russian influence is the Republic of Georgia. The U. S. and the Republic of Georgia have enjoyed a close relationship, and maintaining this relationship would be an ideal mission for the MEB focused on this area. Marines have been deploying to the Republic of Georgia for more than ten years; however, having a single MEB, which works with this country on an enduring basis, would build a lasting partnership and continue to foster trust through familiarity.

Due to the maritime nature of the Mediterranean and the abundance of allies in this region, the conditions for increasing cooperation among the North Atlantic Treaty Organization member nations are promising. Further, a MEB, singularly focused on enhancing these relationships, would greatly improve the allied front toward combatting global terrorism and reducing the influence of regional competitors.

The second MEB would focus on the critical areas of Africa. Northern Africa has been a hotbed for terrorist activity and this trend is worsening. Likely missions in this area of responsibility include crisis response, security cooperation, bilateral training, counter-piracy and counterterrorism (particularly in northern Africa). Pirates operating in the Arabian Sea and terrorist attacks, are but a few examples of the turmoil that the African Continent faces.
Operations in this area could include counter-piracy around the Horn of Africa, counterterrorism across the whole of North Africa, as well as security cooperation and bi-lateral training. Given the lack of stability in the Southern Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea, it is critical to have MEB forces forward deployed and focused on this region.

On the west coast of the U.S., I MEF, with two subordinate MEBs would be assigned to Marine Forces Central Command for operations in the Central Command area of responsibility. These MEBs would establish operational relationships with U.S. THIRD Fleet (for deployment) and U.S. Fifth Fleet for operations in the Central Command area. These two MEBs would alternate in providing a Joint Task Force HQ to the Commander, U.S. Central Command. Likely missions in this area include: security cooperation, bi-lateral training, counter-piracy, counterterrorism, and crisis response. In coordination with U.S. FIFTH Fleet, conducting freedom of navigation operations, particularly in the Suez Canal, would be a vitally important mission. The Central Command Area has been and will continue to be a focal point for terrorist activity. Although terrorist organizations are dispersing globally in order to avoid being targeted, many of these organizations continue to be coordinated and controlled by terrorist groups headquartered in the Central Command Area. The U.S. has been at war with terrorists in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan for more than a decade and this situation is not likely to change in a significant way for the foreseeable future. While the U.S. supplies Egypt with military equipment and aid, political turmoil and attacks fueled by the Muslim Brotherhood continues to be a significant issue in this country. Key partners in the region such as United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar need the assurance that the U.S. will enhance stability to the region.
Perhaps the most troubling of relationships in the region is with Pakistan. The U.S. continues to provide aid to this country while it harbors significant terrorists organizations which threaten the withdrawal of U.S. equipment out of Afghanistan. In addition to the terrorist threat in Pakistan, China (a U.S. competitor) continues to strengthen relationships with Pakistan through trade agreements and foreign aid. Additionally, Yemen has a significant terrorist population (particularly Al Qaeda). Terrorists in Yemen attacked the U.S.S. Cole and the U.S. Embassy. The Yemeni Government has taken some steps to combat the terrorists and the U.S. has used drone attacks extensively in Yemen to kill terrorist leaders. Maintaining MEBs which are focused on this region will significantly aid in deterring and countering terrorism and will also help reduce the influence of China in the region.

In the Pacific Theater of Operations, III MEF, with two subordinate MEBs would be assigned to Marine Forces Pacific. These MEBs (located on Hawaii and Okinawa) would establish operational relationships with U.S. THIRD Fleet (for deployment of the Hawaii MEB) and U.S. SEVENTH Fleet (for deployment of the Okinawa MEB) in order to provide the Pacific Command with Joint Task Force HQ and forward deployed forces to conduct security cooperation, bilateral training, counter terrorism, and crisis response forces. The Pacific Area is not only the location of three significant competitor nations (China, North Korea, and Russia), but also it is an area saturated with terrorist activity. Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines are some of the most concentrated areas in the Pacific where terrorism exists. These countries are also adjacent to key sea lines of communication and trade routes. Using forward deployed MEBs to counter and deter this terrorist threat will be key to keeping these chokepoints open. Due to the vastness of the Pacific, the U.S. will need to maintain its alliances with key countries
in the Pacific such as: Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, Taiwan, Singapore, and New Zealand in order to provide a united front against the terrorist threat. The U.S. will need to continue to strengthen relationships with Cambodia and Vietnam not only to counter the terrorist threat but also to deter the influence of China and Russia. An additional ally that the U.S. will need to maintain is India. India is a major player in the Pacific Region and although there have been recent disagreements between the U.S. and India regarding activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the U.S. cannot afford to allow this partnership to deteriorate. The maritime nature of the Pacific makes this area well suited for MEBs to conduct bilateral training, freedom of navigation operations, and counter terrorism. A challenge in this area is the lack of amphibious shipping in Hawaii to leverage the capability of a Hawaii based MEB. With the restructuring of the Marine Corps' active component MEFs, the Corps needs to urge the realignment of the amphibious Navy to better position Naval forces as the U.S. continues to shift toward the Pacific Theater.

In Twentynine [sic] Palms, California, a single MEB would be created and organized under Marine Forces Command. This MEB would be designated as the global crisis response force and would be prepared to respond should the other MEBs be unable to respond due to operational commitments elsewhere or need immediate reinforcement due to an escalation of the situation. This MEB could easily create multiple task-organized forces for smaller scale crises or move to an air and/or sea port(s) of embarkation for rapid deployment as a MEB. Given that it would not be routinely deployed, and that it is located on the Marine Corps' best training base, this MEB would benefit from a higher level of readiness than other MEBs. These conditions make it a supreme choice for the global crisis response force mission.
The Marine Corps must reorganize in order to meet this globally dispersed terrorist threat. However, if MCO occurs, the Corps must be ready to respond. Some would argue that this reorganization would reduce the Marine Corps’ ability to respond to MCO; however, this reorganization actually enhances the Corps’ ability to conduct MCO. While the MEBs will be primarily focused on deterrence and crisis response, participating in MCO is a mission for which the MEBs are well suited. A MEB possesses enough combat power (as a part of a larger joint force) to gain entry and maintain a foothold for follow-on forces while being small, fast, forward deployed, and light enough to be lifted by the current inventory of Naval shipping (at least one MEB for the present time). It can sustain itself for 30 days and with the arrival of the Maritime Prepositioning Force, it can sustain itself even longer. Because a portion of its forces would always be forward deployed, it would already have forces in the theater of operations to provide situational awareness, shape the battle space, and prepare for the reception, staging, onward movement and integration of the rest of the MEB. The MEBs regional focus and alignment would give it key knowledge of the operational environment before MCO occurs and its habitual relationships with the Combatant Command, numbered fleet, joint forces, and allied partners in the region would enhance its operational capability. Once forcible entry has been achieved, the MEB would provide key insights to follow-on forces on the operating environment and set the conditions for joint success. Should a single MEB be the only Marine force in theater, the MEB could easily integrate into the joint architecture to provide a significant contribution to combat operations. Should an additional MEB and a MEF CE deploy to the theater the MEF Commander could exercise several options for employment of his forces. First, the MEF Commander could continue to employ the MEBs independently like an Army Corps’ Commander would. Secondly, the MEB Commander could reorganize the MEBs into a Division
and a Wing construct given that each MEB Commander would retain the title as a Division or Wing Commander. In this scenario, the MEF Commander could allow the Division and Wing to retain its own logistics support while the MEF Commander leverages joint assets to fill in the gap. Further, he could call for an additional MEB CE to assume the role of the Marine Logistics Group (MLG) HQ. A final option would be to have the Deputy MEF Commander form a staff from the MEF to stand up an MLG HQ to support the operation. In the latter two scenarios, the MLG Commander would assume control of some or all logistics units within in the MEF in order to prioritize support as required. The MEF Commander would have to weigh all of these options and make decisions as the situation dictates.

Resistance to reorganizing the Marine Corps into MEBs has previously been influenced by a fear that doing so would lead to deep personnel cuts. In the post Desert Storm era, the Marine Corps faced personnel cuts in the same manner that it faces now. At the time, the Marine Corps had several standing MEB CE but decided to deactivate them in order to preserve the MEF structure. According to Major Michael West in “Evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade,” “If the Corps were seen to be primarily a service based on brigades, vertical cuts or elimination of brigades might appear more attractive to senior decision-makers.” In other words, fear of these “vertical cuts” was a factor in deactivating the MEB CE. The proposal put forward in this paper takes this concern into account. According to the National Security Act of 1952, the Marine Corps “shall be so organized as to include not less than three combat divisions and three airwings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein.” Six of the newly formed MEBs would also be designated as Division or Wing HQ and might serve in this capacity during MCO. Thus, these units would be protected from
elimination by law. The seventh MEB is designated as the global crisis response force and the only alternate MLG HQ. While the statutory protection for this force is not as clear as that of a Division or Wing, it would be easy to defend given its critical mission as a global crisis response force and its potential mission as an MLG HQ during MCO.

To counter the threat of globally dispersed terrorism in a fiscally constrained environment, the Marine Corps must reorganize its forces to make the most effective and economical use of force. Although fiscal austerity and globally dispersed terrorism are current issues, both of these factors are expected to worsen, and dominate the U.S. national security situation for decades to come. The Marine Corps cannot afford to maintain bloated HQ elements that are designed for MCO when the situation requires smaller, lighter, faster, focused, forward deployed, and more numerous fighting formations to meet the globally dispersed terrorist threat. Should the Marine Corps choose to make bold adjustments, it may very well prevent a major conflict by denying the enemy the safe haven he desperately seeks, while at the same time strengthening allied partnerships and capabilities. If the Marine Corps chooses otherwise, America may find herself in another major war in the years ahead for which she is ill prepared, and cannot afford.


3 James F. Amos, “Marine Corps Commandant Warns U.S. May Be Unable To Respond To Major Threats” Patdollard.com, May 29, 2013, http://patdollard.com/2013/05/marine-corps-
commandant-warns-u-s-may-be-unable-to-respond-to-major-threats/ [accessed December 8, 2013].


7 Ibid., 3.


9 Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Marine Corps Intelligence Activity. Mid-Range Threats Briefing. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, last modified June 12, 2008.
https://intellipedia.intelink.gov/wiki/MCIA_Future_Analysis


