

➤ Joint Forcible Entry Study

DISCUSSION

In recent operations such as Allied Force (Kosovo) and Enduring Freedom, our adversaries have demonstrated the ability to endure protracted, long-range strikes from both the sea and air. Moreover, these foes may have interpreted the U.S. reliance on this kind of force alone as a sign of our aversion to risk. In turn, this may have emboldened and strengthened them. In these operations, it has been after the actual or threatened introduction of ground forces that favorable outcomes have been achieved.

These results highlight the fact that, for the foreseeable future, effective power projection will continue to require multi-dimensional, multi-axis (i.e., multi-component) U.S. attacks action against hostile governments, their armed forces, and their territory. In addition, America's armed forces must be capable of gaining access to these critical overseas areas should anti-access strategies be employed against us.

The Marine Corps maintains distinctive expeditionary capabilities support a wide range of U.S. power projection options. These options run the gamut of contingencies, from disaster relief to high-intensity combat. Marine forces are deployed globally and are ready for immediate employment. Other Marine units can rapidly reinforce other joint forces from their home bases.

The Navy and Marine Corps provide joint force commanders with a "kick-in-the-door" capability comprised of both air and amphibious assault from the sea. The combination of these sea-launched strikes, combined with the complementary capabilities of the Army and Air Force, create a portal through which follow-on joint forces may flow, generating

a complex operational dilemma that will overwhelm our rivals.

To ensure our nation retains a sufficiently robust forcible-entry capability in the future, a December 2002 Program Decision Memorandum from the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in collaboration with appropriate Undersecretaries of Defense and the services

... to conduct a thorough review of joint forcible entry operations, including examinations of airborne and air assaults, amphibious assaults, the role of maritime prepositioning and other sea-basing concepts. For naval forces, the review shall include Marine Corps organization and equipment, amphibious ships, maritime prepositioning and other Navy and Marine Corps sea-basing concepts, and development of air-capable ships. For the Army, the review shall include airborne and air assault forces organization and equipment, as well as emerging stryker brigade combat team and objective force concepts for forcible entry. In addition, the study should include a review of alternative concepts for the logistic support of these forces.

A consolidated joint assessment of forcible entry capabilities is due to the Secretary of Defense by 15 August 2003.

MARINE CORPS POSITION

The Marine Corps strongly supports this timely examination of our nation's enduring requirement for forcible entry and the concepts, capabilities, and systems necessary to defeat current and future anti-access strategies.