

➤ Power Projection Capabilities

DISCUSSION

While the global war on terrorism has demonstrated the current capabilities of the Navy-Marine Corps team, our continuous transformation and modernization efforts hold even greater potential for increasing naval power projection capabilities in the future. The following initiatives are some of the keys to the achievement of Marine Corps operational objectives:



MV-22 Osprey. While fulfilling the Marine Corps' critical medium lift requirement, the MV-22's increased capabilities will also generate radically new tactical and operational opportunities. With the Osprey, Marine forces operating from the sea base will be able to take the best of long-range maneuver and strategic surprise, and marry it with the best of the sustainable forcible-entry capability. Ospreys will replace our aging medium-lift fleets of CH-46E Sea Knight and CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters.

Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC). The LCAC is a high-speed, fully amphibious

craft capable of carrying a 60-ton payload (75 tons in overload) at speeds in excess of 40 knots at a nominal range of 200 nautical miles. The LCAC's ability to ride on a cushion of air allows these craft to operate directly from the well decks of amphibious warships and to access to more than 70% of the world's beaches, compared with 17% for conventional landing craft.

A service life extension program (SLEP) began in late 2000 for the 74 active LCACs that will extend their hull life an additional 20 years. SLEP Phase I includes the replacement of obsolete radios and radar, the installation of the Enhanced Position Location Reporting System (EPLRS), and corrosion abatement. SLEP Phase II provides engine and hull improvements that will increase the performance envelope. Lastly, Phase II provides a "C4N"—Command-Control-Communications-Computers and Navigation—upgrade that replaces these crafts' deteriorating and obsolete electronic suites.

Landing Craft Utility Replacement (LCU(R)). The LCU(R) will provide an improved heavy-lift landing craft to complement the high-speed, over-the-horizon, ship-to-objective amphibious lift required for EMW and sea-based logistics support. The characteristics that the Marine Corps





desires for the LCU (R) include an increased payload capacity (up to three M1A1 tanks), the ability to conduct independent operations up to 10 days, a range of 1,000 nautical miles, increased speed, and a greater cargo-carrying capacity. The craft will have a drive-through capability that will enable vehicles to drive straight onto the craft, thereby reducing turnaround time.

High-Speed Vessel (HSV). High-speed vessels would enhance the Marine Corps' capability to perform a wide range of missions, from providing support to a Theater Security Cooperation Plan to sustaining long-term operations ashore. Most immediately, HSVs would enhance the ability of MAGTFs to conduct sea-based operations and use the sea as maneuver space.

HSVs do not have the loitering and forcible entry capabilities of amphibious ships or the prepositioning capacity of our MPF Squadrons. However, their shallow draft, high speed, maneuverability, and open architecture would make them a valuable link in a seamless logistics system that extends from source of supply in the continental United States to the theater of operations,

and then to the sea base and its constituent naval expeditionary forces. High-speed platform vessels enable a faster, more responsive deployment of a range of force modules.

To fulfill their envisioned role, HSVs should be high-speed (40+ knots) and shallow draft (under 15 ft) and have capability to conduct independent operations in austere ports, conduct flight operations, and launch and recover Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicles and small boats. The vessels would be used to support all phases of USMC operations, including deployment, employment, sustainment, and redeployment.

MARINE CORPS POSITION

Technological advances in tactical lift are moving Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare from the realm of concept stage to reality. The Corps' acquisition focus is to leverage technologies that improve the mobility, flexibility, and lethality of MAGTFs in a cost-effective manner. The Marine Corps supports Navy efforts to expeditiously SLEP LCAC, build LCU (R) as well as OSD efforts to procure HSVs.