

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES

OF THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS

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“...American history, recent as well as remote, has fully demonstrated the vital need for the existence of a strong force-in-readiness. Such a force, versatile, fast moving, and hard-hitting... can prevent the growth of potentially large conflagrations by prompt and vigorous action during their incipient stages. The nation’s shock troops must be the most ready when the nation is least ready... to provide a balanced force-in-readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large scale war....”

-82nd Congress (1952)

Introduction

Chairman Akin, Representative McIntyre, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, we are honored to appear here today. We want to thank you for your continued support to our Sailors, Marines, and their families and appreciate the opportunity to address amphibious operations. The Department is committed to meeting the vital and enduring requirement for the amphibious capabilities that support our National Security Strategy and enable us to engage forward, to prevent conflict, to protect citizens and interests, and to prevail in conflict. Amphibious operations enabling capabilities include: amphibious ships, amphibious combat vehicles, connectors such as the landing craft, air cushion (LCAC) and landing craft, utility (LCU), naval surface fire support assets, vertical lift platforms, and fixed wing short take off and vertical landing (STOVL) aircraft. Finally, we will describe the approach to replace the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV). Our intent is to promote a common understanding of the utility of amphibious capabilities and the necessity for the Navy-Marine Corps team’s role as the Nation’s expeditionary force in readiness.

Overview

We are a maritime nation with global interests and responsibilities. With the majority of the world’s population living within 200 miles of the sea, assured access to these littoral areas is critical in promoting and protecting our wide range of national interests. Whether it is responding to crisis or assuring littoral access, the Navy-Marine Corps team is the only force that can rapidly provide a versatile, scalable, and self-sustaining capability operating from the sea to conduct a wide range of military operations ashore.

Forward-deployed amphibious forces provide the capability to: conduct security cooperation and engagement activities to build partnership capacity; respond to natural and man-made crises; and overcome access challenges to gain entry. In times of international crises the ability to position amphibious forces offshore allows policy makers to signal U.S. concerns or intentions without prematurely committing forces ashore, providing an invaluable means of deterring potential foes. Most recently the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, embarked aboard the USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3) and the USS PONCE (LPD 15) were repositioned in the Mediterranean to provide the President flexibility on a full range of options responding the dynamic situation in Libya.

In cases where policy makers decide intervention is necessary, amphibious forces provide the most robust sustainable means of entering hostile territory. In addition to its deterrence and combat value, the capability to overcome access challenges and project self-sustaining forces from the sea, at a time and place of our choosing, also provides the means to assist our friends when disasters strike. All of these applications have significant "strategic value."

Failure to maintain adequate amphibious capability and capacity presents a grave risk to our national security. Without it the United States: loses credibility among both friends and foes; forfeits opportunities to establish and maintain influence; relinquishes the ability to operate in austere environments or overcome damaged infrastructure; divests itself of a critical means of responding to crises and protecting our citizens and interests; and ultimately surrenders its only sustainable entry capability, becoming reliant on the willingness of others to grant overseas access. It is imperative that the Navy-Marine Corps team maintains its amphibious capabilities, forward-deployed and globally postured, so that it remains focused on being the "most ready" when the nation is "least ready."

The Operating Environment

The adversaries we face are diverse and not easy to characterize into a monolithic threat. They learn and adapt quickly to counter our actions and target our vulnerabilities simultaneously across multiple domains. Surprise is a reality that cannot be eliminated; it must be mitigated by properly training, equipping, and employing our forces. In a dramatic shift, we can no longer assume dominance in the maritime, air, cyber, land, or space domains. We will likely have to fight to gain and maintain access in the future.

The enduring characteristic of conflict is that it is, at its core, a human endeavor. Therefore relationships are important and access must be guaranteed at all phases of conflict. We face a number of challenges to access that must be overcome. The American Association for the Advancement of Science concluded in 1995 that within 30 years "75 percent of humanity... will reside in coastal areas" (defined as 150 km inland). That prediction appears to be coming to fruition as densely populated urban centers become increasingly common in the littorals—precisely where access is required. **Environmental challenges** caused by major disasters not only inflict intense human suffering and loss of life, the resultant damage to roads, buildings, fresh water resources, communications systems, and electrical power distribution impede first responder actions and can quickly overwhelm local governments. Therefore, the execution of disaster relief operations and restoration of basic governmental services present a high degree of danger and uncertainty. The **military challenges** we face span the full spectrum from improvised explosive devices through high-tech weaponry, to include precision munitions that target our vulnerabilities both on land and at sea. Additionally, growing sensitivities to U.S. and coalition presence on, near, or in the air over sovereign boundaries present increasing **political challenges**.

The Nation has a strategic need for an expeditionary force-in-readiness that can overcome impediments to access and immediately respond to a crisis anywhere in the world. Naval forces, operating from international waters, provide the ability to proactively influence events ashore without the unintended consequences that often accompany more permanent basing arrangements. Further, this provides the joint force commanders, geographic combatant commanders and the National Command Authority a credible and immediate response that allows time and space to pursue an emerging diplomatic option or a decisive joint force solution.

Amphibious Flexibility

In the early 20th century, military historian Sir B.H. Liddell Hart accurately described amphibious flexibility as the greatest strategic asset that a sea based power possesses. However, in the early 21st century the inherent flexibility and utility of amphibious forces are not widely understood, as evidenced by the frequent and mistaken direct correlation between the term amphibious operations and mental images of World War II Marines assaulting Tarawa or Iwo Jima. In fact, in the last 20 years the Navy-Marine Corps team has conducted well over 100 amphibious operations of various types. The majority of these involved humanitarian assistance/disaster response (HA/DR) or noncombatant evacuations and defense of U.S. diplomatic posts during periods of host nation unrest occurring in permissive or uncertain environments. A smaller number involved operations in openly hostile environments to project or withdraw U.S. or partner-nation forces. Not included in the last 20 year tally—because they were only recently codified as a type of amphibious operation within joint doctrine—are the numerous military engagement and security cooperation activities routinely conducted by amphibious forces. Given the National Security Strategy’s emphasis on engagement, these operations are becoming increasingly prominent.

Types of Amphibious Operations

Amphibious operations are categorized by five distinct types: assaults, raids, demonstrations, withdrawals, and amphibious support to other operations. An ***Amphibious Assault*** occurs when a force is projected onto a hostile or potentially hostile shore to accomplish a single mission, to gain entry and secure a lodgment for the introduction of additional forces, or to support an ongoing campaign. A contemporary amphibious assault took place on November 25, 2001, when two Amphibious Ready Groups with embarked Marine Expeditionary Units—ARG/MEUs in naval parlance—combined on short notice to form Task Force 58 which projected Marines from amphibious ships 441 miles inland into southern Afghanistan to open a lodgment near Kandahar.

Amphibious Raid is a swift incursion into, or temporary occupation of, hostile territory - followed by a planned withdrawal. For example, on September 9, 2010, the USS PELELIU ARG/15th MEU recovered the MV Magellan Star and rescued its crew from armed pirates.

Amphibious Demonstration is a military deception operation conducted to deceive the enemy into a course of action unfavorable to him. For example, prior to the ground war in Operation DESERT STORM, the two Marine Expeditionary Brigades afloat presented the Iraqis with such a credible offshore threat that the Iraqis diverted an estimated 6 infantry and 2 mechanized divisions away from the US and coalition ground advances and toward the Kuwaiti coastline to defend against a potential amphibious assault.

Amphibious Withdrawal is the extraction of land forces by sea in naval ships or craft from a hostile or potentially hostile shore. An example of this can be seen in the 73 hour operation that took place in early May 1995, when a U.S. Marine-led combined task force operating from amphibious ships evacuated more than 6,200 United Nations troops from a decaying security situation in Somalia.

Amphibious Support to Other Operations describe a type of amphibious operation which contributes to conflict prevention or crisis mitigation. Amphibious forces routinely conduct amphibious support to other operations such as: security cooperation, foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA), civil support, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), peace operations, recovery operations, or disaster relief. Recent examples of these operations include: The 2005 HA/DR missions to ease human suffering caused by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana; the 2006 NEO of 14,000 American citizens from Lebanon; the 2010 humanitarian relief provided to the Haitian people following the January 2010 earthquake, and responding to the needs of the Pakistani people ravaged by the August 2010 floods. Note that these examples all involved rapid response to natural or man-made crises. In 2009 joint doctrine added security cooperation and FHA activities to the “other” category, recognizing the strategic importance of these efforts in the current era.

The remarkable flexibility of our amphibious forces is demonstrated by the myriad additional operations conducted simultaneously with the rescue of the MV Magellan Star, to include conducting HA/DR operations in Pakistan and strike operations in Afghanistan. During the same deployment, the MEU also conducted a wide variety of security cooperation activities with forces from Australia, Indonesia, the Maldives, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Turkey, and Pakistan in addition to supporting to the US Secret Service during the Presidential visit to India. As stated by the Secretary of the Navy, the Navy’s amphibious ships are the fleet’s most “flexible” asset.

Importance of Amphibious Operations

Regardless of the type of amphibious operation conducted, they generally involve overcoming diplomatic, geographic, and/or military challenges to access. Regular employment of amphibious forces in uncertain and austere environments where access is challenged is chronicled by over 50 amphibious operations conducted since Sept 11, 2001.

Rapid action is the critical enabler in these operations requiring immediate response regardless of access afforded. Organic capabilities such as well decks and flight decks, billeting, communications, medical, dental, messing, and command and control all combine to increase the utility of amphibious forces. More importantly, an amphibious force can loiter off shore indefinitely providing valuable time for diplomatic efforts to unfold; complementing diplomacy with demonstrated resolve. Amphibious forces can be task organized to the mission and threat, and scaled to bring only those capabilities ashore necessary for mission accomplishment. In a security environment characterized by uncertainty, operating from the sea provides a degree of flexibility, force protection, and freedom of action not realized by traditional ground force lay-down.

Geographic Combatant Commander Demand

Since 2007, the geographic combatant commanders' cumulative requests for naval forces have grown 29 percent for carrier strike groups, 76 percent for surface combatants, 86 percent for ARG/MEUs, and 53 percent for individually deployed amphibious ships. While our Combatant Commanders are unconstrained in their requests, our job is to determine how to best

meet their demand given the resources available. For the foreseeable future, we will continue to maintain a forward based ARG/MEU in the Western Pacific and maintain continuous ARG/MEU presence in the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean. As recent events in North Africa and the Middle East demonstrate, we may need to consider temporarily increasing ARG/MEU presence in the Mediterranean and along the coast of Africa.

Meeting the Demand

The Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps have determined that the force structure requirement to support a two Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) lift is 38 total amphibious assault ships. Understanding this requirement, and in light of the fiscal constraints with which the Navy is faced, the Department of the Navy will sustain a minimum of 33 total amphibious ships in the assault echelon. This 33 ship force accepts risk in the arrival of combat support and combat service support elements of the MEB, but has been adjudged to be adequate in meeting the needs of the naval service within today's fiscal limitations.

In order to meet this inventory, the following priorities are essential:

LSD/LSD(X)

A fully funded LSD mid-life program, to include repairs, will ensure these ships meet their expected service life. Material readiness in regards to LSD's readiness for tasking will be enhanced by a fully funded program. LSD(X) will replace 12 of the aging LSD 41/49 WHIDBEY ISLAND/HARPERS FERRY Class vessels and will perform an array of amphibious missions. Eleven LSD(X) platforms will provide one third of the total amphibious ships necessary to meet USMC mission requirements. LSD(X) Initial Capabilities Document (ICD) is currently under review; the Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) will be conducted in FY 2012 with a planned FY 2017 procurement. Affordability remains the key factor in acquiring the needed future capacity and operational capabilities of this highly flexible multifaceted ship.

LPD 17

The SAN ANTONIO Class LPD (LPD 17) has a 40-year expected service life and serves as the replacement for four classes of older ships: the LKA, LST, LSD 36, and the LPD 4. Lessons learned from the effort to resolve material reliability concerns identified in the early ships of the class are being applied to ships currently under construction. Quality continues to improve with each ship delivered as the Navy continues to work closely with the shipbuilder to address cost, schedule, and performance issues. Current challenges with the operational availability of the in-service LPD 17 Class ships are being addressed by a NAVSEA led Strike Team. Five ships have been delivered, and three of those five have completed their initial deployment. The eleventh and final LPD is planned for procurement in FY 2012.

LHD/LHA

The LHA Class will provide flexible, multi-mission amphibious capabilities that span the range of military operations from forcible entry to HA/DR. AMERICA (LHA 6), and her sister

ships, will replace our TARAWA Class ships that reach the end of their already extended service lives between 2011 and 2015. The AMERICA (LHA 6) is now more than 30 percent complete and is scheduled for delivery in FY 2014. The decommissioning of USS PELELIU (LHA 5) has already been extended to accommodate the late delivery of AMERICA and to mitigate any possible gaps in future deployment cycles. However, given PELELIU's age and material condition, further extensions are unlikely. In support of the Navy's commitment to advancing our energy security, the hybrid propulsion drive in use on USS MAKIN ISLAND (LHD 8) is being installed in AMERICA. The second increment of full funding for LHA 7 is requested in FY 2012. Beginning with LHA 8, the Navy will reintegrate the well deck into this class of large deck amphibious assault ships. Our budget for FY 2012 requests funding for research and development to support reintegration of the well deck into the design of the large deck amphibious ship and the construction of LHA 8 in FY 2016. Funding has been added to install a critical self defense capability for LHD 2-6 during their Mid-Life Upgrades. The Capstone Ships Self Defense System is essential to ensure these ships remain survivable in any environment.

Posturing for the Future

While supporting operations in Afghanistan remains the Commandant's top priority, the Marine Corps Service Campaign Plan directs the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commanders to exercise amphibious operations as they are able. In 2010, the Navy-Marine Corps team returned to conducting large-scale Marine Expeditionary Brigade / Expeditionary Strike Group exercises in order to hone these critical amphibious skills. On the west coast, I Marine Expeditionary Force and Expeditionary Strike Group-3 commenced their annual Marine Expeditionary Brigade-level amphibious exercises DAWN BLITZ and PACIFIC HORIZON. On the east coast, II Marine Expeditionary Force and Expeditionary Strike Group-2 conducted the first in a series of Marine Expeditionary Brigade-level exercises titled BOLD ALLIGATOR. While these exercises are critical to enhancing our proficiency in large-scale amphibious operations, they also serve as a valuable platform from which new concepts can be tested that lead to the development of updated joint operating doctrine.

Future amphibious operations will require improvements in mobility, command and control, intelligence, fires, sea-based logistics, organization, doctrine, training, and education. The landing force requires surface and vertical assault systems with the speed, range, precision location and navigational capabilities, protection, and firepower to launch from over-the-horizon positions, maneuver through tactical points of entry, and achieve the objective regardless of whether it is on the low or high end of the spectrum of conflict. The technologies required to enhance these capabilities are under development, and the combat systems implementing these technologies are the highest priority in the Marine Corps.

Priorities

In order to adapt to the future operating environment and address access challenges, the Navy and Marine Corps are pursuing a number of viable options that leverage operational lessons learned and adopt acquisition best practices.

Amphibious Combat Vehicles. The production and operating costs of the EFV were the principal factors leading to the recommendation to cancel the program. We are facing competing demands across all elements of our warfighting capabilities to reset war-weary equipment and to modernize capabilities. Funding identified for EFV will be used to address overall modernization and plan to pursue an integrated vehicle program with three components; crafted from inception for affordability and leveraging the investment made in the EFV. We intend to maximize value and mitigate the risks associated with a new vehicle program through the use of an integrated acquisition portfolio approach in addressing our requirements. This approach will have three integrated efforts: an acceleration of the procurement of **Marine Personnel Carriers**, investment in a service life extension program and upgrades for a portion of the existing amphibious assault vehicles (**AAV upgrade**), and the development of a **new amphibious combat vehicle**. Utilizing best practices in systems engineering, cost estimating and government/industry teaming during concept refinement and technology development, we intend to develop operationally relevant and technically achievable requirements as the basis for the most affordable programs possible. Our FY 2012 Budget request was based on early cost estimates for the three vehicle programs. We have since refined our program management approach and our cost estimates necessitating a shift in appropriation categories by year while maintaining a zero-sum profile.

Connectors. The Navy's landing craft, air cushion (LCAC) and landing craft, utility (LCU) form the backbone of our heavy-lift surface ship-to-shore movement capability from amphibious ships. The speed of the LCAC combined with the LCU's inherent capability to perform independent operations provides flexibility across the range of military operations. Designed for a 20 year average service life, the current inventory of **LCAC** are undergoing upgrades to improve capabilities and readiness through a service life extension program (SLEP) which will extend the service life to a total of 30 years. However, with the projected number of LCAC and **LCAC (SLEP)** dropping below that desired to support fleet operations by 2014, a replacement craft is required. The **ship-to-shore connector (SSC)** is the Navy's program to recapitalize the LCAC capability. The SSC has achieved Milestone A and a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) has been released to industry. Milestone B and contract award of the lead craft detail design and construction contract is planned for Fiscal Year 2011. The SSC will incorporate several improvements over the LCAC (SLEP) by increasing payload, decreasing operating and maintenance costs, and incorporating systems enhancements to increase crew efficiency. The **LCU-1600** is a displacement craft designed to transport personnel (up to 400), supplies, and heavy equipment (180 ton capacity) from amphibious ships. It can also interface with maritime prepositioning ships squadrons' roll-on/roll-off discharge facility to support in-stream off-loads and logistics over-the-shore operations. Similar to the LCAC, the LCU-1600 craft have been in service for decades (ranging from 30 to 50 years old) and are experiencing maintenance and availability issues. The Navy initiated an LCU sustainment program and recently has completed a study that confirmed the LCU's ability to operate independently for short periods of time (range 1200 nm or 10 days).

LHD CAPSTONE Upgrade to Ship Self Defense System (SSDS) Mk 2. This capability is vital to protecting amphibious ships against a classified set of anti-surface cruise missiles to the level required by the governing 1996 ASCM Self Defense CAPSTONE Requirements Document. This capability upgrade consists of the SSDS Mk-2 combat system, the Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile (ESSM), Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC), ,

AN/SPQ-9B, electronic warfare countermeasure rockets, and Common Data Link Management System (CDLMS [which includes LINK-16]). Without the SSDS Mk-2 upgrade, our amphibious ships would continue to be unacceptably vulnerable to ASCM attack as they operate in an ever increasingly complex, compressed and dangerous littoral battle space. Currently, two of eight LHDs (LHD-7, LHD-8) have SSDS Mk-2 installed; these ships will receive ESSM during a future maintenance availability. One of the six remaining LHDs (LHD-1) is planned to receive SSDS Mk2 (no ESSM until a future maintenance availability) in FY 2013 in support of Joint Strike Fighter Developmental / Operational Testing. The five remaining LHDs (LHDs 2-6) are scheduled to begin receiving the SSDS-Mk2 upgrade during LHD mid-life availabilities starting in FY 2016.

Naval Surface Fire Support. Accurate, timely, lethal, persistent, all-weather, long-range fires from U.S. Navy surface ships and aircraft are essential for conducting amphibious operations. Along with organic Marine Corps ground fires and Close Air Support, **Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS)** completes the “triad of fires.” This integrated triad is required to ensure that adequate fire support available to the joint force commander when and where needed. The Joint Expeditionary Fires AoA identifies several promising

NSFS technology options, to include the complementary development of an extended range 5” guided projectile and extended range precision attack missiles. These enhancements will augment the 155mm Advanced Gun System (AGS) and Long Range Land Attack Projectiles (LRLAP) of the DDG-1000 program and will help fulfill the Marine Corps’ 41-63 nautical mile range, volume, and responsiveness requirements for NSFS. The Marine Corps also endorses continued technology development of the Electro-Magnetic Rail Gun (EMRG) as a future NSFS capability.

Vertical Lift in Support of Amphibious Operations. With the **MV-22 Osprey** on its third at-sea deployment with MEUs and six deployments in desert combat, the quantum leap in technology we envisioned thirty years ago is reality, and so is the extraordinary vertical lift range and speed we need to drive expeditionary operations from ship to shore. Ospreys are designed by and for Marines and they allow the MAGTF commander to dictate tempo in a fast lethal fight in an austere environment. This aircraft provides ground forces with speed, range and altitude no helicopter can match, and its swift, quiet vertical insertion capability is changing the modern amphibious battlespace. The new-build **CH-53K** will transport 27,000 pounds of external cargo out to a range of 110 nautical miles, nearly tripling our workhorse CH-53E's lift capability while fitting into the same shipboard footprint. Our H-1 helicopters, the UH-1N Huey and the AH-1W SuperCobra, are being replaced by a total of 349 **UN-1Y** and **AH-1Z** models (160 Y and 189 Z), which share an 84 percent parts commonality and are thus far easier to support and maintain compared to their predecessors. These new H-1 helicopters will add lift, range, speed, durability, weaponry and critical tactical flexibility to the amphibious task force. The UH-1Y has deployed aboard ship and demonstrated its superior lift and range, and the AH-1Z is developing swiftly and smoothly into what will be the world's dominant attack helicopter. We will deploy the first "all-upgrades MEU" this fall, with the Y and Z models deploying at sea together for the first time.

Neutralizing Mines and Obstacles. Our forces remain challenged in our ability to conduct amphibious operations within acceptable timelines when mines and obstacles are

present. The greatest shortfall exists within our capacities to conduct stand-off detection, mapping, and neutralization and in our capacity to conduct mine clearance operations in-stride across a dispersed sea echelon area containing multiple littoral penetration points and objectives. A key enabler is the development and fielding of sensors to find mines and obstacles in order for joint forces to avoid them.

Conclusion

In order to contribute to the stability of the global system and thrive in the 21st Century, amphibious forces must: ***engage forward*** to forge partnerships, prevent crises, promote diplomatic access, reassure allies and friends of our commitment, build partner capacity, and facilitate the security and stability of our allies; ***respond*** rapidly and effectively to protect national interests, contain disruptions to global stability, overcome access challenges by operating from the sea base, reinforce U.S. credibility, solidify relationships with international partners and forge new ones; and ***project*** power in order to assure access allowing us to prevail when conflict arises by rapidly transitioning from the open hand of engagement to the closed fist of power projection that can impose our nation's will and defeat our adversaries.

The ability to overcome diplomatic, geographic, and military impediments to access has emerged as a critical enabler for extending U.S. influence, responding to crises, and projecting power overseas. The sea is a vast maneuver space—one that can be used to our advantage provided we maintain the capability and capacity to conduct amphibious operations. It is for that reason the Marine Corps force structure review proposed the re-establishment of standing Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB) headquarters, each under the command of a brigadier general. These command elements will increase responsiveness to Geographic Combatant Commander needs and align with the Navy's Expeditionary strike group (ESG) headquarters. The goal of this alignment is to provide a more integrated naval approach for amphibious training and innovation, while also establishing headquarters capable of commanding and controlling larger amphibious operations. The naval services have implemented an annual amphibious exercise program as seen this last year in exercises BOLD ALLIGATOR and DAWN BLITZ.

In this age of uncertainty, the demand for adaptable forces—capable of immediately responding to crises—is certain. It is true that all things are not equally important or affordable...and thus as the nation resources its future national security, it will be forced to make tough choices between capabilities, capacities, and levels of readiness in and among the Services. Although it is impossible to know where the next flare up will be, it is clear that well trained and equipped amphibious forces will be ready to respond and protect interests or prevent undesired effects. With the support of the Congress and the American people we can ensure amphibious forces are well prepared to secure our national interests in an uncertain future. Thank you for the opportunity and we look forward to answering further questions.