

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE SENATE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM A. WHITLOW
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
DIRECTOR, EXPEDITIONARY WARFARE DIVISION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
(WARFARE REQUIREMENTS AND PROGRAMS)
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEA POWER
OF THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
NAVY AND MARINE CORPS OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
9 APRIL 2002

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE SENATE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Sea Power Subcommittee, I am Major General Bill Whitlow, Director of the Expeditionary Warfare Division. It is truly an honor to represent the men and women of your United States Navy and Marine Corps Expeditionary team. As head of the division that identifies and validates resource requirements necessary to conduct Expeditionary Warfare, I provide this testimony on their behalf.

History is replete with incidents that galvanize a nation. The events that took place seven months ago stunned our sense of domestic tranquility. They also aroused our collective anger, eliciting a national call to arms to eliminate a vengeful enemy eager to wreak carnage onto the American public. Our military response has been powerful, yet focused; lethal, but mindful of the ideals that form the foundation of our nation. Over the years, this committee has supported and provided valuable guidance on many of the systems now being employed in defense of our country. You should take great pride, as I do, in the Sailors and Marines who are faithfully and professionally performing their assigned duties overseas today. Their performance is a reflection of the support they have received from their countrymen and elected leaders.

It is worthy of our time to pause and examine how our nation has chosen to respond to the War on Terror. Well before my tenure as Director of the Expeditionary Warfare Division, Navy and Marine Corps leaders have spoken of the operational advantages of possessing a force that is lethal, flexible and self-sustaining. Events in Afghanistan have demonstrated that the maritime strategy “*forward...from the sea*” is valid even when conducting warfare in a country that is landlocked and located 400 miles from a major body of water. Despite Afghanistan’s isolation, the first sustained U.S. military operation ashore was conducted by the 15th and 26th Marine Expeditionary Units, an expeditionary force that was deployed, organized and launched from the USS PELELIU and USS BATAAN Amphibious Ready Groups (ARGs). As you recall, the mission of these two MEUs was to seize the first in-country staging base (Rhino), secure the Kandahar airport and establish a base from which quick-reaction operations could be conducted to further track down Taliban and al Qaeda forces.

The MEUs’ conquest is simply the latest example of a long history of Expeditionary Warfare. The term “expeditionary” refers to a menu of forces (air, ground and sea) that are forward or

rapidly deployed to achieve a specific national security objective. These forces are trained and configured to respond to the full spectrum of military operations, from humanitarian assistance to small-scale contingencies through major theater war. To be effective in these different and challenging operations, Expeditionary Warfare forces must be capable, mobile and extremely versatile. And while the concept of “expeditionary warfare” may seem new or revolutionary, in reality it is how this nation’s sea services have operated for all of its 226-year (plus) history.

To maximize operational effectiveness while minimizing the threat to safety, we have pursued programs that enhance our capability to be fast, flexible and lethal. Underpinning these operational imperatives is the requirement for lift. Lift drives everything. It permits us to respond quickly, decisively, and without first having to obtain host nation support. Lift also allows us to be on station to monitor and hopefully deter events before they escalate. The naval amphibious assault ships that provide the critical lift are designed to conduct sea-based operations with a minimal reliance on host or allied nation support. Amphibious ships with embarked Marine forces are one of the most formidable power projection capabilities in the world and represent our Nation’s **only** sustainable forcible-entry capability.

By doctrine and prudent analysis, execution of our nation’s military strategy relies on the availability and readiness to deploy three Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) Assault Echelons, the so-called “3.0 MEB-lift”. However, it should be emphasized that the 3.0 MEB requirement is based on a single major theater war (MTW) scenario and this force is not intended to act as a swing force in the event of a second contingency or second MTW. As this committee is aware, we have not been able to meet the 3.0 MEB requirement because of fiscal constraints and instead have focused on the less capable, goal of maintaining 2.5 MEB. The fiscally constrained 2.5 MEB goal was supposed to be a temporary situation; a “strategic pause” permitted following the end of the Cold War and Desert Storm. It was not intended to replace, nor should it be seen as an acceptable alternative to, the 3.0 MEB requirement. Unfortunately, I must report that we have not been able to maintain the 2.5 MEB capability in the active force. Today, your Expeditionary forces are only equipped at 2.1 MEB lift equivalent with the corresponding risk and dangers inherent in such a reduced posture. I want to emphasize that a

2.5 MEB capability is neither dependent on, nor significantly affected by, changes to the two MTW strategy.

So what? So why should Congress and the American public be concerned if our military falls even further from the required 3.0 MEB lift? Among the capabilities that Expeditionary forces -- and in many cases, Expeditionary forces alone -- provide is assured access. As the number of overseas U.S. bases has decreased, the importance (and difficulty) of gaining and sustaining entrance into foreign hotspots has increased. Expeditionary Warfare, with its diverse, tailored packaging of forces represents our nation's **only** forcible entry capability as well as the enabling force for the introduction of heavier and more specialized forces into a theater conflict. As such, without adequate amphibious shipping we run the risk that access will be blocked or achieved only at great human cost.

The ability to conduct Expeditionary Warfare is tied to the size and composition of our naval force. The amphibious fleet remains the oldest in the Navy and must be replaced and enhanced. Key to this effort is the LPD-17 program. The LPD-17 SAN ANTONIO class ship is a highly versatile, wet-well platform that is capable of conducting both air and Landing Craft Air Cushioned (LCAC) operations. According to the current ship construction plan, the 2.5 MEB lift capability will not be achieved until delivery of the twelfth LPD-17 now estimated for the 2015 timeframe. As such, the Department of the Navy is forced to retain the aging and increasingly unreliable LPD-4 class of ships. All of these ships are currently 31-37 years old and are not expected to be decommissioned until they reach an average age of 41.5 years – 6.5 years beyond their expected service life. Not surprisingly, the LPD-4 AUSTIN class ships are plagued with problems of poor habitability and deteriorating working conditions that have a direct impact on the morale and effectiveness of assigned personnel. Additionally, these ships require costly C4I upgrades to be interoperable with other C4 advances being implemented throughout the Fleet.

I cannot stress enough the importance of maintaining, if not accelerating, the construction schedule of the LPD-17. Relative to the LPD-4s, delivery of LPD-17s will have a direct and immediate increase in our warfighting capability. The LPD-17s will provide increased vehicle

and LCAC capacity, improved aviation and C4I capability, improved survivability, and improved shipboard quality of life. They are a vital asset and a prudent investment.

Another initiative that impacts every aspect of Expeditionary Warfare is the LHD-8/LHA Replacement (LHA(R)) program. The five TARAWA Class LHAs are rapidly approaching the end of their service life and face block obsolescence at the rate of one per year from 2011-2015. Under the recapitalization plan, we project that some of the LHAs will not be retired until they are as much as 10 years beyond their 35-year service life. LHD-8 (WASP Class) is scheduled to begin construction in FY-02 with an expected delivery during FY-07. Once operational, LHD-8 will replace one of the TARAWA class LHAs. Yet, as this committee well knows, the LHD-8 is a “transition” ship – a ship designated to develop and demonstrate technology that will be incorporated into the follow-on LHA-Replacement ship. An ongoing Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) is due to be completed in June 2002 and should lead to the selection of a design for the LHA(R). As the centerpiece of the Amphibious Ready Group, the big deck LHA(R) ship class will be multi-functional and highly versatile. It is prudent, however, to improve the baseline capability of the LHD-8 and leverage technology to garner more vehicle and air capacity. A smooth transition from LHA to LHD-8 to LHA(R) is reliant on continued funding of the LHA Mid-Life Sustainment Program. This upgrade program extends to 35 years the useful life of the aging LHA-class ships and provides the time necessary to pursue the LHA(R) in a fiscally responsible manner.

From an operational point of view, lift (and the ships that constitute our lift) is necessary to transport and sustain the Expeditionary Amphibious Triad. The Triad consists of Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC), the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAAVs), and the MV-22 tilt rotor aircraft. The versatile LCAC is **the** primary platform for high speed, over-the-horizon transport of troops, vehicles and material. The LCAC’s high speed and ability to access over 70 percent of the world’s coastlines (compared to 17% for conventional landing craft) is key to our ability to execute the maneuver warfare doctrine of seeking out and landing at the enemy’s weakest point. The LCAC fleet is undergoing a Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) to correct hull fatigue and corrosion, extending the hull life up to 20 years. In addition, the SLEP includes an upgrade to its command/control/ communication/computer and navigation (C4N)

suite and enhanced engines that will increase its interoperability and performance. I'm pleased to report that in December 2000, the Navy received its first successful SLEP craft, LCAC 91, providing a good template for future LCACs. This program makes good business sense and is widely endorsed by fleet commanders. Our conventional landing craft now average 35 years of age. The LCU Replacement program is on track for a FY-05 start to replace these craft.

The attack on the World Trade Centers, preceded by the 1999 attack on the USS COLE, illustrate the type of asymmetric threat our Sailors and Marines face as they carry out their duties in support of our national objectives. All of our commanders place the protection of their Sailors and Marines on top of their priority lists, and it is my task to provide the support necessary to optimize their ability to deter and counter such an attack and to minimize the consequences should one occur. The solution lies in a combination of complimentary efforts, ranging from doctrine and training to manpower and equipment. While there is no single program that can entirely eliminate our vulnerability to a terrorist attack, there are several ongoing initiatives within Expeditionary Warfare that will improve our ability to both deter and defeat terrorist attacks.

For the past year and a half, our Naval Coastal Warfare Forces (NCWF) have been called upon to conduct expeditionary harbor defense and coastal surveillance at critical locations throughout the globe. It is important to note that the NCWF is almost completely manned and managed by Naval Reservists and is a prime example of the integration between active duty and reserve forces. Using their core elements of Mobile Inshore Undersea Warfare units, Inshore Boat units, and Harbor Defense Commands, the Naval Coastal Warfare Forces have provided us the flexibility and capability to tailor units to meet specific requirements based on the deployment location and threat. These deployments, however, have revealed critical readiness shortfalls, primarily in equipment deficiencies, that have accumulated since their last major employment during Desert Storm. Providing sufficient resources to attain sustainable readiness for this small but essential force is one of my most immediate priorities.

This group of highly motivated Naval Reservists has largely volunteered to defer their personal and professional lives so that they may contribute to our Navy's immediate security. This

increased force protection posture, however, is not indefinitely achievable solely through a reserve force, however motivated. To that end, we have resourced the establishment of an active duty “Mobile Security Force” that will provide our Naval Commanders with a flexible, rapidly deployable, and immediately available capability. This force is designed to provide defensive security augmentation during heightened Force Protection Conditions in locations where the U.S. or the host nation’s security infrastructure is inadequate to meet the temporary heightened requirement. This new force has been fully resourced to the identified requirement. The first detachment is expected to reach initial operational capability early in FY-03 and all 12 detachments will become fully operational by FY-05. While this new active duty force will not replicate the robust surveillance and command and control capability of our reserve Naval Coastal Warfare force, it will relieve them of the security augmentation role they have been filling, allowing us to sustain heightened force protection requirements and conduct extended harbor security and overseas littoral surveillance operations.

Equally important to our ability to maintain a heightened security posture in locations where our expeditionary forces operate, is the requirement to detect, identify and defeat weapons most commonly employed by terrorist organizations. Such weapons include the full spectrum of chemical, biological, nuclear, radiological (CBNR) and enhanced explosive devices. This difficult task lies primarily with another of our Navy’s small but critical forces: Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) units. To improve the capabilities and safety of these highly specialized forces, we are developing unmanned ground and underwater vehicles to assist in conducting dangerous EOD operations at sea or on land, in hostile and contaminated environments. We are also funding increased EOD force levels as the demand for these uniquely skilled operators increases across the spectrum of naval operations. The Navy is not the only service feeling the increased demand for EOD capabilities. As the single manager for joint service EOD technology and training, the Navy is expanding and improving the curriculum for joint service advanced improvised explosive device training and developing technologies to further enhance the joint service capability to detect, identify and defeat terrorist devices.

While much of the current discussion of asymmetric threats involves terrorist activities, perhaps the greatest asymmetric threat to expeditionary operations continues to be the anti-ship mine. To

address the challenges posed by sea mines, the Navy-Marine Corps team is maintaining a dedicated Mine Countermeasure (MCM) force while simultaneously developing and introducing new organic MCM capabilities. Dedicated and organic assets are complimentary and are designed to address two different missions. Organic MCM systems are being developed to permit naval forces to operate/transit in a mined environment without having to await the arrival of dedicated MCM forces. Focusing primarily on the area that stretches from deep water to the 40-foot curve, organic assets will provide a highly capable, albeit reduced, capacity across the MCM requirements spectrum. Specifically, the Carrier Battle Group commander will have a full range of organic MCM capabilities embarked as an integral part of the battle group. These ship-borne assets will give forward deployed forces the ability to conduct timely MCM operations, allowing for unencumbered transit and minimizing the operational delay or impact of mines on a mission.

Dedicated MCM forces are equipped, manned and trained to provide a sustainable capability for larger missions such as detecting and clearing mines in a broad geographical area. Dedicated forces will continue to provide highly capable assets in sizes and quantities that effectively address the sustained, large area MCM efforts required for creating areas necessary for both fleet operations (e.g. large Carrier Operational Areas or major Q-route shipping lanes) and Amphibious Task Force Operations (principally large landing architectures). It is the Department of the Navy's position that **both** organic and dedicated forces are needed to safely and efficiently prosecute MCM missions.

The Navy leadership has openly discussed the difficulties associated with MCM operations. Contained in the Fiscal Year 2003 U.S. Naval MCM Certification Plan is the admission that, "given the complexity and proliferation of the mine threat and the myriad of environmental influences on MCM system performances, mine countermeasures represents one of the Navy's most significant operational and tactical challenges." To address these challenges the Navy has developed a plan that seeks to maintain current assets while aggressively developing and fielding new capabilities. The overarching goals of this plan are to (1) shorten the MCM tactical timeline and (2) reduce and eventually eliminate manned MCM operations in mine threat areas.

Current capabilities are well established in the “blue water” operational area. These capabilities are resident in the current MCM Triad force of Surface Mine Countermeasures (SMCM) ships, Airborne Mine Countermeasures (AMCM) helicopter squadrons, and Underwater Mine Countermeasures (e.g., EOD MCM Detachments and Marine Mammal Systems). This multi-faceted force operates synergistically and is well suited for mine hunting and minesweeping in deep waters. The Triad offers not only a capable force, but a sustained high capacity to conduct large area and long endurance MCM efforts. These forces are collectively known as “Dedicated MCM.” In many respects, this capability is the legacy of efforts begun in the late 80’s and early 90’s to reconstruct a viable world-class U.S. MCM force. Specifically, the “Avenger” Class MCM ships, “Osprey” Class MHC ships, and the MH-53E “Sea Dragon” aircraft were all introduced or in procurement prior to Operation Desert Storm.

These combined forces possess the requisite capability to successfully hunt and neutralize or sweep mines from the deepest ASW weapons to those threats generally employed in the vicinity of the 40-foot curve. However, inside the 40-foot point the efficacy of these dedicated sensors and platforms, particularly SMCMs and their systems, can be significantly impacted by a number of factors.

Unfortunately, recent efforts to develop a mine clearance/mine destruction system in the surf zone (defined as the area from defined as the area from 10 feet of water depth to the high water mark) proved unsuccessful. As this committee knows, a decision was made in the summer of 2000 to terminate development of the Shallow Water Assault Breaching (SABRE) and Distributive Explosive Technology (DET) systems, two R&D programs that early on demonstrated great potential. Knowing Congress’s and this committee’s keen interest in these programs, we have attempted on several occasions to outline and explain the rationale to terminate. Ultimately, the decision was made because the military utility of these programs was judged too low to justify the cost. Studies proved that these programs were ineffective against specific threats, could not be operated in the presence of even light obstacles, required an extensive number of LCAC missions to employ, proved problematic to handle onboard ship, and required the displacement of an unacceptable quantity of combat power to embark aboard amphibious shipping. While cancellation of these two programs was clearly the right thing to

do, it also left the Navy-Marine Corps team without an effective assault breaching system. As such, the Navy's current capability in the surf zone is deemed unsatisfactory. To remedy this unsatisfactory situation and provide badly needed capability in the critical surf zone area, the Navy has instituted a corrective "**three track**" program.

Track One is known as the Operator's Track. Under this track the Navy seeks to identify, refine and improve existing breaching & clearance tactics that currently provide limited surf zone mine countermeasure capability (SZ MCM). Beginning in December 2001, Commanders of the Navy Amphibious Groups and Marine Expeditionary Forces began briefing N-75 staff on current concept of operations for SZ MCM. With a thorough understanding of the fleet's current tactics, budgetary resources will be focused to support and enhance these capabilities with the aim of maximizing their effectiveness. While a complete solution is not expected from this track, it is anticipated that a better, more realistic approach can be developed that can immediately be employed should the need arise.

Track two, known as the Near-Term track, seeks to develop and exploit a "family of capabilities". At a minimum, desired/required capabilities include: enhanced ISR tools, data fusion applications, mine-obstacle detection and location systems, precision navigation & maneuvering systems, area/lane/object marking systems, mine-obstacle kill mechanisms, and common C4I systems.

Within 18-24 months, existing technology promises to provide answers to some of these requirements. For example, the Navy is confident that current COTS/GOTS technology exists to equip landing craft/vehicles with precision navigation systems. Further illustrating the potential of this approach is the Airborne Laser Mine Detection System (ALMDS), a program that is already under development and represents the next generation of airborne mine hunting systems. ALMDS has demonstrated that, with certain modifications, it will be capable of rapidly detecting mines in the Very Shallow Water region.

Recent efforts by the Office of Naval Research (ONR) further demonstrate our belief that evolving technology can provide a robust, near-term MCM capability. In January 2002, ONR released a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) soliciting technology concepts from industry,

government labs, and academia. Paramount to concept submission was the requirement that the proposed technology must be demonstrated within 18 months of contract award and fielded to the fleet three years thereafter. Thirty “white papers” were received in response to the BAA. A comprehensive evaluation panel involving fleet operators met and selected three promising concepts to pursue. Full proposals are due from these three in mid-May with funding for the 18-month development phase commencing in FY-03. If successfully demonstrated, a mine and obstacle kill capability could be fielded to the Fleet by 2006.

The third track is a long-term approach and is based upon a standard acquisition model (normally 10 – 15 years) for developing and fielding mine-obstacle “kill” mechanisms. This process encompasses early Science & Technology (S&T) development work and concept demonstration, and involves clearly delineated milestones such as a full “Mission Area Analysis” (MAA), a subsequent “Mission Needs Statement” (MNS), an “Analysis of Alternatives” (AoA), and eventually an “Operational Requirements Document” (ORD). This process ensures that the testing, acquisition, and fielding of a system will meet ORD/Fleet requirements.

In December 2001, the Navy established a MAA team, instituted an over-arching O-6 Level Oversight Board and initiated an Integrated Process Team for the purpose of developing required operational capabilities for a family-of-systems to perform amphibious MCM by 2015. The MAA is on track to be completed by the end of FY-03 and will lead into a FY-04 AoA. Aircraft and ship-based concepts are currently being examined through the S&T and concept demonstration phase and will be evaluated during the AoA process.

While expediting the overall process is a key priority of this track, particular care will be taken to ensure acceleration does not result in a quick but unsatisfactory product. This track is expected to result in acquisition of the final MCM piece – obstacle and mine kill mechanisms – which, with the other required capabilities, will complete the MCM tool set.

As stated in the Navy’s Strategic Planning Guidance (NSPG), establishing an “organic capability of surface forces to detect, avoid and/or neutralize mines within operationally acceptable timelines and with acceptable levels of operational risk” is a top Navy priority. The MH-60S,

next generation MCM systems, the Remote Mine Hunting System (RMS) deployed from surface combatants, and the submarine-based Long Term Mine Reconnaissance System (LMRS) address this priority.

The RMS represents the most effective mine hunting system ever carried onboard a non-MCM Class ship. The RMS, an unmanned surface vehicle (USV) towing an AQS-20X sonar system (practically identical to the system operated from the MH-60S), will provide long-duration unmanned operations under the direction of host ship operators or in a pre-planned autonomous mode. The USV “tow vehicle” is almost entirely submerged with only a snorkel/antenna piercing the surface of the water. As such, the RMS is considered to be “low-observable” and very tolerant of sea states that can adversely effect other USVs.

The LMRS is an autonomous unmanned undersea vehicle (UUV) system that will be operated from both *LOS ANGELES* class submarines (SSN-688) and *VIRGINIA* class submarines (SSN-774). Using mine detection and classification sonars, the LMRS will be used at extended ranges as a clandestine, forward-deployed asset, to determine the extent and size of the mine threat, as well as to determine the safety of anticipated operating areas.

It should be noted that in addition to fielding the MH-60S AMCM aircraft as an organic asset, the Navy is evaluating whether to transition its dedicated AMCM force from the MH-53E to the MH-60S. One advantage of transitioning from the MH-53E to the MH-60S is airframe commonality between the dedicated and organic fleet AMCM force operations, training, and logistics. Many significant issues are being evaluated including the ability of the MH-60S to conduct the AMCM-required missions as well as the total cost of completely recapitalizing the force into an MH-60S dedicated force. We expect a decision in PR-05.

As this Subcommittee is well aware, the Navy converted USS *INCHON* (LPH-12) to serve as a Mine Countermeasures Command and Support Ship (MCS-12) in 1994. The intent was to use this ship, the last of her class, to bridge the Navy to a future MCS platform prior to 2005. The rapid aging of USS *INCHON*, particularly its engineering plant and equipment, resulted in sub-optimal material readiness and high operating/repair costs. Ongoing safety concerns and a recent

major fire in its engineering spaces further reduced the ship's utility. Already planned for decommissioning in 2005, the INCHON's age, difficulty in effecting repairs while in homeport, and the immediate need for extensive engineering upgrades combined to lead the Navy to a decision to accelerate the decommission plan to FY-02.

In the absence of a dedicated MCS platform, the Commander, Fleet Forces Command (formerly Commander, Atlantic Fleet) coordinated a plan with the numbered fleets and Commander, Mine Warfare Command to employ large deck amphibious ships (LHAs and LHDs) in a surrogate MCS role. Upon decommissioning of MCS-12, various key operational capabilities inherent to USS INCHON will be retained in expeditionary detachments. This plan has already been promulgated and will be exercised on a regular basis. Use, however, of amphibious shipping as surrogate MCS will pose additional constraints on MEB AE lift requirements. When embarked, MCM assets will greatly increase the size of the Naval Support Element and will encroach on aviation and vehicle storage space – a situation that must be watched and managed closely.

Concurrent with the employment and refinement of this interim MCS concept, the Navy is conducting a MCS Mission Area Analysis (MAA) with Johns Hopkins University. This MAA will lead to a refined Mission Need Statement supporting an Analysis of Alternatives for a follow-on MCS platform. Additionally, the Navy continues to experiment with transformational concepts like the High Speed Vessel to understand how such a concept/platform might serve in an MCS role.

In closing, I first want to echo and reinforce what General Jones stated to this committee on March 5, 2002. The long recognized requirement for the amphibious force structure is the ability to lift the assault echelons of **three** Marine Expeditionary Brigades. Today, we can barely lift two brigades – a mere two-thirds of the requirement. I second the Commandant's recommendation that we recapitalize our amphibious fleet as a matter of urgent priority. Two programs that I have testified about today will move us closer to meeting this critical requirement. We need delivery of at least twelve LPD-17s and replacement of the LHAs as they approach the end of their expected service life. Second, I want to reemphasize the need to ensure the safety and welfare of our Sailors and Marines. The way to do this is to ensure that the

equipment and shipping they use is modern, capable and habitable. Again, LPD-17 and LHA(R) address these priorities, as does our continuing endeavor to remove the “man and mammal from the minefield.” We can ill afford not to fully exploit these programs. The gain far exceeds any short-term financial pain caused by investing in the safety and welfare of our most precious asset – our Sailors and Marines. I am grateful for your support and look forward to supporting you and the American people in the years to ahead.