

Department of the Navy
HEADQUARTERS U. S. MARINE CORPS
Washington, DC

4 January 1996

The MAGTF in Sustained Operations Ashore

Operational Maneuver from the Sea and *Ship to Objective Maneuver* describe Marine Corps participation in future military operations ranging from “humanitarian relief to a high stakes struggle against a rising superpower.” The tenets of these concepts are universally applicable because they are firmly rooted in the fundamental belief Marines share in the philosophy of maneuver warfare. The *MAGTF in Sustained Operations Ashore* is no different. It acknowledges that sustained land combat is nothing new to Marines, but recognizes that future battlespaces may well differ significantly from their 20th Century predecessors. Naval forces will capitalize on the maneuverability and protection the sea affords to conduct the decisive actions envisioned by *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*. They will do so without reliance on tenuous overseas bases or vulnerable shore based facilities, making them even more the force of choice for warfighting commanders-in-chief and joint force commanders than they already are today. *The MAGTF in Sustained Operations Ashore* continues the process of proposal, debate, and experimentation which will transform our warfighting concepts into operational realities.



C.C. KRULAK

General, U.S. Marine Corps
31st Commandant of the Marine Corps

Intentionally Blank

The Marine Air Ground Task Force in Sustained Operations Ashore

INTRODUCTION

The traditional role of amphibious forces in sustained joint campaigns has been one of enabler for the introduction of follow-on forces, followed by transition to conventional joint operations ashore. In most cases, such operations entailed the establishment of a lodgment in order to facilitate the safe introduction and accumulation of the manpower and materiel required for command and control, execution, and sustainment. The Allied invasion of France during the Second World War is an excellent example, although the Marine Corps' amphibious landings on the larger Pacific islands also apply. Since that time and throughout this century, Marine forces have been called upon to operate alongside Army and allied forces in sustained joint campaigns. The Marine air ground task force's (MAGTF) participation in Sustained Operations Ashore (SOA) will be every bit as likely in the 21st Century; however, the nature of such participation will be different. This concept envisions the MAGTF remaining a general purpose force, but one capable of executing a series of precise, focused combat actions rather than primarily participating in continuous, methodical ground operations. By capitalizing on its unique seabased character, the MAGTF not only remains the nation's premier forcible entry force, but establishes itself as the force of choice for decisive operations, as well.

The battlespace of the future will scarcely resemble its 20th Century predecessor. While the nature of combat will undergo little fundamental change for the individual participant, the way land combat takes place will be dramatically different. The battlespace will often be nonlinear and lack large, easily targeted enemy formations. Critical vulnerabilities will be difficult to discern and centers of gravity dispersed, well defended and difficult to engage. Physical occupation of large terrain segments will be less important than focused attacks aimed at reducing the enemy's ability and even will to fight. This lack of preoccupation with occupying terrain will give maneuver commanders vastly improved op-

erational and tactical freedom of action. It will also, however, eliminate the heretofore “secure” rear area from which commanders have traditionally conducted combat support and combat service support operations. Marines must view this fundamental change in future sustained land combat as less a challenge than opportunity.

THE MAGTF AS AN OPERATIONAL MANEUVER ELEMENT


The inherent flexibility of the MAGTF and its incorporation of emerging technologies will permit an expanded role for the Marine Corps in future sustained joint campaigns. The MAGTF, as a seabased operational maneuver element (OME), will enhance its forcible entry capability and ability to participate in sustained land campaigns through exploitation of the tenets of *Operational Maneuver From the Sea* (OMFTS) and *Ship-to-Objective Maneuver* (STOM). The MAGTF will provide warfighting commanders in chief (CINC) and joint force commanders (JFC) with an agile, versatile, and responsive force which identifies and attacks enemy critical vulnerabilities to reduce his centers of gravity as part of the joint campaign.

Employed as an OME, the MAGTF constitutes a unique seabased operational capability for the JFC, maintained in immediate readiness to create its own opportunities or exploit those resulting from the activities of other components of the joint force. In this role, MAGTFs will be assigned operational-level missions which have decisive impact on the outcome of the overall campaign. The actions of the OME must be coordinated with those of other joint and coalition components in order to retain the flexibility and responsiveness required to exploit opportunities as they arise. The MAGTF will normally be employed as an independent formation, relying on its organic capabilities and exploiting connectivity throughout the joint force to acquire and extend external support as required. As a self-contained, self-sustaining combined arms force with integrated air, ground, command and control, and logistics capabilities, the MAGTF is ideally suited to function as an enabling force, decisive force, or exploitation force. These functions are not mutually exclusive.

ENABLING FORCE

The MAGTF will conduct enabling operations to set the stage for follow-on operations by other elements of the joint task force. While closely related to the traditional MAGTF role of initial forcible entry, enabling actions are not limited to the opening phases of a campaign, nor are they necessarily restricted to the securing of lodgments for the introduction of follow-on forces. Enabling attacks may also be conducted to divert the enemy commander's attention from the main effort, or even cause him to reorient forces engaged in a successful defense to an attack from an unexpected quarter.

In late April 1945, Generals Alexander Vandegrift and Roy Geiger proposed just such an amphibious "end run" during the Okinawa Campaign, as an alternative to direct attacks on the heavily defended Shuri Line. Unfortunately, their recommendation was not accepted and the costly battle of attrition in southern Okinawa continued for two additional months.

A map of Okinawa Island showing the Shuri Line. A black arrow indicates a route from the Pacific Ocean, around the southern coast, to the Shuri Line. A blue arrow indicates a direct route from the East China Sea to the Shuri Line. Two white envelope icons with 'X' marks are placed on the map, one near the East China Sea and one near the Pacific Ocean. The labels 'EAST CHINA SEA', 'SHURI LINE', 'PACIFIC OCEAN', and 'USMC' are visible.

In today's context, an enabling force can exploit its ability to maneuver at sea to conduct amphibious attacks, even demonstrations, along large segments of coastline to "enable" planned or ongoing joint force actions, including the introduction of additional forces. Alternatively, enabling operations may be as rudimentary as establishing the cornerstone of a command and control system that the assembling joint or coalition force "plugs into," or as complex as physically seizing forward operating bases for ground, naval, and aviation forces.



DECISIVE FORCE

The MAGTF will exploit its advanced command and control system to identify the gaps necessary to conduct decisive operations and reduce enemy centers of gravity. Improvements in command and control, mobility, and lethality will give the MAGTF a greatly enhanced capability to execute decisive actions. Decisive actions run the gamut from destruction of enemy military units to interdiction of critical lines of communication to the evacuation of American and third country nationals from untenable urban areas. The 21st Century MAGTF will retain the ability to conduct such operations, across the width and depth of the area of operations at a tempo that will quickly overwhelm the enemy commander's ability to react effectively.

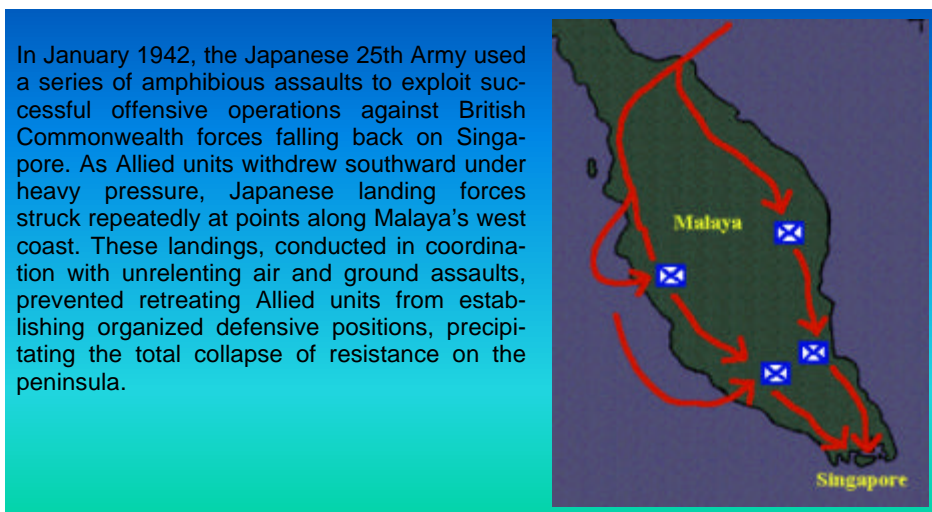


The 1950 landing of the 1st Marine Division at Inchon was such a decisive blow. By landing in an unexpected place and quickly moving inland to sever North Korean lines of communication, the Marine “air-ground” team effectively halted the North Korean advance and turned the tide of the Korean War.

EXPLOITATION FORCE

The MAGTF will also be used as an exploitation force. In this capacity, the OME takes advantage of opportunities created by the activity of other components of the joint force. During the early phases of a campaign, it may be difficult to identify an adversary's critical vulnerabilities and centers of gravity. As the campaign progresses, however, actions by elements of the joint force will result in enemy reactions. The JFC will exploit these reactions through rapid and focused seabased operations by the MAGTF which capitalize on the results of ongoing engagements to achieve decisive results. For example, a MAGTF functioning as OME in

a future conflict may exploit a joint force breakthrough by striking at enemy units attempting to retrograde from the engagement.



ORGANIZATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The employment of the MAGTF as an OME exploits its inherent expeditionary nature, naval character, combined-arms orientation, flexibility, adaptability, and sustainability. The MAGTF organizes for combat based on the mission. While its particular composition will vary with each situation, its basic organizational design (Command Element, Ground Combat Element, Aviation Combat Element, and Combat Service Support Element) will remain. As each OME mission will be unique, the MAGTF commander must be prepared to rapidly build tailored, combined arms teams appropriate to the mission. The MAGTF will be seabased. Ground maneuver elements, however, will frequently be employed ashore and may remain there for prolonged periods. Combat support and combat service support to such units will remain seabased, recognizing that operational requirements may necessitate some positioning ashore to enhance effectiveness or increase operational range and decrease turnaround time, particularly in the case of aviation combat element operations.



The MAGTF commander will execute precise, focused combat actions by using his shared situational awareness and organic planning and intelligence capabilities to anticipate and respond to operational-level taskings from the JFC. In addition, the MAGTF must be prepared to reinforce or exploit the efforts of its own committed forces or respond to other JFC requirements. Upon completion of assigned missions, the MAGTF reconstitutes on the seabase and prepares for additional JFC taskings.

COMPONENT HEADQUARTERS

During a sustained joint campaign, a Marine Corps service component headquarters supports the JFC and facilitates the warfighting functions of the MAGTF. The Marine Corps Component Commander, designated Commander, Marine Corps Forces (ComMARFOR) advises the JFC on the status, capabilities, and employment of assigned Marine forces. In this capacity, the MARFOR staff participates in joint force planning and coordination mechanisms in order to ensure effective MAGTF employment and to assist the MAGTF staff in anticipating future taskings. The MARFOR is also responsible for the execution of service-level administrative and logistics functions, relieving the MAGTF of these responsibilities so that it may concentrate on warfighting.



The Marine Corps component commander (or his representative) and a small nucleus staff will most often be co-located with JFC; however, every effort will be made to limit the personnel and logistics footprint of the component headquarters. Enhancements in communications and information systems will permit the execution of many service component responsibilities such as personnel administration and replacement, detailed intelligence production, and strategic-level logistics via “reach-back.” Specialized skills such as cultural expertise, knowledge of weapons of mass destruction, or unique target system analysis capabilities required to plan or execute a specific mission will be made available through reach-back rather than physically deploying specialists into the theater.

THE MAGTF AFLOAT

The MAGTF derives its unique capabilities and a large degree of its force protection from its seabased character. In response to tasking from the JFC, the MAGTF plans and executes its mission in accordance with the tenets of OMFTS and STOM. When employed as an OME, the MAGTF exploits the operational mobility inherent in its seabased character to conduct operations at times and places of its choosing to

achieve the desired effect or set the stage for follow-on actions by other elements of the joint force.

The MAGTF is prepared to operate as an OME on short notice. The MAGTF command element (CE), through its robust reach-back capability, electronic links to the joint force headquarters, Marine Corps component commander, and other elements of the joint force, monitors the common operational picture, establishes and maintains situational awareness, and initiates planning for potential missions. The MAGTF initiates a rapid-response planning sequence and organizes for combat at the earliest indication of formal tasking. Command and control during execution is seabased. While the scope and duration of certain missions may require the establishment of limited command or liaison elements ashore, the MAGTF utilizes the capabilities and collaborative connectivity afforded by the seabase to minimize its footprint ashore.¹

MAGTF SUSTAINMENT

MAGTF sustainment will be seabased, providing a secure, yet accessible logistics base. The intent of seabased operations is to rely on the flexibility and protection afforded by the seabase and to minimize the MAGTF's footprint ashore. The manpower and equipment intense nature of command elements, combat service support elements, and fixed air base facilities makes them large consumers of logistics support, as well as lucrative targets. Seabasing of these functions will drastically reduce over-the-beach logistics requirements, freeing lift assets for operational missions and maneuver commanders from burdensome rear area security matters. Seabasing facilitates a rapid and seamless reconstitution upon mission completion, as tactical units return to the seabase using the same platforms that initially took them ashore, not having to concern themselves with “covering” the retrograde of command elements and combat service support detachments.

Maneuver forces operating ashore will have limited organic logistics capabilities. These capabilities will be tailored to the type and expected

¹ *The “seabase” includes all elements of Navy and Marine units tailored for the execution of a specific expeditionary mission. In the context of SOA, the seabase would likely consist of a MAGTF, amphibious shipping, Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 elements, and one or more carrier battle groups.*

duration of the mission and replenished directly from the seabase, or in some cases, directly from intermediate staging bases or even CONUS. Operational requirements may, however, require limited logistic capabilities be temporarily moved ashore. Such support will be provided by small, highly mobile, direct-support elements rather than traditional fixed logistics sites. These elements will draw their supplies from the seabase and act as a repository for critical supplies required by maneuver forces on those occasions when their direct supply from the seabase is precluded by weather or is tactically not feasible. Mobile combat service support elements will possess the full range of warfighting functions, be task organized for the mission and, in addition to providing supply support, may contain limited maintenance and casualty handling capabilities. In order to accomplish their support mission, these elements must be fully integrated into the MAGTF command and control system. It is envisioned that maneuver forces will draw on these elements only in “emergency” situations, using direct support from the seabase for routine resupply and maintenance.

MAGTF ELEMENTS ASHORE

The MAGTF remains a seabased operational maneuver element throughout the Joint Force Commander’s prosecution of a sustained campaign. The inherent flexibility and seabased nature of the MAGTF create troublesome dilemmas for the enemy commander as he attempts to anticipate and counter potential MAGTF actions. Elements of the MAGTF, most commonly the ground combat element (GCE), will frequently operate ashore in order to accomplish assigned missions, sometimes for sustained periods. The prospect of operating ashore, however, is not limited to the GCE. Pursuant to mission accomplishment, the MAGTF commander has the responsibility to take those steps necessary to support his force in the most effective manner possible. This idea is particularly relevant as it applies to basing of aviation combat element (ACE) assets as Marine aviation flows into theater and potentially exceeds the deck space capacity of the seabase. Aviation is an integral part of the Marine Corps’ combined arms approach to warfighting; therefore, provision must be made for basing these assets where they can best function as part of the MAGTF combined arms team. Easily displaced advanced expeditionary airfields and advanced forward arming and refueling points, combined with

VSTOL and rotary wing aircraft will give the MAGTF commander the unique flexibility to employ his aviation in order to most efficiently accomplish the mission.

Marine air will, however, be seabased to the maximum extent practicable. Maneuver at sea applies to aviation assets as well as to ground forces and, properly executed, can reduce flight distances and time of response. The seabase also provides a relatively secure bed down site where maintenance can be conducted and crew rest accomplished. Should deck space constraints or operational requirements so dictate, however, selected aviation elements may operate ashore, as described above. This is not a preferred course of action, as it subjects personnel and equipment to many vulnerabilities and increases strain on the combat service support system.

KEY CAPABILITIES

Successful implementation of the concept for *The MAGTF in Sustained Operations Ashore* will require improvements in command and control, planning, intelligence, mobility, firepower, and logistics. Specific enhancements are discussed below. In aggregate, their synergistic effect results in a MAGTF with not only unmatched operational capabilities, but an equally unmatched level of force protection.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

Command and control provides the mechanism by which a commander recognizes what needs to be done and communicates those actions required to ensure mission accomplishment. Command and control in a sustained joint campaign requires the ability to coordinate the efforts of multiple, widely dispersed elements maneuvering through an extended and nonlinear battlespace. Key command and control capabilities required by the MAGTF to function as an OME include the ability to:

- establish and maintain a common operational picture among all elements of the MAGTF, utilizing advanced forward projection and reach-back technologies

- integrate the simultaneous actions of numerous maneuver forces
- quickly respond to new opportunities or changes in the situation
- coordinate and control external fires in support of maneuver forces ashore
- provide mechanisms for the rapid receipt of and response to requests for intelligence, operational, or logistics support

MAGTF command and control capabilities will be seabased, minimizing the personnel and logistics footprint of command elements through reach-back capabilities. “Reach-back” is a broad term and encompasses more than a unitary link to a single source of information resident in CONUS. It describes a widespread capability to exploit real time sources of information worldwide and, particularly, in theater. Additionally, this linkage must be available to every ship of the amphibious force, in order to support the multiple and often geographically separate taskings received by the MAGTF commander.

PLANNING

An OME is employed to exploit critical vulnerabilities or newly created operational advantages. The successful employment of the MAGTF as an OME depends upon its ability to respond to these situations by rapidly planning complex operations and quickly transitioning to execution. To do this, the MAGTF must be able to conduct rapid-response planning within severe time constraints. The MEU(SOC) planning process and standards can be used as a model for development of a larger MAGTF process. In order to anticipate future taskings, the MAGTF will require full connectivity to the joint force's common operational picture and must be able to monitor and participate in the JFC's planning process. In addition, the MAGTF must possess an effective distributive and collaborative planning system which enables widely-dispersed elements of the MAGTF to carry out real-time, interactive planning.

INTELLIGENCE

Timely and focused intelligence support is critical to the conduct of operational maneuver. Intelligence identifies opportunities for the employment of the OME and guides the planning and execution of actions to exploit those opportunities. In order to achieve and maintain situational awareness, anticipate taskings, and rapidly respond to assigned missions, the MAGTF must have full connectivity with the joint intelligence architecture and be able to request, receive, and utilize intelligence developed by all supporting national, theater, and joint force intelligence assets. While it is intuitive that the MAGTF maintain a robust organic capability to produce intelligence to satisfy mission-specific requirements of the MAGTF and subordinate element commanders, it must also be able to capitalize on equally robust reach-back capabilities to develop the requisite human intelligence and cultural awareness required for success in future chaotic, complex land operations.

In addition to possessing full connectivity to MAGTF and supporting joint intelligence assets, maneuver elements ashore must have responsive organic or direct-support capabilities in order to develop the situation, avoid contact with major enemy forces or strong points, identify exploitable opportunities, and aid in the development of rapid responses to fleeting opportunities. Organic MAGTF intelligence capabilities are required to provide responsiveness, granularity of detail, and focus on those intangible, human factors necessary for successful employment at the tactical level.

MOBILITY

The successful conduct of operational maneuver requires mobility at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. To function as an OME, the MAGTF must have the strategic mobility to reach the theater, the operational mobility to strike across the entire area of operations, and the tactical mobility to gain a positional advantage over the enemy once ashore. Strategic mobility is derived from the MAGTF's ability to deploy via a variety of airlift and sealift combinations. Enhancements in the MAGTF's strategic mobility as outlined in *MPF 2010 and Beyond* will increase both its flexibility and response time. Operational mobility is



the key to execution of operational maneuver and is provided by the ships and landing craft of the amphibious task force, aircraft of the ACE, and high-mobility vehicles of the GCE. Continued improvements are needed in these areas to provide the range and speed required by operational

maneuver. Tactical mobility is needed to adapt to changes in the situation and exploit opportunities as they arise. MAGTF maneuver forces must possess sufficient tactical mobility to gain positional advantage, retain the initiative, and avoid engagements when they are at a disadvantage. Aviation combat element aircraft will continue to provide significant tactical mobility; however, surface mobility via high-speed and protected vehicles will also be needed to support a flexible OME responsive across the spectrum of conflict.

FIREPOWER

Firepower is essential to achieving decisive effect on the enemy. The OME must be able to concentrate accurate, lethal and non-lethal fires at the right time and place. To do this, the MAGTF will draw on a wide range of organic and supporting fires. The majority of these will be provided as long-range precision and accurately delivered non-precision fires from supporting naval expeditionary forces or other components of the joint force. Availability of external fires provides the required lethality while maximizing the mobility of maneuver forces ashore and minimizing their logistical requirements. To employ the full range of supporting fires, all maneuver forces must be fully integrated into the MAGTF command and con-



trol system. In addition, maneuver forces must retain sufficient organic firepower to provide for their own force protection, adapt to unanticipated situations, or deal with asymmetrical threats which are less vulnerable to long-range, precision fires. Once ashore, maneuver forces possess the ability to discern and react to local conditions. MAGTF maneuver forces must have an appropriate mix of organic weaponry to provide discretionary firepower in response to opportunities or advantages as they develop.

LOGISTICS

To function effectively in the OME role, the MAGTF must be able to sustain the effort necessary to accomplish the operational mission. While



this concept envisions the focused use of tailored maneuver forces to strike at critical vulnerabilities and reduce operational centers of gravity in brief, decisive engagements, a number of scenarios may require MAGTF elements to remain ashore for prolonged periods. In these situations, the MAGTF must be able to support its maneuver elements for the duration

of the operation. To do so, the MAGTF must possess the capability to provide tailored logistics support to widely dispersed maneuver forces operating across the breadth and depth of the battlespace. Focused, responsive logistics will be needed to deliver critical support at precise times and locations. As with command and control, MAGTF sustainment will be seabased, minimizing combat service support elements ashore. Maneuver forces ashore will employ new sustainment methodologies to sustain themselves without loss of operational tempo. One of these methodologies may resemble the current ACE concept of forward arming and refueling points (FARP). A FARP in support of an OME, however, would be capable of rearming, refueling, resupplying, and repairing ground maneuver elements as well as aircraft. Another methodology involves the use of small, mobile, task-organized CSS elements ashore. Such elements could enhance throughput from the sea-

base for forces located at great distances inland as well as provide a mobile logistic reserve for forces remaining ashore for extended periods. MAGTF logistics capabilities in the areas of requirements processing, asset visibility, selective throughput, and rapid delivery must be enhanced in order to implement this concept.

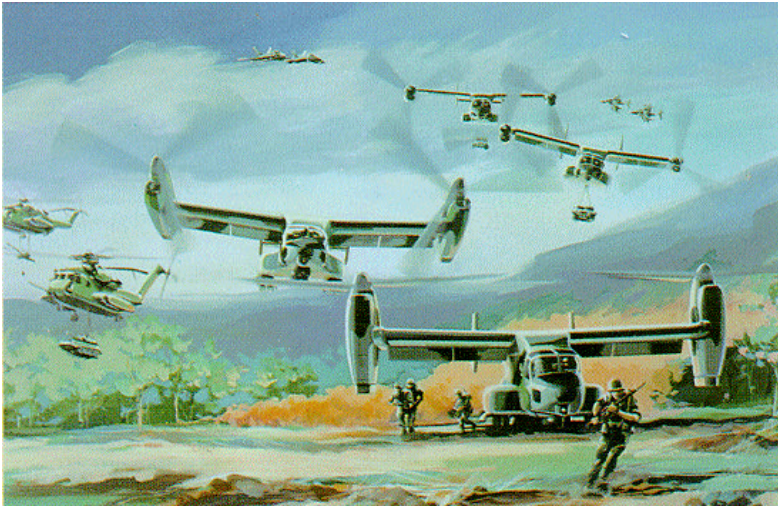
FORCE PROTECTION

The underlying premise of *The MAGTF in Sustained Operations Ashore* concept is enhanced Marine Corps utility to the warfighting commanders-in-chief and joint force commanders. Added to overall operational effectiveness, however, is the overriding requirement to protect our forces from increasingly dangerous enemies whose methods of attack will become more asymmetrical. One does not have to look back far in time to find instances where shore-based US expeditionary forces have suffered severe losses, even while participating in “peacekeeping” missions. The fact is that fixed installations and facilities are more vulnerable than those which are seabased. Employment of the MAGTF as a sea-based operational maneuver element optimizes its unique combined arms character; just as significantly, its overall force protection posture.

CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, the Marine air-ground team has performed well in short duration forcible entry operations and sustained operations ashore. The 21st Century MAGTF will be no different, but must align its tactics, techniques and procedures with the tenets of *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, *Ship to Objective Maneuver*, and *MPF 2010 and Beyond*. Seabasing is the thread that ties these concepts together, describing a capability which capitalizes on the maneuverability and protection afforded by the sea. The 21st Century MAGTF commander will exploit the seabased nature of his force to execute precise, focused combat actions, rather than participate in continuous, drawn-out ground operations.

The concept of *The MAGTF in Sustained Operations Ashore* addresses these very issues and creates the opportunity for a more versatile Marine



Corps role as an enabling, decisive, or exploitation force in future joint and combined operations. Unfettered by the requirement for in-theater infrastructure and unconstrained by manpower and equipment intensive rear areas, the MAGTF provides the joint force commander a truly decisive weapon with which to fight and win the land campaign.