



2013 CHIEF OF ARMY  
HISTORY CONFERENCE

# ARMIES & MARITIME STRATEGY

Edited by Peter Dennis

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ARMIES AND MARITIME STRATEGY

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# Introduction

As Australia's long-running involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan draws to a close, the Australian Defence Force, and especially the Australian Army, is faced with a strategic situation that offers no easy answers. What lessons can be drawn from these and other post-Vietnam deployments, and how should they impact on the ADF of the future? For the Army in particular, the dilemmas are profound. Budgetary restrictions (though in truth, these have always been present) and a widespread public disquiet over the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences—especially given the questionable results achieved—put enormous pressure on the Services to explain the rationale that underpins the development of their force structures and the expenditure that makes it possible. Professionals might well cringe when, for example, the public asks 'What is the Army / Air Force / Navy for?' but it is not an unreasonable question and deserves a more thoughtful answer than is often (and sometimes grudgingly) given. Today the ADF is poised to enter an exciting but very challenging new era. Not since the latter stages of the Pacific War has it aspired to develop an Australian land component capable of being transported, lodged, sustained, supported and delivered by Australian joint forces. Ever since the strategic shock of the East Timor crisis in 1999 Australian governments of all political persuasions have recognised that the security of Australia and its interests requires the ADF to be capable of joint and coalition operations both within our immediate region and further afield.

The papers from the 2013 Chief of Army History Conference attempt to provide some context within which the questions arising out of these challenges can be addressed. Drawing on examples ranging from the Napoleonic Wars to the present, and looking at the experiences of the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and Australia across two centuries, the centrality of sea power to military effectiveness in its broadest sense is unquestionable. As these papers make clear, military force in conjunction with sea power can produce very positive outcomes. However, inherent in a maritime strategy is the potential difficulty of inter-service cooperation, sometime arising from personal rivalries but more often from misunderstanding and a failure to appreciate fully what is possible and

## *Introduction*

what is not. Another challenge is to educate the public. In the final essay Michael Evans points out the long tradition in Australian culture of ignoring the sea, a bizarre frame of mind considering the geography of our island continent. As some of the comments in the press about the wisdom or otherwise of the projected submarine development reveal, there is a long way to go before the ADF can confidently rely on the support of an informed public. In urging the study of military history by and for the profession of arms, Michael Howard has warned that 'the purpose of military history is not to make us more clever next time, but wiser forever'. Over many years the Chief of Army History Conference has sought to contribute to that evolution.

I am indebted to the speakers for their patience and cooperation in the publishing process, which has been far more protracted than I would have wished; to Roger Lee, Andrew Richardson, Nick Anderson and Tania Hampson of the Army History Unit for their work in running the conference; to Margaret McNally for her customary skill in producing the published proceedings; and to Terry McCullagh for compiling the index at very short notice.

Peter Dennis

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# Maritime Perspectives on Strategy

*Geoffrey Till*

## Introduction: A Naming of Parts

This review of strategy from a maritime perspective should start with an exercise in the 'naming of parts'—namely what do we mean by the term 'Maritime Strategy.' Plainly this is an essential pre-requisite to considering what might be the role that armies will play in it. Although following chapters will be looking at what Mahan and Corbett have to say on the matter, we really have to start with Corbett's definition of the term. Corbett distinguished very carefully between 'maritime' (a term he applied to the conduct of a war in which the sea is an important factor) and 'naval' which was about the disposition, movement and immediate purposes of the fleet. He was an advocate of the combined efforts of the Navy and the Army acting in mutual support for the achievement of the country's strategic objectives—and had the Air Force existed in his time he would doubtless have included them too.

It had to be that way:

Since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided—except in the rarest cases—either by what your army can do against your enemy's territory and national life or else by the fear of what the fleet makes it possible for your army to do.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the constructive and synergistic operations of armies and navies was taken forward and explored much further by Sir Charles Callwell, a fellow traveller in Corbett's caravan. He was interested, much more in exactly how the land and sea components should interact in support of a common aim:

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1 Sir Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green 2nd edn, 1911; Reprinted with Introduction by Eric Grove (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 15-16.



It has been the purpose of this volume to show how naval preponderance and warfare on land are mutually dependent, if the one is to assert itself conclusively and if the other is to be carried out with vigour and effect. There is an intimate connection between command of the sea and control of the shore. But if the strategical principles involved in this connection are to be put in force to their full extent, if the whole of the machinery is to be set in motion, there must be co-ordination of authority and there must be harmony in the council chambers and in the theatre of operations ... 'United we stand, divided we fall' is a motto singularly applicable to the navy and army of a maritime nation and of a world-wide empire.<sup>2</sup>

The balance between the two components (or latterly the three, counting the air force) depended, he said, on what was appropriate to the particular circumstances. Broadly, this kind of thinking generally figures quite strongly in naval doctrinal formulations around the world, since they tend to be inherently joint.<sup>3</sup>

This joint, maritime approach found—and finds—expression in the conduct of what we would now call 'expeditionary' operations, that is, operations conducted against an adversary at some distance from one's home base, usually for some fairly limited objective and usually (but not always) involving a sufficient degree of sea (and now air) control.

But—and here's an important caveat—Corbett, Callwell and the rest of them were actually talking about what seems to us now to be a rather narrow range of circumstances. Note the reference in the Corbett quotation above to 'great issues between nations at war'. This was the

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- 2 Charles E. Callwell, *Military Operations and Maritime Preponderance: Their Relations and Interdependence* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996). Colin Gray's introduction to the reprint of this volume which originally appeared in 1905 is especially useful. Callwell and Corbett are both discussed more extensively in my *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Routledge, 2013), 61-73. See also J.J. Widen, *Theorist of Maritime Strategy: Sir Julian Corbett and his Contribution to Military and Naval Thought* (London: Routledge, 2012).
  - 3 British, Australian, Dutch and Indian doctrines generally in support this claim. Its close relationship with the powerful US Marine Corps, and the aerial strength of both services, makes US Navy thinking seem rather different.

main focus and the intellectual construct through which, by and large<sup>4</sup> the British maritime school of the early 20th Century looked at the operations of armies and navies.

A good case can be made for the comparative strategic effectiveness of the maritime approach over the past several centuries, despite the required descent into continental conceptions of war for much of the 20th Century.<sup>5</sup> And there *is* a very respectable argument for saying that much of this seems likely to be equally true for the Asia-Pacific of the 21st Century as it was earlier. Perhaps the most compelling reason for arguing this is the growing extent to which the sea shapes the region's destiny. Partly this is a simple response to the growth of sea-based trade in the Asia-Pacific Region. Something like 87 per cent of East Asian GDP in 2008 can be credited to seaborne trade, and that has almost doubled over the past two decades.<sup>6</sup> Partly it reflects the fact that great ocean spaces divide (or unite!) the region's major players, the US, China, Japan, India, Australia and so on. Partly it is the consequence of so many maritime disputes over jurisdiction stretching from the Kurile islands north of Japan to the Indian border, encouraged no doubt by the region's growing hunger for the resources to be found there, most obviously oil, gas and fish.

This maritime cast to conceptions of national interest seems to have encouraged a rising nationalism in the area such that it would seem decidedly premature to write off the possibility of state-on-state conflict of the kind Corbett and all the rest of them were preoccupied by on the grounds of the uniting effects of globalisation. So the continued salience of the historical experience of the maritime expeditionary approach in the possible state-on-state conflict of the future, especially perhaps in this region, will undoubtedly and properly continue to be a major preoccupation.

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4 This caveat applies particularly to Callwell, not least for what was in fact his most original work, namely, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (reprinted) (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). In this he explored the conduct of the much wider range of conflicts that had in fact been the day-to-day preoccupation of the British army through the 19th Century.

5 These arguments were reviewed in my 'The Economics of Sea Power: Testing the Maritime Narrative', in Andrew Forbes (ed.), *The Naval Contribution to National Security and Prosperity* (Canberra: Sea Power Centre, 2013).

6 World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, 20-08, cited in Amit A Pandya et al., *Maritime Commerce and Security: The Indian Ocean* (Washington, DC: The Stimson Center, 2011), 34.

But, although what the great maritime strategists of the past said about this retains considerable salience for the 21st Century, what Corbett, Callwell and so on *didn't* say, and the situations they did *not* deal with, is interesting too, and it is on this that the rest of this chapter will focus.

Corbett especially was a cool rationalist who did not pay much attention to the existence and still less the consequences of Clausewitz's famous 'trinity of war', and the animal passions and totally irrational activity in war and in situations far short of that, that it so often produces. Accordingly, he does not really discuss forms of conflict other than those conducted between states, although he was certainly aware of them.<sup>7</sup> His preoccupation was with orthodox conceptions of war, not the messy, unstable conflicts characteristic of the much-less-than-perfect peace by which today's armed forces are confronted on a sadly common basis.<sup>8</sup> So what of the maritime/expeditionary approach in this alternative set of circumstances? How necessary might it be? And what would be its requirements?

First, we need to return to a definitional issue raised earlier, namely, what exactly do we mean by an 'expeditionary' capability in the 21st Century? Plainly it includes a maritime country's capacity to exploit the manoeuvre space offered by the ocean to confound the land-bound ambitions of continental powers, as Corbett, Callwell and the rest of them urged a century ago.<sup>9</sup> But alongside this familiar conception of coercive state-on-state expeditionary operations, there increasingly features a much wider and often much less confrontational set of activities that include forward engagement, disaster relief and humanitarian operations alongside robust action against a variety of state and non-state threats to the global system. These can range from Operation *Solace*, the RAN's relief efforts to Somalia in 1993, to the recent action in Libya.<sup>10</sup> On the face of it, Corbett, Callwell and the rest of them did not really address such issues.

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7 His treatment of the Seven Years War for example showed a lively appreciation of the strategic significance of the proxy messy conflict between Indians, French and British in the great area to the west of the 13 colonies.

8 A point brilliantly made by Michael Howard: 'The Transformation of Strategy', *Journal of the RUSI*, August/September 2011. Callwell, in his *Small Wars* volume came rather closer than others in the school to making the same point.

9 This indeed is the main argument advanced in Corbett's *England and the Seven Years War*, 2 Vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1907).

10 John Perryman, 'Operation Solace—RAN Relief to Somalia 1993', *Semaphore*, May 2013.

## **The Advantages of the Maritime Approach for the 21st Century**

So, if this broadly, is what is now generally understood by the notion of a maritime expeditionary strategy, what advantages might such an approach have in the 21st Century, especially in this region?

There seem to me to be three main advantages, and they are all linked:

1: *The Maritime Approach suits political and strategic reality.*

As a good student of Clausewitz, Corbett was well aware of the need to ensure that what armies and navies did was appropriate for the political context, and served the country's strategic interests within that context. The point has already been made that trade and geography have combined to make the international context uniquely maritime in the Asia-Pacific. But there is a broader point too. The experience of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has combined to give the participants a strong distaste for that kind of inadvertent continentalism and a determination not to engage in anything similar for the foreseeable future if at all possible. The disinclination of bystanders like China to intervene in this kind of way will also doubtless have been reinforced.

The Afghan war did not play to the strengths of the maritime approach, despite the substantial role played in it by sea-lift, carrier-based air and marines. Partly of course, this is a matter of geography. Afghanistan is a land-locked country, with a primitive infrastructure, complex social characteristics, a traditional aversion to central government and porous border regions abutting outside areas that are supportive of the insurgency. Resourceful adversaries have repeatedly demonstrated their capacity to make the most of the Coalition's unavoidable logistic vulnerabilities, not least the fiendishly expensive land transit phase through Pakistan which has so often been attacked or pilfered.<sup>11</sup> Worst of all, arguably, in Afghanistan UN and NATO forces were, for all their dedication and professionalism, labouring under the enormous disadvantage of their association with a regime seen as illegitimate by a disappointingly large proportion of the local population. Good strategy is about making the best use of one's advantages, and denying the adversary the ability to do the same. In Afghanistan-type counter-insurgency situations, this is

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11 'Military gear missing from Afghan mission shipments', *CBC News*, 10 January 2012.

particularly difficult. Worse, long-term boots-on-the-ground can often seem to be counter-productive, more part of the problem than of the solution, especially when, to the locals, their presence seems to take the form of inaccurate air-strikes based on faulty intelligence which kill or injure innocent civilians. The longer garrisoning forces stay in such places, the worse this problem usually gets, especially if they aren't big and well-armed enough, relative to the challenge they face and, moreover, unprepared economically, strategically and politically for the inevitable long haul.<sup>12</sup>

Objectively two points can be made against this perspective:

- First, that such an intervention was necessary: 'wars pick us, we don't pick them.'
- Second, that history will show in due course that the operation was successful in that the Afghan people will prove capable of handling their own affairs.

Both observations may be, or turn out to be, perfectly true, but rightly or wrongly the political disinclination for a repeat performance will surely remain. It will be reinforced, I suspect, by the professional opinion of those within the armed services eager to resume normal business, whether this is ASW, amphibiosity, striving for air superiority, global defence engagement or whatever it might be.

This absolutely does not mean 'good-bye cruel world' and a retreat to territorial defence. Instead it implies a recognition of the continuing need to go to a crisis that affects national interests and/or threatens the international system on which those interests ultimately depend. But it does imply a rather more hard-headed—perhaps hard-boiled—assessment of the true extent of those interests and more attention paid to the possible/likely costs, and clearer perceptions of cost-effectiveness.<sup>13</sup>

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12 'Afghan sitrep' *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 June 2010; John J. Mearsheimer, 'Afghanistan: No More The Good War', *Newsweek Special Edition*, June 2010. Even in the pages of the *British Army Review* the perceived need for major re-thinking seems clear. See Charles Dick, 'Afghanization—Delusion or Deceit?', and William F Owen, 'Killing Your way to Control', in the Spring edition 2011. There is now something of a fashion for regarding the Counter-Insurgency focus of the 9/11 decade as a detour from normal business.

13 For this kind of thinking see Robert Kaplan, 'Public Morality and the Case for neo-Realism', *The National Interest*, August 2013. R2P [Responsibility to Protect] should be replaced by R4P!

It may also require a greater proportion of the expeditionary effort to be devoted to possibly enduring forms of post-conflict stabilisation and less to the more coercive aspects of the strategy.<sup>14</sup>

With all such caveats, to judge by the nature of naval and indeed military programs around the world, this expeditionary narrative still seems to have global resonance, at least with those countries with the necessary wherewithal and global outlooks.<sup>15</sup>

Applying this general point to Australia, some analysts (perhaps a majority) do indeed argue along very Corbettian lines, and emphasise the country's need to develop capacities for forward defence engagement and expeditionary operations, partly to secure its own interests and partly to service its alliance with the US, perhaps especially given the latter's re-balancing towards the Pacific. Others, however, urge the country's geographical ability to distance itself from regional conflicts, doubt the wisdom of antagonising China by over-developing relations with the US and would rely instead on a strategy of air/sea denial against (unlikely) threats from the north. In all such debates, the roles of the armed forces clearly follow very different interpretations of what the strategic context demands, and the fleet structure aspirations that follow on from them.<sup>16</sup> But either for or against they are all moulded by perceptions of the political context.

## *2: The Relative Controllability of Limited, Maritime Interventions*

Cost-effectiveness depends critically on the controllability of the enterprise—and maritime operations do seem to have a distinct advantage over others in this respect. As Sir Francis Bacon famously remarked, 'This much is certain, that he that commands the sea is at great liberty, and may

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14 Hence the current debate about the largely French effort in Mali. Thus Aryn Baker, 'Perils of Intervention', *Time*, 24 June 2013; Joe Glenton, 'Don't Forget the critical role of China in Mali', *The Independent*, 18 January 2013.

15 Nick Lee-Frampton, 'Expeditionary Task Force central to NZ 10-year Plan', *DefenseNews*, 10 October 2011; Tim Ripley, 'British Army looks to reactive and adaptive divisions', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 27 June 2012.

16 These issues are discussed in 'Australia's difficult defence balance', *IISS Strategic Comments*, July 2013. Also Sam Bateman, 'East Asia's Evolving Maritime Security Environment—an Australian Perspective', draft paper for the RUSI/MacArthur workshop 21 February 2013; Andrew Davies, 'Australia's Next Defence White Paper', and Benjamin Schreer and Sheryn Lee, 'The Willing Ally? Australian Strategic Policy in a Contested Asia', both in *Journal of the RUSI*, October/November 2012.

take as much and as little of the war as he will. Whereas those that be strongest by land are many times nevertheless in great straits.<sup>17</sup>

The sea allows limited interventions ashore that profit from the options for manoeuvre that in turn derive from the sheer extent and ubiquity of the world ocean; it also allows a greater capacity to calibrate the level of effort and vulnerability of forces that use it as a base. It means, in modern terminology, that instead of getting sucked into other peoples' quarrels, powers with a maritime approach can aim to be 'offshore-balancers', intervening, in a limited and therapeutic way, where, when, and to the extent, they want, while always retaining the option of pulling out if circumstances demand it. Here, arguably, a focus on the means available will shape perceptions of the objective to be sought.

The recent Libya experience is an interesting example of this approach. On the one hand, it can be seen as a cost-effective military enterprise conducted largely by NATO's air and naval components with Special Forces and other specialist land elements, acting of course in conjunction with local land forces. In securing general world approval for a strategy of protecting civilians from a vindictive and failing regime, it was successful. Civilian collateral deaths were kept to a very low level; there were no NATO deaths, and the financial costs, for the British, for the same six month period were barely 12 per cent of their costs in Afghanistan. The mission itself was an operational success and the large-scale presence of conventional NATO ground forces was not after all proved to be necessary, although that remained at least in theory, an option.<sup>18</sup>

All the same, though, there were intimations of danger, even in such success. The first was that the initial military incompetence of the insurgents and the National Transitional Council's refusal to treat with Gaddafi meant there was a degree of mission creep into the aspiration for regime-change, and so it all took longer than expected. Moreover, consolidating that success remains a significant post-conflict commitment.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Cited with evident approval by Corbett in *Some Principles* (1988), 58.

18 Malcolm Chalmers, 'Libya and Afghanistan: Cost Analysis', in *Accidental Heroes: Britain, France and the Libya Operation*, Interim RUSI Campaign report, September 2011. 'Early Military Lessons from Libya', *IISS Strategic Comments*, 30 September 2011.

19 Chris Stephen, 'A year after Gaddafi's death, Libya remains a land torn by conflict', *The Guardian*, 20 October 2012; Tim Ripley, 'UK to train Libyans, send more military aid to Lebanon,' *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 July 2013.

The second intimation of danger is an abiding lack of certainty about the long-term *strategic* consequences of the operation given the uncertainties of the Arab Spring, which help explain the West's reluctance to get over-involved in the more substantial problems of Syria.<sup>20</sup> The price of moderation, in other words, seems to be eternal vigilance against the inadvertent expansion, rather than maintenance, of the aim.

### *3: Salience for an Age of Contingency*

Thirdly, few would disagree that we are living in an unpredictable world of few certainties. We are all looking through a glass darkly and few nations can distance themselves from the uncertainties and the unexpected dangers this presents.

The system is therefore faced with a number of threats to which those with a strong national interest in its peace and prosperity need to respond. These include:

- Inter-state war. The disruptions to the world economy that a US-China conflict over Taiwan would have are unimaginable. The threats of this are currently low, but we need to help keep them so.
- Deliberate attack by forces, both state and non-state, hostile to the intentions, values and outcomes of globalisation.
- Disorder ashore and at sea, especially in areas that produce crucial commodities, through which critical transportation routes run or which have clear links to world security and/or prosperity. The disorder may be man-made or the result of catastrophic weather events. These can all create systemic instabilities.

As China is in the process of fast discovering, involvement in the world's affairs brings new responsibilities whether you want them or not.<sup>21</sup> Your economic interests and investments may be threatened by local disorder, transnational crime in its manifold forms, or by the hostile relations of others. Your citizens may be put in danger and your population insist that they are rescued. In some cases, although this seems to apply much

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20 'Syria: foreign intervention still debated, but distant', *IISS Strategic Comments*, September 2012.

21 '29 Chinese captured after attack in Sudan', *The Straits Times*, 30 January 2012; Drew Hinshaw, 'China tensions in Africa Stoked by Ghana arrests', *Wall Street Journal*, 10 June 2013.



less to the pragmatic Chinese than it does to the tenderer consciences of the West, your values may be outraged by extremist action of one sort or another, catastrophic natural events and so forth.

For most internationally active countries—security providers rather than security consumers—defending the conditions for trade means , above all else, deterring conflict and preventing the onset of ruinous war. Vulnerabilities that might tempt others need to be avoided, rising powers accommodated (provided their aims are compatible with the defence of the system) and unnecessary arms races avoided. It requires a collective emphasis on global security, an acceptance of commonality of interest in the defence of the system and the need for international maritime cooperation as a means of narrowing the gap between necessary commitments and available resources. Situations that give rise to failing states or malign regimes where terrorism can flourish and disorder reign can hopefully be prevented by proactive and comprehensive capacity building by military and non-military forces inside the framework of a globalised trading system that is made to seem fairer and so more sustainable than it appears to many people at the moment.<sup>22</sup> In an increasingly maritime world, it is hard to exaggerate the importance of seapower-enabled engagement of this sort. Specifically system-defence requires having access to an appropriate force structure and the capacity to conduct limited expeditionary operations where and when absolutely necessary.

The problem is that although such dependencies on stability in far-off places can be safely predicted in general, their incidence in particular places can come like a bolt from the blue and require fast if not instant reaction. And each contingency is likely to be unique in at least some of its key attributes.

Despite the difficulties and the expense, there is growing acceptance around the world of the need to build forces capable of responding rapidly and effectively to a host of unpredicted contingencies, ranging from natural disasters to outbursts of conflict that are common only in that they seem to require limited intervention by forces from outside, usually acting in consort with others.

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22 Mike Moore, *Saving Globalization: Why Globalization and Democracy are the Best Hope for Progress, Peace and Development* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

For this, the maritime approach seems uniquely suited. Because of the ubiquity of the sea, and the capacity to operate from the sea and to base much of one's activity at sea, non-intrusive and proactive actions can be taken that are designed to head off instability ashore and fast and varied responses made where they nonetheless prove necessary. This is the kind of thinking behind the British Response Force Task Group concept, which is designed to achieve maritime influence and provide political choice and significant contingent capability to deal with unexpected events.

Catering for contingency in an expeditionary context would seem to require capacity across a whole range of activities, including, and in no particular order:

- Defence Engagement, both proactive and reactive.(The FPDA is a good example of the preferable proactive variant of this.<sup>23</sup>)
- Capacity-building—everything from Security Sector Reform to Maritime Security Operations.
- The 'Away Game' aspect of Maritime Security (i.e. easing the drugs problem in Glasgow by monitoring the situation in Jamaica and helping develop local law enforcement agencies).
- Humanitarian assistance and disaster response.
- Limited interventions ashore (East Timor, Sierra Leone, Libya—Desert Storm?).

### **A Maritime Approach: The Requirements**

A successful maritime strategy based on the notion of catering for contingencies requires attention to both the end objective and the means by which a nation's leaders hope to help achieve it.

#### *The moderation of policy*

Politically, the maritime approach normally seems to require moderation in policy, in the identification of objectives. Historically associated with pragmatic policy motivations that revolve around the defence of trade,

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23 Thus the then Singaporean Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen at the Shangri-La Dialogue Conference, Singapore, 1 June 2013: 'Over the coming years, practical cooperation through established multilateral defence and security frameworks such as the FPDA will become even more important to maintain and enhance regional cooperation and security.'

the maritime expeditionary approach avoids large scale ambitions that seem likely to require engagement in large-scale, cost-ineffective land campaigns especially on the mainland of Asia. As Walter A. McDougall has recently observed: Japan enjoyed regional naval supremacy, indeed a sort of Japanese Monroe Doctrine, from 1904 to 1937. But rather than seeing insular Japan as the Asian mirror of Britain and privileging naval power, the Mikado saw Japan as the Asian mirror of Germany and privileged the Army. Hence Japan exhausted itself in a suicidal bid for a mainland empire. One might even say, the British, too, lost their maritime supremacy by engaging in two exhausting world wars on land. One might even wonder whether the United States is in danger of squandering its supremacy through a series of discretionary land wars in Asia.<sup>24</sup> Such are the dangers for maritime powers trapped by circumstances into expansive aims, commitments and conflicts.

By contrast, as Robert Rubel has argued, 'Therapeutic incisions have been and will continue to be necessary at various times and places.'<sup>25</sup> Surgeons engaged in such activity hopefully have considered the options carefully before they start operating. Their aim is to ensure that the incision is indeed therapeutic. The political and resource challenges will usually require such actions to be taken in the company of other partners both local and not, preferably operating under UN mandate. Neither large scale endeavours to assure national survival nor the success of ideological crusades would fit happily in this rubric.

Next we need to turn from Ends and Ways, to the Means of a maritime approach.

### **Expeditionary Armed Forces**

Obviously, the three armed services will need to reflect the likely practical requirements of expeditionary contingency operations. This will affect what they have in terms of capability, and what they do with what they've got.

As far as the naval component is concerned, this is likely to require a capacity to operate safely in shallow waters, the ability to command

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24 Walter A. McDougall, 'History and Strategies: Grand, Maritime and American', *The Telegram* (FPRI-Temple University Consortium on Grand Strategy), October 2011.

25 Robert C. Rubel, 'Navies and Economic prosperity- the New Logic of Sea power', Corbett Paper 11, King's College London.

and support forces ashore in distant operational areas, sea-lift, naval gunfire and missile support, and the provision of defensive and offensive airpower ability if needed. All of these characteristics were required of British in the recent Libya campaign.<sup>26</sup>

Sea portability and basing, and consequently a certain required 'lightness' in weaponry and autonomy in logistics, would seem to be necessary as far the land component is concerned. The provision of special elements expressly designed to cooperate across the domains, such as Britain's 148 Battery Royal Artillery (which supports Naval Gunfire Support) and the Army Air Corps is likely to increase.<sup>27</sup> Indeed the current operation of US Army Apaches from a US amphibious warfare ship in the Gulf seems to show that land involvement is some form or other in sea-based endeavour is both a growing and a global trend.<sup>28</sup>

Political sensitivity about the loss of life in what are, after all, operations of choice mean that there will need to be high levels of protection and offensive capability in order to increase the prospect for fast decisive low-cost outcomes. The experience of counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan remain relevant. As the US Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno has recently made clear, for all the attractions of basing forces at sea and for all the maritime character of the region. The dominant service within most foreign nations and every country in the US Pacific Command region is their army.<sup>29</sup>

If for no other reason the land component in some form or other remains a key component of a properly conceived expeditionary strategy. Nonetheless, in the wake of those two conflicts, armies are clearly involved in a period of introspection about future priorities, that has become quite painful when associated with budget cuts.<sup>30</sup>

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26 Tim Ripley, 'RN Libya report calls for new land-attack options', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 18 January, 2012.

27 Lt Cdr Rob Stephens, 'The Road to Afghanistan—the Story of the Junglies', *British Army Review* 155 (Autumn 2012), 41-54.

28 'US Army Helos Train on Navy Ships in the Gulf', *Defensenews*, 2 September 2013

29 Daniel Wasserbly, 'Army chief outlines ground force role in new strategy', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 1 February 2012.

30 This is certainly the case for the British Army. Peter Felsted, 'British Army homes in on future force structure', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8 February 2012; Tim Ripley, 'The British Army in 2012; Living on the Edge', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 15 February 2012.

The expeditionary air component needs to be capable of swiftly moving into theatre when the necessity arises, and, once there, capable of assuring air superiority and most importantly providing close air support with the kind of precision that will achieve operational objectives while keeping civilian casualties to a minimum. Again the interest in developing strategic air lift and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance appears to be a global phenomenon.

A problem for both the land and air components once ashore is that while they will be needed for very many likely contingencies, their footprint can prove a political complication and they may even provide a target for adversaries. Hence the advantage in a maritime strategy of basing such capabilities at sea as much as possible.

The problem for the maritime component, however, is the spread around the world of the means of what the Americans call A2/AD, that is anti-access, area denial capabilities in the shape of shore-based missiles and aircraft, mines, diesel submarines and effective fast attack craft. Even in the East Timor operation the presence of Indonesian SSKs needed to be taken seriously, and the situation has arguably deteriorated since then. Hence the revival of the interest of Western navies in developing forces capable of going in harm's way and still able to do their business.

The Americans with their penchant for sexy, snappy titles label this the Air-Sea Battle which has even more unfortunately become associated with putative containment of China. In fact it is part of a general issue faced by the world's more internationally active navies and increasingly of those Asia-Pacific navies that have such expeditionary aspirations.<sup>31</sup> In general, most sailors remain confident that they will be able to deal with this latest sea denial challenge as well as they have with all of its predecessors. But we should be clear, if they are wrong, then the capacity to engage in contingency operations will be very severely restricted. Accordingly it is in the expeditionary interests of the land and air components that this challenge is indeed overcome. Hence the widespread joint interest in multinational exercises like 'Bold Alligator' in 2012 which partially sought to revive amphibious skills neglected over the past decade.<sup>32</sup>

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31 Evidently including New Zealand with its creation of the Joint Amphibious Task force (JATF). Interview with Lt General Rhys Jones, *DefenseNews*, 28 January 2013.

32 Sam Lagrone, "'Bold Alligator' tests amphibious innovations', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8 February 2013. The greatest professional concern, though, is about amphibious assault on defended beaches, which does not tend to be a problem in most lower intensity intervention operations. Or even the Al-Faw peninsula in 2003.

The alternative conclusion advanced by Hugh White and others, indeed, is that sea denial technologies and procedures as such have advanced so much that what might be called coercive expeditionary operations will become too difficult against all but the least capable of adversaries. Instead Australia should develop its own sea denial capabilities against threats to the north by building an effective submarine force rather than waste its money on the kind of vessels needed to sustain an increasingly unfeasible expeditionary policy.<sup>33</sup>

The commonality of the aim and of service interest in the success of expeditionary contingency operations will also require the three components to inter-operate as effectively as possible with each other and indeed with their opposite numbers from other countries. Frequent exercise interactions will help in better coordinated operational planning, command and control, the harmonisation of rules of engagement especially in targeting protocols, communications, intelligence, training and logistics. These are critical, extremely complicated and often expensive requirements that cannot simply be improvised when such forces come together in common cause. The command and control of non-combatant evacuation operations is a good example of the kind of cross-domain military activity that demands prior preparation of this sort.<sup>34</sup> The fact that even NATO got aspects of its command and control arrangements in Libya troublingly wrong shows just how difficult in practice this is.<sup>35</sup>

The task is particularly challenging when it is a question of integrating the efforts of occasional rather than regular partners, but the ready availability of NATO standards certainly helps.<sup>36</sup> But of course, the problem with allies and partners is that sometimes they have minds and interests of their own.<sup>37</sup>

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33 Hugh White, 'A Middling power: Why Australia's defence is all at sea', *The Monthly*, 12 September 2012. Also in *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*.

34 Craig Sutherland and Michael Codner, 'Command and Control During Non-Combatant Evacuation', *Journal of the RUSI* 157: 3 (June-July 2012), 12-20. The command and control of non-combatant evacuation operations is a good example of military activity that particularly benefits from experience.

35 'Secret Report Criticizes NATO's Command in Libya', *DefenseNews*, 29 October 2012.

36 Tom Kington, 'Managing Limited Assets', *DefenseNews*, 2 May 2011.

37 'Anglo-French defence: "Entente Frugale plus"', *IISS Strategic Comments*, 12 March 2012; Mark Laity, 'The latest test for NATO', *Journal of the RUSI* 157: 1 (February-March 2012), 52-8.

All of these requirements of course are associated with *reactions* to contingency. Such are in fact evidence of previous failures in the broader campaign to defend the international stability on which the system depends. This broader more *proactive* campaign aims to make such reactions unnecessary by dealing with problems ashore before they turn into strategic challenges. Here the day-to-day business of forward defence engagement, all-round capacity building and disaster relief assumes even greater prominence in the operational priorities of all three components. Instead of being something useful to do when there isn't a serious war to fight or prepare for, it becomes core business, as was suggested by the US Navy's 'Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower,' back in 2007.

Because 'security' has become so wide a term, the 'need to massage the environment in a nice way' adds further emphasis to the need for the three components collectively to engage more effectively still with Other Government Departments and Non-Governmental Organisations than they already do.

### **Conclusion**

The tentative conclusion is that the more an out-going, hard-headed, maritime and expeditionary approach is adhered to, the greater the likelihood that Western maritime powers will be able to sustain their peace and prosperity and the rising powers of Asia to develop it.

It might be objected that there is little that is new in any of this, that it merely marks in many respects a nostalgic rediscovery of the traditional maritime approach aimed essentially at the direct and indirect defence of trade, of maintaining maritime security, wherever possible of capacity-building and offshore balancing and where absolutely necessary of hard-nosed limited engagement for maximum effect.<sup>38</sup> But this should be a recommendation not a criticism. Such a strategy has served the maritime powers well over the past several hundred and despite the occasional exceptions of the past and the obvious novelties and manifold obscurities of the present and future, seem likely to serve the emerging generation equally well now.

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38 Colin Gray, 'Britain's National Security: Compulsion and Discretion', *Journal of the RUSI* (December 2008), makes the point admirably.

# Mahan and Corbett: Concepts of Economic Warfare

*James Goldrick*

This paper focuses on Mahan and Corbett's thinking in relation to economic warfare, or what can be called the 'war of supply'. It may seem odd within a conference sponsored by the Army to focus on an aspect of maritime strategy in which land forces usually have only indirect involvement. But usually does not mean always. Early in the First World War, amongst the key reasons for the British Cabinet approving the assault on the Dardanelles was the hope that Russian wheat exports from the Ukraine could be resumed through the opening of the Black Sea. This would provide much-needed food security as well as reduced bread prices in Britain and France, while giving Russia (before August 1914 the world's largest exporter of wheat) an equally needed source of hard currency to pay for munitions.<sup>1</sup>

If we are to comprehend maritime strategy in its totality, it is vital that we develop an understanding of the issues of supply warfare in the maritime domain and the ways in which people like Mahan and Corbett thought about it. Arguably, this is only a part of spanning the reality of nation-state conflict and of grand strategy. Mahan himself commented that, 'Logically separable, in practice the political, commercial and military needs are so intertwined that their mutual interaction constitutes one problem.'<sup>2</sup>

In particular, there are real difficulties with treating in isolation the famous assertion of Corbett that 'Since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been

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1 For a new examination of the role of economic warfare in British war planning before and during the First World War, see Nicholas A. Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and The First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). For the Dardanelles decision and wheat, see 320 & 335-6.

2 Alfred Thayer Mahan, 'Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies'. Originally published in *National Review* 39 (July 1902), reprinted in John B. Hattendorf (ed.), *Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections from the Writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 281.



decided—except in the rarest cases—either by what your army can do against your enemy’s territory and national life or else by the fear of what the fleet makes it possible for your army to do.’<sup>3</sup> This statement is *necessary* in emphasising the requirement for effective coordination between navy and army and, by extension, the air force, but not *sufficient* as a definition of maritime strategy, of what Corbett described as ‘the principles which govern a war in which the sea is a substantial factor’.<sup>4</sup>

Corbett’s dictum has been interpreted, particularly since the end of the Cold War, in a literal way that confuses what became in later years his real message, that final *effects* on land are what count, with the idea that only *operations* on land are what matter and what the fleet can do in support of such operations is what defines the role of the navy. This is an assumption to which many soldiers are prone. The problem is it ignores the fact that the ‘war of supply’ needs to be conducted alongside and in conjunction with what could be described as the ‘war of territory’—and it is a war of supply that extends not only to the protection or interruption of the movement of *military* materials necessary to sustain *military* campaigns, but to the protection or interruption of the movement of materials required to sustain the national war machine, and even national life itself. These materials tend to go by sea, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. As Mahan has said, you cannot have one type of war without the other, a truism that is clearly evident from the history of the First World War. It is something that Corbett himself came to think in the light of that experience.

This paper therefore will not examine Mahan’s apparent fixation with the decisive naval battle, or Corbett’s apparently more subtle thesis which emphasises the combination of naval and military forces to achieve necessary military effects. Indeed, it may well be that, in terms of economic warfare and economic understanding before 1914, Mahan was more sophisticated than his British colleague. Mahan wrote of globalisation:

As regards the commercial factor, never before in the history of the world has it been so inextricably commingled with politics. The interdependence of nations for the necessities and luxuries of life have been marvellously increased by the

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3 Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (With an Introduction and Notes by Eric J. Grove) (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 16.

4 *Ibid.*, 15.

growth of population and the habits of comfort contracted by the peoples of Europe and America ... The unmolested course of commerce, reacting upon itself, has contributed also to its own rapid development, a result furthered by the prevalence of a purely economical conception of national greatness ... This, with the vast increase in rapidity of communication, has multiplied and strengthened the bonds knitting the interests of nations to one another, till the whole now forms an articulated system, not only of prodigious size and activity, but of an excessive sensitiveness unequalled in former ages.<sup>5</sup>

These words have a certain applicability to 2013, even if they were written in 1902.

With this in mind, this paper will discuss some of Corbett and Mahan's ideas in relation to the protection of, or attack on sea communications with a deliberate effort to understand how their thinking matured. The focus will largely be on Corbett because, in relation to the events of the twentieth century, he had more chance to get it right for the modern era, even if Mahan had it more correct in earlier years.

Some caveats are needed. First, if armies can be criticised for not comprehending the economic element, that criticism goes double for modern navies, who ought to know better. The truth is that economic warfare at sea, or by the sea—already described as an aspect of the 'war of supply'—is an extraordinarily complicated subject and one which navies generally do not have a good record in considering, preparing for, or initially conducting. There may here be an analogy with counter-insurgency and the emotional and cultural problems which this aspect of warfare presents for armies—such as the tendency for counter-insurgency doctrine and training to be relegated to the bookshelf as soon as circumstances allow a return to more 'conventional' areas of warfare. As with armies and counter-insurgency, in time of peace navies often don't think enough about, don't plan enough for, and don't have sufficient mastery of the ins-and-outs of economic warfare at sea. Which are considerable.

For economic warfare is inherently whole-of-government and arguably whole-of-nation, since it involves the very close interaction of

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5 Mahan, 'Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies', 282.

government, industry and business in practically every area of commerce and supply. Navies are not in control of the whole, nor is naval or even whole-of-defence-force action alone sufficient to achieve the necessary effects. Furthermore, the work that the navy does is most generally in the ‘continuing on of the same until it be truly finished’—patrol, surveillance and protection, in which there is much more unremitting toil than the release and satisfaction of kinetic action. If there is a ‘true glory’ in such work, to quote Francis Drake again, it is often very difficult to discern, particularly by those who actually have to do it.

Second, both Mahan and Corbett wrote a great deal. It is important to understand that their work, particularly that of Corbett, fell into three parts. The first was that which was clearly historical in nature and without a professional naval pedagogical purpose; the second, that which was intended for a contemporary naval audience and which, in seeking to explain maritime and naval strategy, was directly derived from historical work. The third element was intended to illuminate or directly dealt with contemporary issues—very often work that was ‘written to order’ for public or bureaucratic purposes. Although Mahan wrote much history and his work can, as John Hattendorf has pointed out, be similarly divided,<sup>6</sup> the element of ‘pure’ history is much smaller because the origin of so much of his historical work was in the instruction that he was providing to the classes of the United States Naval War College.

A third point, already implied, is that their views evolved and changed. It is only fair, therefore, to attempt to assess them as much as we can in the light of their later, or even final work, when considering their concepts of maritime and naval strategy. This is particularly important for Corbett and something not generally done.<sup>7</sup> His work most often cited in strategic circles and already quoted from in this paper is *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. It was written partly as a contribution to the continentalist versus maritime debate then taking place in British defence circles, and partly as an attempt to provide a digestible analysis

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6 John B. Hattendorf, ‘Editor’s Introduction’, *Mahan on Naval Strategy*, ix-xxxiii.

7 But see Andrew D. Lambert, ‘Sir Julian Corbett and the Naval War Course’, in Peter Hore (ed.), *Dreadnought to Daring: 100 Years of Comment, Controversy and Debate in The Naval Review* (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2012), for a review of Corbett’s achievements which casts much light on his later work. Professor Lambert’s study of Corbett continues, the latest work being an introduction to a new edition of *England as a Maritime Power* (London: Tauris, forthcoming).

of the fundamental elements of maritime strategy to a professional naval audience which had been less than receptive to his efforts to inculcate principles via history.<sup>8</sup> In *Some Principles*, the theory is presented first with the history in the form of easily comprehensible examples. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that if *Some Principles* were written this century, its title would be *Maritime Strategy for Dummies*. This also applies to Mahan's *Naval Strategy*, which was largely based on his Naval War College lectures and whose only new material related to the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>9</sup>

Both books were published in 1911 in the midst of what can be described as a time of pre-transition. 'Pre-transition' may be defined as a period in which new technology is emerging, but this new technology is not yet mature to the point at which its potential can practically be realised and thus its effects adequately mapped out. It was very much the situation navies faced before 1914. To give one example, launching from a ship a single-man aircraft with no weapons, no radio, a success rate of mechanical failure-free flights of barely 60 per cent, no ability to operate at night or in limited visibility and an operational radius of barely 30 miles, does not create a naval aviation capability of any utility. Or, as another example, in August 1914 German U-Boats were not equipped to navigate out of sight of land. 'Pre-transition', in other words, is the state of an organisation when it does not yet have the technology to use and, because of this, short of science fiction-like prescience (and, to be fair, there was much of this around in the decade before the First World War), has insufficient understanding as how it really can change things. In the areas which would be most affected by the emergent technology of the aircraft and submarine, there are thus many problems with *Some Principles*—as well as much of Mahan's work, including *Naval Strategy*—in relation to the reality of the First World War and the conflicts that followed. A second but unaltered edition of *Some Principles* was published in early 1919. Had Corbett lived to complete the British official history of the war at sea, he may well have produced a very different third edition.

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8 See James Goldrick & John B. Hattendorf (eds), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Newport, RI: US Naval War College Press, 1993), for a series of papers describing these activities, particularly Jon Tetsuro Sumida, 'The Historian as Contemporary Analyst: Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir John Fisher'. See also Andrew Lambert, 'Sir Julian Corbett and the Naval War Course', 37-52.

9 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Naval Strategy: Compared and Contrasted with the Principles and Practice of Military Operations on Land* (Boston: Little Brown, 1911).

Corbett's thinking, as set out in *Some Principles*, also lacked an understanding of some aspects of the historical record which he cited and this was significant in regard to the quality of his thought on economic warfare. In fact, he has been severely and justly criticised in relation to his ideas on the protection of and attack on sea communications as a whole. Corbett was opposed to convoy and differed fundamentally from Mahan, who understood the clear advantages of convoy in protecting shipping from a dispersed and long range threat. As Eric Grove has pointed out, and this has relevance for—and should be a warning to—those more used to thinking of transportation systems on land, Corbett's theoretical approach to 'abstract terms of "lines of communication" or ... "sea lanes" ... detracted from his recognition that naval communications are made up of distinct finite elements, ships that are left undefended at one's peril.'<sup>10</sup> There are no lines on the sea. We need, in considering the war of supply in the maritime environment, to understand always that it is about ships and their cargoes.

Corbett has also been criticised by early-modern historians for certain deficiencies in his own understanding of economic factors in the seventeenth and eighteenth century period in which he specialised (and, to be fair, in which he did much work of the highest academic quality of the day).<sup>11</sup> More importantly for our discussion, he did not in 1911 comprehend the implications of the development of the globalised 'just in time' economy which existed before 1914 and which was dependent upon the near-real time communications provided by the telegraph and, increasingly for seaborne cargoes, the wireless. There were two problems with this deficiency of comprehension.

The first was that he possessed before 1914 an essentially pre-industrial understanding of the operation of the global and national economies. Corbett's naivety on this subject may have protected him from the contemporary assumption by many economists and politicians that the various industrialised economies were so inter-connected and interdependent that they had little or no resilience and would collapse in the event of a major European war. By the way, Mahan commented on the 'excessive sensitivity' of the system, but had few illusions as to the

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10 Eric J. Grove, 'Introduction', *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 16.

11 Notably Professor Daniel A. Baugh. I am indebted to Dr Nicholas A. Lambert for this information, based on discussions with Professor Baugh, particularly at the Corbett-Richmond conference in 1992.

part that such sensitivity might play in preserving the peace. He was very much a realist. Corbett's judgement was based on a misapprehension, but in fact proved accurate at least in part with the experience of the First World War. His view in 1911 was summed up by the comment which immediately preceded the famous quote already given:

**Unaided, naval pressure can only work by a process of exhaustion.** Its effects must always be slow and so galling both to our own commercial community and to neutrals, that the tendency is always to accept terms of peace that are far from conclusive.<sup>12</sup>

He was right in relation to the highlighted sentence, but not for the reasons that he thought. For an associated point, and a critical one, is that Corbett did not perceive that the industrialisation of naval and military forces created a much more direct, but at the same time an incredibly complex relationship between general trade and national war machines than had existed before. The issue was no longer one in which specifically military equipment could readily be labelled as contraband and that would be enough. Bulk raw materials such as iron ore, copper ore, cotton, rubber, coal and oil were all key feeds into the sort of industrial system that was required for modern warfare as well as the actual existence of industrialised nations. Mahan may have understood this much better because his own operational experience was tied up with what can be described as the first naval blockade of the industrial era—that of the South by the North in the American Civil War. Indeed, it was not just a naval blockade, but an excellent example of joint navy-army operations to ensure that the cordon could be set and maintained.<sup>13</sup> Mahan's comments on the War of the Spanish Succession in the eighteenth century could perhaps be more accurately applied to both what he thought had happened in 1865 and did happen in 1918:

The noiseless, steady, exhausting pressure with which sea power acts, cutting off the resources of the enemy, while maintaining its own, supporting war in scenes where it does not appear itself, or appears only in the background ...<sup>14</sup>

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12 Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 16.

13 See the first history written by Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters* (New York: Scribner, 1883).

14 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1890), 209.

Corbett (and many naval officers) also did not understand that the 'bill of lading' by which a ship recorded its cargo loading, the ownership of that cargo and its consignment had been overtaken, at least for bulk cargoes, by an advanced credit system through which cargoes could change consignment and final ownership up to the time they entered harbour. This meant that the old simplicities (which were in fact never really that simple) of cargo being declared contraband and therefore lawful prize on the basis of the national ownership and/or the destination defined in the bill of lading were obsolete.

We also need to understand in much of his pre-1914 writing that Corbett focused on the concepts of limited war, as John Hattendorf and Donald Schurman have pointed out in their introduction to a public edition of his history of the Russo-Japanese conflict.<sup>15</sup> His own background as a lawyer and his immersion in a culture of free trade may also have made him a little too sanguine about the civilising effects of progress; that all wars would continue to be limited. But, significantly, he did not support the restrictions on belligerent rights which were being discussed at the beginning of the twentieth century and wrote strongly on the subject.<sup>16</sup> This was a campaign that needed to be waged. After all, owning much of the world's shipping and controlling so much international trade, when not a combatant, the United Kingdom would, the argument went, in most circumstances benefit from belligerents being unable to interfere with neutral merchant shipping. That this was confusing *general* interests with *vital* interests—that is, Britain's absolute need to be able to employ its naval strength in such ways when it came to a war of *survival*—was manifest to the more thoughtful. Mahan shared Corbett's views unreservedly and had already said as much. He declared in 1902:

The preservation of commercial and financial interests constitutes now a political consideration of the first importance, making for peace and deterring from war; a fact well worthy of observation by those who would exempt

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15 Julian Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905*, intro. by John B. Hattendorf and Donald M. Shurman (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994), vi-vii.

16 Julian S. Corbett, 'The Capture of Private Property at Sea', *The Nineteenth Century and After* 61 (June 1907): 918-32. See also Alfred Thayer Mahan (ed.), *Some Neglected Aspects of War* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1907).

maritime commercial intercourse from the operations of naval war, under the illusory plea of protecting private property at sea.<sup>17</sup>

Mahan died at the end of 1914, which meant he had no opportunity to reflect upon, still less comment on the experiences of the First World War. In particular, his views about the limitations of a *guerre de course* may have been tempered by the experience of the U-Boat campaign, although he might also have observed that the existence of the High Sea Fleet as a 'fleet in being' was a vital support to the submarines. As in previous centuries,<sup>18</sup> the requirement to guard against that fleet reduced the forces available to protect against the commerce raiders and so increased the U-Boats' effectiveness against merchant shipping.

Corbett, soon installed at the Admiralty, was there to observe and think—as he did. This means that, to be fair to Corbett and to draw out the best of him, it is necessary to include the volumes of the official history of the Royal Navy in the Great War which he completed before his death in 1922 and his work on the 'Freedom of the Seas'. These provide a better basis on which to understand his mature thinking on maritime strategy in the modern era. Corbett produced the first three volumes of *Naval Operations*, the series being completed by his friend, the poet Henry Newbolt. In these three books one can see the evolution of his thought as events unfolded. Its direction can be summed up by his comment after the British declaration of the North Sea as a war zone at the beginning of 1915, 'it was useless to shut our eyes to the fact that the old methods would no longer serve'.<sup>19</sup>

Corbett had to steel himself to the reality of the U-Boat war, a conflict not only of capture but death. In *Some Principles* he had refused to believe that a combatant would 'incur the odium of sinking a prize with all hands.'<sup>20</sup> In his account of the start of Germany's first unrestricted U-Boat campaign in Volume II of *Naval Operations*, Corbett was honest enough to acknowledge that 'Naval Authorities of the highest distinction

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17 Mahan, 'Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies', 284.

18 Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, 132-6.

19 Julian S. Corbett, *Naval Operations* Vol. I, *To the Battle of the Falklands December 1914*. (London: Longmans Green, 1920), 179.

20 Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 269.



[by which he meant Jacky Fisher] had foretold before the war that the Germans would not scruple to use the new weapon against merchant ships both belligerent and neutral.<sup>21</sup> The implication is that he had not seen this himself and was admitting so.

Corbett's summary of the reasons for the German decision to adopt unrestricted warfare against merchant shipping, fundamentally the 'provocation' of the Allied blockade, is a reasonably accurate one, even nearly a century later. He was particularly clear on the extent to which the British had been forced to limit their restrictions and their definitions of contraband because of neutral, notably American, pressure. He also developed an understanding of the problems of managing the neutrals—the way in which countries like Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden became conduits through which materials could be passed directly into Germany or, particularly in the case of food, imports to the neutrals enabled them to export their own products to Germany.

Corbett recognised the concerns of British commercial interests. Given the history of the previous Great Wars in Europe, it is interesting that he did not put their case at any length, which (although obviously based on self-interest) was that the ability of Britain to finance the war depended critically upon its ability to trade. This, associated with a much more efficient state system of taxation and thus of low-interest loan raising, was a key reason behind Britain's eventual victory over Napoleon, because it could continue to finance war when France eventually could not. But the difference, as Corbett now appreciated, was that the industrialisation of war meant that it was more important to disable the enemy's economy than to protect one's own in such ways. Corbett's recognition of the inter-agency factor was another way in which his thinking became more sophisticated. In all, Corbett came to recognise much more clearly how the economic element operated. He wrote:

The real German grievance was ... that we were endeavouring to paralyse the economic life of the nation. We certainly were, and with perfect justice, for this is the ultimate object of all war, and it is to give the belligerent the power of exerting such pressure that he seeks to destroy the enemy's armed forces.<sup>22</sup>

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21 Julian S. Corbett, *Naval Operations* Vol. II (London: Longmans Green, 1920), 132.

22 *Ibid.*, 263.

This is much stronger language than in Corbett's work from before 1914. It is language that is also present in a pamphlet on the 'Freedom of the Seas' he wrote in 1918 which was intended to address the arguments being made by the Americans in particular. Significantly, in assessing President Wilson's early declarations on the need for the immunity of non-belligerent trade and private property at sea, Corbett notes:

But that was in the early days of the war, when men had not yet had driven home to them what sea-power actually meant for the cause of peace and freedom and for the punishment of international criminality.<sup>23</sup>

Corbett may well have included himself amongst the 'men' that he described. Some of his other comments in the pamphlet confirm the strength of his new views:

To kill, or even to seriously hamper, a nation's commercial activity at sea has always been a potent means of bringing it to reason, even when national life was far less dependent on sea-borne trade than it is now. At the present time, when the whole world has become to so large an extent possessed of a common vitality, when the life of the nation has become more or less linked by its trade arteries with that of every other, the force of an oecumenical sea interdict has become perhaps the most potent of all sanctions.<sup>24</sup>

Corbett came to understand that the First World War could only be won by the combination of the defeat of the enemy on land and the destruction of his capacity to wage war through the imposition of the blockade. Neither could work on its own, each supported the other. But he tried hard to ensure that others understood that there should be no confusion of ends and means and he believed that some might have lost this perspective in relation to the commitment to the Western Front. The aim was not the destruction of the enemy's armed force for its own sake, but for a wider purpose. In an article in the *Naval Review* of 1920, which can perhaps be considered as his last tutorial for naval officers, he wrote that the enemy,

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23 Sir Julian Corbett, *The League of Nations and Freedom of the Seas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1918), 11.

24 *Ibid.*, 9-10.

*must* [give in] if he finds his sources of strength for carrying on the war are getting exhausted, and this is the cause, so long experience tells us, why most wars come to an end.<sup>25</sup>

And this brings us back to the idea that the war of supply needs to be considered alongside as well as in conjunction with the war of territory. It is an aspect that needs to be considered by armies when contemplating maritime strategy from their own perspective, because the war of territory may sometimes need to support the war of supply, just as the war of supply so often supports the war of territory. Corbett's definition can therefore be amended to read:

Since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided—except in the rarest cases—either by what you can do against your enemy's territory and national life by the actions of your army and your sea and air fleets, or else by the fear of what your sea and air fleets make it possible for your army to do, or what your army makes it possible for your sea and air fleets to do.

I don't think he'd disagree.

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25 Sir Julian Corbett, 'Methods of Discussion', *The Naval Review* VIII: 3 (August 1920), 323.

# British Maritime Strategy and Amphibious Operations during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

*Huw J. Davies*

British grand strategy in the late eighteenth century had a global dimension, with strong European caveats. Britain saw the power of maritime commerce, and the associated benefits of imperial expansion, but in order for this strategy to prosper, a balance of power had to be maintained on the European continent. Four strategic triggers existed that would force Britain into a European war. In the north, Britain had to maintain ease of access to the Baltic, in order to ensure trade of the vital maritime commodities of hemp, tar and pine. In the south, control of the mutually dependent islands of Malta (as a base from which to blockade Toulon) and Sicily (necessary as a vital supply to Malta), enabled Britain to maintain control of the Mediterranean and the associated access the sea brought to the Levant and, perhaps unrealistically, to India. In the West, Gibraltar and Lisbon were vital strategic locations that enabled access to the Trade Winds to the West Indies. But, by far the most important strategic trigger was the independence of the Low Countries, and with them, access to the port of Antwerp, the naval yard of Flushing and the estuary of the river Scheldt. All of this combined gave a potential aggressor with naval ambitions an easy point of access to the Channel and a clear invasion route to England, as well as a safe harbour for a vast flotilla, something that none of the ports of Northern France offered. It became a vital British interest, then, to ensure a power with no naval ambitions controlled the Low Countries. It is no coincidence that all of these strategic interests had maritime complexions.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Discussions of British grand strategy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are numerous. Perhaps the best concise examination is D.A. Baugh, 'Great Britain's "Blue-Water" Policy, 1689-1815', *International History Review* 10: 1 (March 1988), 33-50; while Brendan Simm's *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783* (London: Allen Lane, 2008) is perhaps the most detailed examination of the importance of the continental commitment to wider British strategic thinking.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the balance of power in Europe that protected this interest frequently collapsed as the so-called 'second hundred years war' raged between Britain and France. Without a large army to field against France, Britain resorted to two linked strategies to keep the French in check. The first focussed on the acquisition of overseas French assets that would bolster the British economy, undermine the French, and act as bargaining chips in the post-war negotiations. Thus, in 1748, the port and fortress at Louisbourg that controlled the mouth of the St Lawrence River, having been captured at great expense by the British, was traded for the independence of the Low Countries. The economic benefits of this aggressive maritime strategy allowed Britain to help pay her continental allies to fight the French in Europe. This limited France's abilities to react to British maritime operations elsewhere in the world. A startling demonstration of the utility of this combined strategy is evident not just in the success of the Seven Years War, but in its absence during the American Revolutionary War, when Britain faced strategic defeat across the globe.

After the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War in 1793, the British government devised a similar strategic concept. Britain's strategy in the new war with France would be based on the establishment and maintenance of maritime supremacy. Henry Dundas, the Secretary of State for War, considered as the first object the denial of colonial territories to France. 'A complete success in the West Indies is essential to the interests ... of this country', he wrote in February 1795. In quick succession, between late 1793 and 1797, three expeditions were sent to the West Indies. Initially, the expeditions were very successful. Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St Lucia fell within two months of the arrival of the expedition commanded by Admiral Sir John Jervis and General Sir Charles Grey. But under cover of darkness, the French sneaked a counterattack onto Guadeloupe. Caught unawares, the British were overrun. Espousing revolutionary ideals, the French quickly emancipated the slaves on Guadeloupe, and revolt spread first to the newly conquered islands, and then to the British islands of Grenada and St Vincent. The revolts were so successful that the value of total exportations from Grenada alone fell from £500,000 in 1793, to £91,000 over the next three years. Within six months of the expedition beginning, the British position in the Caribbean was starting to look untenable. Worse still, the sickly season had begun in late June, and by the middle of July,

casualties were beginning to rise, with some regiments suffering as much as 70 per cent deaths from Yellow Fever and Malaria.<sup>2</sup>

At home, Dundas's initial conviction that the West Indies should be the main strategic focus had been quickly diluted. An expedition had been sent under the Duke of York to operate in conjunction with the Austrians and the Prussians in Flanders. After some success, York met with disaster at Dunkirk, and thereafter his force was pushed into retreat through the winter of 1794-5, culminating in a humiliating withdrawal from Hamburg. Amphibious operations were also ordered in support of the Royalists at Toulon, and to stir up rebellion in Brittany. Intended to divert the French Revolutionaries from their defence of north-eastern France, the operations succeeded only in achieving strategic overstretch for the British. By 1796, Spain had entered the war and Britain was temporarily and humiliatingly excluded from the Mediterranean.

This strategic disaster was in part the result of the mismanagement of the military in the years before the outbreak of war. In the wake of the British defeat in North America, the British Government cut army funding to £700,000 per year, while simultaneously recognising that a rearmament program was needed for the navy to ensure that command of the sea would never be lost again. This approach resulted in the summary reduction of officers and men from 144,000 at the height of the American war to just over 29,000 in 1784. A peace dividend was plainly necessary, but the manner in which the cuts were applied was badly thought-through. Every regiment with a number above 67 was culled. The officer corps was allowed to stagnate. Such an approach obviously garnered quick results, but no thought appeared to be given to how to go about augmentation when a new war broke out. Regiments eliminated in 1783 would have to be recreated from scratch in 1793. No administrative shell, or functional rhythm, would exist.<sup>3</sup>

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2 See Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War Against Revolutionary France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 149.

3 For lengthy discussions of the damage done by the post-American war military cuts, see John Pimlott, 'The Administration of the British Army, 1783-1793' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1973); Keith Bartlett, 'The Development of the British Army during the wars with France, 1793-1815' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 1998); Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparation: The Reform of the British Army, 1795-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Roger Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon: The Organisation of Victory, 1793-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2013).

These problems manifested themselves very early. After the collapse of the first expedition to the West Indies, Dundas had to augment the army on an enormous scale. New regiments numbering up to 117 came into existence, but with no experienced backbone on which to hang the new recruits, some regiments proved worse than useless. Regimental hygiene was particularly bad. By the time some of these regiments got to the West Indies for the second expedition in 1796, its commander, General Sir Ralph Abercromby, found that up to half were fit for nothing more than garrison duty. Despite assembling the largest British expeditionary force in history, numbering some 29,000 soldiers, Dundas had sent Abercromby a millstone to hang around his neck. Abercromby, though, was more than capable of turning the force around, and, having established good relations with his naval counterpart, Admiral Hugh Cloberry Christian, set about his task with verve. He was ably assisted by sharp brigade commanders, in the form of John Moore and John Hope. Despite delays in assembling his expedition, Abercromby was eventually able to reassert British authority in St Lucia and St Vincent, while the following year he captured Tobago from the Spanish. Military success might have been achieved, but the casualty rate remained grimly high. By the end of the 1796 sickly season, 14,000 soldiers were dead, and another 10,000 suffered debilitating illnesses, leaving just 5000 of the original expedition fit for duty. Indeed, the total number of deaths in the Caribbean owing to disease alone numbered 49,000 by 1800.

By the end of 1797, then, British grand strategy had suffered something of a reverse: the Low Countries and Mediterranean were lost, and the continental coalition designed to defeat France had collapsed under the weight of its own politics. Moreover, the tenets of strategic aims had also fundamentally altered. The Revolutionaries had acted in the West Indies in such a manner as to destroy the economic foundations of the colonies. Depriving France of her colonies was now unlikely to result in the type of diplomatic bartering that had previously taken place at the negotiating table. A fundamental re-evaluation of Britain's maritime strategy was necessary.

Dundas commissioned a strategic review based on past experience by John Bruce, keeper of the State Paper Office.<sup>4</sup> Bruce argued that the fundamentals of British strategy remained sound: the balance of power on

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4 I am grateful to Professor Andrew Lambert for bringing this to my attention.

the continent was the only way of guaranteeing the security of the British Isles without the ruinous expense of a permanent war establishment. The issue was that France—now in the process of transition from Revolutionary dictatorship to the autocratic government of Napoleon—had proven extremely effective at dismantling British-funded coalitions on the continent. As Napoleon’s power increased, this aspect of French strategy only improved. In such moments, Britain would have to continue the struggle alone, and her maritime strength would have to be used to undermine French power on land. Bruce argued that denial of colonial assets to France should continue, but that this strategy of denial should also extend to Europe itself. Strategic raids should be considered against French-held ports. ‘These measures have been usually resorted to in the crisis of a war; and though both plans have frequently failed in their particular objects’, Bruce argued, ‘they have, on most occasions, answered the general purpose of annoying and distressing the enemy ...’<sup>5</sup>

The analysis had almost instantaneous repercussions. Although too soon to be the product of the strategic review, the British re-entered the Mediterranean in 1798, and, after some confusion, Nelson cornered Napoleon’s fleet at anchor in the Bay of Abukir on 1 August. All but two of the 13 French ships were lost, including the flagship *L’Orient* which blew up spectacularly when its powder magazine was hit. Arguably, this action crippled French naval power, but Dundas continued to press for strategic raids against French targets. By necessity, these were amphibious in nature, and required significant inter-service cooperation. Unfortunately, on many occasions this proved easier said than done.

At the root of the difficult relationship between Army and Navy was the poor performance of the Army, with its dearth of effective or competent general officers, its severe manpower shortages and monstrous administrative difficulties. By contrast, the Navy, with rising self-confidence after several fleet actions, looked on the army with disdain. Amphibious operations were considered a waste of naval assets, but between 1798 and 1801, several were launched, with mixed success.

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5 John Bruce, *Report on the Arrangements which have been adopted, in former periods, when France threatened invasions of Britain or Ireland, to frustrate the designs of the enemy, by attacks on his Foreign Possessions, or European Ports, by annoying his coasts, and by destroying his equipments* (London, 1798), 3, quoted by Andrew Lambert, ‘Sea Power, Strategy and The Scheldt: British Strategy, 1793-1914’ (unpublished conference paper presented at Waterloo: The Battle that Forged a Century, September 2013), 5.



In 1798, Captain Home Popham orchestrated a raid against Ostend, to blow up the sluice gates and effectively destroy the port, denying it to the French as a possible harbour for an invasion fleet. Although successful, a gale blew up preventing the withdrawal of the troops, who were forced to surrender. Other operations were launched in support of continental allies. In 1799, during the Second Coalition, an Anglo-Russian expedition was launched against Dan Helder. Immediate success was achieved when the Dutch fleet in harbour surrendered without a shot being fired, but although the troops had got ashore, they did so in no order whatsoever. Chaos reigned for some time, and the British, commanded by the Duke of York, were unable to exploit their amphibious assault. Eventually York organised an armistice that allowed the force to be withdrawn. Soon after, Austria was defeated and Russia abandoned the war.

In 1800, Dundas cobbled together a seaborne expeditionary force that was sent to European waters to find targets of opportunity. After spectacularly unsuccessful attacks on El Ferrol and Cadiz, many of the officers aboard this large flotilla were despairing of its misuse. 'Never did so large and effective a force leave the ports of England', wrote Brigadier General Sir Eyre Coote in his journal on 2 October, 'and never was a year so completely wasted away without advantages to the country. We must consider ourselves as a wandering Army, not knowing where to go or what progress to pursue.'<sup>6</sup> In London, though, a decision had been reached on what to do with this force: Dundas had finally convinced his cabinet colleagues of the need to clear the French from Egypt.

It is worth exploring this operation in a little more detail. Many of the officers who served in Egypt went on to serve with distinction in the Peninsular War, while some of the tactical doctrines that became standard in Wellington's Army were implemented here for the first time. It is no coincidence that these ideas developed during part of a joint campaign. Months spent at sea, waiting for action, produce, both then and now, the opportunity for the discussion of experiences of past wars. While the junior officers would go on to fame and glory in Portugal and Spain, they were commanded by veterans of the American Wars and the West Indies. General Ralph Abercromby was in command, bringing over four decades of experience with him, including recent amphibious operations in the

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6 William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (WCL) Papers of General Sir Eyre Coote (ECP) 28/6, Journal of Sir Eyre Coote, 2 October 1800.

West Indies and northern Europe. His army, totalling nearly 15,000 men of all arms,<sup>7</sup> arrived in the Bay of Marmarice just after Christmas 1800. The Bay, sheltered as it was from the Mediterranean, offered an excellent opportunity for amphibious assault training, while preparations for the campaign were put in motion. In total, the expeditionary force remained in the bay for six weeks, and despite the benefits an extended stay ashore had on the sick in the army,<sup>8</sup> many could not escape the feeling that time was being wasted unnecessarily. On 8 February, for example, 'it rained almost incessantly all the day', moaned Coote. 'Our stay in this bay is far from being serviceable to our cause.'<sup>9</sup> Even the level-headed John Moore worried that the delay might have a detrimental impact on the operation whenever it commenced. 'Had we sailed straight from Malta to Alexandria, or after staying here a few days to water', he wrote three days later, 'we should certainly have taken the French unawares. They have now had time to prepare and to digest their mode of defence ...'<sup>10</sup>

How easily both men forgot the use to which this time had been put. Captain Alexander Cochrane, appointed beachmaster, with authority for the landings, had had time to plan the disembarkation and landing of the troops in Abukir Bay, and had liaised with the Quartermaster General, Colonel Robert Anstruther, in doing so. Moreover, the troops themselves had had a rare opportunity to practise an assault landing. On 21 January, for example, Coote's 'brigade with the reserve landed, and after having formed in line, fronting the country, and with the right towards Marmarice, re-embarked immediately. The whole', Coote commented in his diary, 'was well conducted and with very little confusion.'<sup>11</sup> A week earlier, part of Coote's brigade had some much-needed drill practice. On a 'fine plain' just behind the British encampment, 'sufficiently spacious to allow one or two brigades to manoeuvre at the same time', Coote 'saw the 1/54 ... form square, four deep, at several different times, & filing from the right of companies, and afterwards forming line'.<sup>12</sup>

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7 Piers Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt: The End of Napoleon's Conquest* (London: Routledge, 2010), 70-1.

8 The National Archives (TNA), WO 1/345, Abercromby to H. Dundas, HMS *Kent*, Marmarice Harbour, 21 January 1801.

9 WCL, ECP 28/6, Journal of Sir Eyre Coote, 8 February 1801.

10 J.F. Maurice (ed.), *The Diary of Sir John Moore* (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), I: 399.

11 WCL, ECP 28/6, Journal of Sir Eyre Coote, 21 January 1801.

12 *Ibid.*, 14-18 January 1801.

All of this was vitally necessary: the previous October, having failed both at El Ferrol and Vigo, the expeditionary force had attempted to attack Cadiz. Little planning was done in preparation for the assault, and there were too few boats to embark the whole landing force—some 5000 men. This was principally because of a lack of communication between the naval and military commanders—Admiral Lord Keith and Abercromby. Moore, who was in command of the reserve, as he would be in Egypt, had gone to explain the situation to Keith, but found him ‘all confusion, blaming everything, but attempting to remedy nothing’. The assault force was recalled even before it had begun landing.<sup>13</sup> This was a manifestation of the degree of contempt with which the naval component held their military counterparts: Keith recalled the assault force because a severe gale was blowing up, but he seemingly declined to inform Moore of the reason. For their part, with limited understanding of the importance of weather conditions for re-embarkation, the officers of the army were dumb-founded. The six weeks spent in Marmarice Bay, then, were far from wasted, for it gave the two services time to understand each other’s tactics, techniques and procedures. This was reflected in the quality of the assault, the rapidity with which the men formed up in order on the beachhead and began their march toward Alexandria, some eighteen miles to the west. Severe resistance was expected during the landing, and the subsequent campaign against Alexandria. ‘Every account states their number of effectives in Egypt to be about 13,000 or 14,000 French’, recorded Moore on 24 January. ‘They will be able to spare 10,000 men, including the garrison of Alexandria, to act against us. Were they with this force to attempt to fight us, I should have little doubt of our success’, he continued. ‘But they will probably rather employ it in harassing us, in intercepting our communications with the sea etc, and in this their superiority in cavalry will much assist them. I cannot but think the enterprise in which we are about to engage extremely hazardous and doubtful in its event.’<sup>14</sup> The General Orders reflected the possibility of irregular threat. The army was ‘to march in columns of Brigades’ while Abercromby ‘gave the General Officers a certain latitude to take any advantage over the enemy without waiting’.<sup>15</sup>

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13 Maurice, *Diary of Moore*, I: 377-8.

14 Ibid., Marmarice Bay, 24 January 1801, I: 398-9.

15 WCL, ECP 28/6, Journal of Sir Eyre Coote, 17 February 1801.

The practice paid off. The beach onto which the troops were to land was sandy and steeply ascended from the surf, providing the French with cover and a dominating field of fire. From a 'distance of a mile and a half, the enemy opened a most tremendous & well directed fire upon our boats, and as we got closer, began to throw in showers of grape', wrote Coote, with some exaggeration, in his diary. 'Never was there a more trying moment for troops than this, exposed as they were to this galling and destructive fire, without the means of defending themselves or of returning it.' Worse, 'as our boats were obliged to keep close together, in order to land the men in that manner, we were the more annoyed. Nothing however, could at all damp their bravery & though surrounded by death in its most frightful shapes, they continued cheering till we got on shore.'<sup>16</sup> For Moore, who commanded the reserve, the rain of grape shot was just as severe. Despite this, 'as soon as the boats touched the land, the officers and men sprang out and formed on the beach ... I then ascended the sandhill with the Grenadiers and Light Infantry ... They never offered to fire until they had gained the summit, where they charged the French ... '<sup>17</sup>

No amount of practice could hasten the slow movement of artillery through shifting sand, however, and the French were able to escape. Abercromby was impressed. 'It is impossible to pass over the good order in which the 23rd and the 42nd Regiments landed', he wrote in his dispatch to Henry Dundas. 'The troops in general lost not a moment in remedying any little disorder, which became scarcely unavoidable in a landing under such circumstances.'<sup>18</sup> The naval support, as well, had gained Abercromby's gratitude. 'The arrangements made by Lord Keith', he wrote, 'were such as to enable us to land at once a body of six thousand men', while 'the honourable Captain Cochrane and those other captains and officers of the Royal Navy who were intrusted [sic] with the disembarkation ... have executed themselves in such a manner as to claim the warmest acknowledgement of the whole Army.'<sup>19</sup> A rare moment of inter-service civility.

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16 Ibid., 8 March 1801.

17 Maurice, *Diary of Moore*, II: 3-4.

18 TNA, WO 1/345, Abercromby to Dundas, Camp before Alexandria, 16 March 1801.

19 Ibid.

Thereafter, Abercromby marched his army in column to Alexandria, fighting an inconclusive battle at Mandara on 13 March. Eight days later, as the British prepared to attack the French lines at the Heights of Nicopolis outside Alexandria, the French commander, Abdallah de Menou (formerly Jaques-François), launched a dawn attack on the British lines. A fraught battle ensued, in which the British right was repeatedly attacked, but managed to defend a set of Roman ruins. During the fighting, Abercromby received a musket ball in the thigh, which became infected and killed him seven days later. The command deferred upon the slow and methodical John Hely-Hutchinson, who now faced a difficult decision. Menou was holed up in Alexandria, but the Turks were reportedly advancing on Cairo, where a second French force commanded by General Augustin-Daniel Belliard, were head-quartered. Hutchinson had to decide whether to advance to support the Turks, and eliminate the threat Belliard clearly posed to his flank, or lay siege to and take Alexandria first. Both presented problems, and Hutchinson's meticulous analysis of them, and his equally meticulous planning when he decided to advance inland to Cairo, suggested to his detractors in the army that he lacked motivation and drive.

When the army did finally make its move (leaving a brigade under Coote to keep an eye on Alexandria), the march was initially slow. Rosetta was captured on 19 April, and Rahmanieh, 9 May. Thereafter, the army could use the Nile to transport its supplies as it marched to Cairo, which was captured by capitulation on 22 June. A French garrison of no fewer than 13,000 troops, far stronger than any in the British camp had anticipated, had to be marched back to the coast for repatriation to France under the terms of their surrender. At the same time, an assault force arrived from India under the command of General Sir David Baird, which took command in Cairo and helped guard prisoners. Although too late to have operational effect, the deployment demonstrated Britain's ability to act on a global scale. Clearly seapower was the core of this success. All that remained, thereafter, was Alexandria itself. The siege lines were tightened, and in another example of impressive jointery, Coote's brigade was transported in flat-bottomed troopships across the inundation of Mareotis to the western end of the city, cutting off French supply lines. After an attempt to raise the siege failed, Menou surrendered on 2 September. The liberation of Egypt from French domination had been achieved in less than six months. Naval support had been crucial throughout the entire operation. As well as keeping the army supplied, Keith had acted regularly against rumours

of French reinforcements, whilst the use of troopships and gunboats to outflank the defence of Alexandria was a striking success. The army had begun to recover some of its confidence.

Moreover, along with a second maritime success in the Baltic, Britain had successfully demonstrated, if not her ability to defeat France, then to survive a prolonged war against her. Both nations were now exhausted, however, and in October the Peace of Amiens was signed. Perhaps inevitably, this peace was short-lived, and when war was renewed in 1803, Britain experienced a pressing invasion crisis. In reality, of course, Napoleon never had sufficient naval capacity to pose a serious threat to the British Isles, and any attempt would have been swiftly defeated by the Channel Fleet. It is much more likely that Napoleon was using the invasion of England as a pretext to assemble a Grande Armée that would descend on Austria, Prussia and Russia, while the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1805 effectively ended France's ability seriously to challenge British command of the seas.

Nevertheless, by 1807, isolated and with no allies, Britain was arguably facing defeat on the continent. An unauthorised operation by Popham against Buenos Aires appeared to open up a new set of possibilities. British troops had been welcomed as liberators, and the opportunities for economic advancement by fostering rebellions in the Spanish empire, and bringing those colonies under the more informal and indirect stewardship of the British Empire, appealed to the Secretary for War, Viscount Castlereagh, who genuinely considered throwing in the towel in Europe, withdrawing from the Mediterranean and focussing on South America.<sup>20</sup>

Such pronouncements proved too good to be true. Soon the inhabitants of Buenos Aires had turned on the 'liberators' and not one, but two expeditionary forces had met with disaster. With no prospects in Europe, however, the cabinet remained fascinated by South America, at one point actually contriving to attack both the west and east coasts simultaneously.<sup>21</sup> Sir Arthur Wellesley, who had been taken on as a strategic

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20 See Martin Robson, *Britain, Portugal and South America in the Napoleonic Wars: Alliance and Diplomacy in Economic Maritime Conflict* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

21 Historical Manuscripts Commission. *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq. Preserved at Dromore* (10 Vols, London, 1892–1927), viii: 386–7.

adviser to the government, pointed out the lunacy of this plan, and instead argued for an attack on Venezuela.<sup>22</sup> As this force was being assembled, delegates arrived from the northern province of Spain, bringing news of a widespread rebellion after Napoleon had used the pretence of the invasion of Portugal to flood Spain with troops, and depose the Bourbon monarchy in favour of his brother, Joseph.

The British cabinet did not need much persuading in 1808 to divert Wellesley's Venezuela force to Portugal. Over the course of the next seven years, Britain committed in total over a hundred thousand troops to the Iberian Peninsula, in what was the greatest continuous expeditionary offensive of the Napoleonic War. To understand why the British elected to commit her only disposable field army in a seemingly irrelevant strategic backwater, we must understand the maritime strategic re-evaluation that commenced in 1807.

Following the submission of Austria, Prussia and Russia to the his European vision by 1807, and realising that an invasion of the British Isles was perhaps unfeasible in the short-term, Napoleon elected instead to impose the Continental System, and the British reaction—designed to isolate France from any global trade—only antagonised the neutral European powers, and eventually led to war with the United States in 1812. Tempting though it must have been to British ministers to leave Europe to Napoleon, the truth was that, if left unfettered, Napoleonic ambition would extend beyond Europe. The Corsican had already demonstrated his ambitions in the Levant, and the invasion of Iberia was at least in part an attempt to establish control over the Mediterranean. 'I will find in Spain, the Pillars of Hercules', wrote Napoleon, referring to the rocks of Gibraltar and Jebel Musa.<sup>23</sup>

The British, then, were never going to abandon the Mediterranean, as their presence there provided the last bastion against Napoleonic expansion eastwards. With no allies on the continent, and no obvious way of exerting her limited military power on land, Britain looked for

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22 See University of Southampton Library, Wellington Papers (WP) 1/165, Memorandum upon the plan of operations proposed 2 November 1806; and 2nd Duke of Wellington (ed.), *Supplementary Dispatches and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, 1797-1818*, 14 vols (London, 1858) (SD), vi, Wellesley to Grenville, 17 February 1807, 56–61.

23 Napoleon to Joseph, Bayonne, 31 July 1808, in Napoleon Bonaparte, *The Confidential Correspondence of Napoleon Bonaparte with his Brother Joseph, sometime king of Spain ...* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1856), I: 331.

alternative strategies. It is difficult to conclude whether subsequent events forced the British hand, or whether those events provided a suitable outlet of a renewed British strategy. British intelligence on the Franco-Russian negotiations at Tilsit in 1807 seemed to indicate that Napoleon planned to seize one of the last remaining viable navies in northern Europe by either reaching an agreement with the Danes or invading Denmark. Such a coup would have been disastrous for Britain, with the Danish navy at least representing a local threat to the Royal Navy's command of the sea.

In response to this intelligence, the British organised a pre-emptive strike on Copenhagen harbour in July 1807. Although the attack caused a rupture in Anglo-Danish relations, it nevertheless successfully deprived Napoleon access to a key resource. If one decisive blow against Napoleon was currently impossible, then Britain could use its tiny army to deprive the French access to key resources. When the delegates of Galician and Asturian Juntas arrived in London in 1807, then, the British government recognised another opportunity to deny Napoleon access to a useful navy. While military aid could be provided to the Spaniards in the form of arms, ammunition, materiel and advisers, Britain's main interest could be met in seizing and securing the Spanish navy in Cadiz. This explains why Britain became interested in the Iberian Peninsula from a strategic point of view.

Such a strategy reflected the arguments made by John Bruce in 1798, and was undoubtedly originally conceived by the exiled French General Charles Dumouriez, who had been taken on as a strategic adviser by the British government in 1803. In May 1804, he wrote a memorandum on the defence of the United Kingdom, in which he argued that an attack against Napoleon's core naval assets was the best form of defence. For Dumouriez, only the Scheldt mattered. 'The island of Walcheren is the *ægis* and the chief portal of the Army that is to invade England, and its capture must be attempted', Dumouriez wrote in his memorandum. Meanwhile, 'Lisbon will be the central point for the invasion of Ireland, and Portugal, left to herself [will] be forced to submit ... This branch of the attack must be lopped off by putting Portugal in a position to defend herself.'<sup>24</sup> With this sound strategic advice, based on clear maritime principles, it is clear why the British focussed such efforts on Portugal and Spain from 1808, and why, in 1809, the British launched a major expedition to capture Walcheren Island in the Scheldt Estuary.

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24 J.H. Rose & A.M. Broadley, *Dumouriez and the Defence of England against Napoleon* (London: John Lane, 1909), 324-37.



The Walcheren Expedition had a more pressing national objective. Recent intelligence from the continent had indicated that ten French ships-of-the-line were fitting out at Flushing.<sup>25</sup> These represented a clear and present danger to British naval superiority and a continuous Royal Naval presence in The Downs would be needed to counter them, distracting the Navy from other important stations, notably the growing conflict in the Peninsula. Characterised as somewhere between partial success and abysmal failure, the Walcheren Expedition actually succeeded in achieving its primary goals. Flushing was taken, and its facilities destroyed, crippling Antwerp as a viable port. Yet another key naval resource was denied to Napoleon. The butcher's bill was horrendous though: of the 44,000 soldiers sent to the Scheldt, 4000 died of malaria—the famous Walcheren fever—while many who survived continued to suffer ill-effects for years to come. More specifically, inter-service relations had been appalling, while ministers eager to defenestrate the key architect of the campaign, Viscount Castlereagh, were all too eager to portray the whole expedition as an unmitigated disaster.

Disaster or not, the British government now focussed its efforts on Portugal, where maritime power would once more prove the bedrock of success. After two abortive attempts to invade Spain, the British opted for a longer-term approach: a set of defensive fortifications were erected around the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, in anticipation of a French invasion. The Lines of Torres Vedras, as they became known, allowed General Arthur Wellesley, now Lord Wellington, to withdraw his entire force, as well as a considerable portion of the population of Central Portugal, into the confines of greater Lisbon, where they survived in bad conditions, but nevertheless continually supplied with food from the sea. British maritime power was intrinsic to the whole defensive plan. The French siege of Lisbon would have succeeded in weeks were it not for the supplies brought into Lisbon from the sea. In total, the Royal Navy helped feed 420,000 mouths for well over six months.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the entire plan was only viable because the navy offered a guaranteed escape route for the army if the French did manage to break through. Indeed, Wellington estimated the total cost of the defence of Lisbon at no more than £1million a year, but he failed to account for unexpected inflation in the price of food, and the true cost of

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25 See TNA, ADM 1/6040, Documents on the Scheldt Expedition, 1805-1810.

26 See Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon*, 356.

shipping. A transport fleet capable of moving 60,000 troops needed to be permanently moored in the mouth of the river Tagus between July 1810, when the invasion began, and May 1811, when all possibility of French success had been ended by the Battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro on the Portuguese border. Finally, 1810 and 1811 proved to be poor harvests, and grain to feed the hungry mouths of Lisbon had to be brought in from the United States, while cattle came from North Africa. To compound this problem, the British Government did not have enough bullion to pay for the imports, and only a hastily mounted mission to South America, organised by Rear-Admiral George Berkeley, himself commanding the Lisbon station, brought in enough money to pay for the food.<sup>27</sup> All this did not come cheap, and inflated the cost of the war by ten times.

In 1813, Wellington orchestrated a new high-risk strategy that if successful would push the French out of Spain. Recognising that the need to lay siege to no fewer than three major and one minor fortress had caused damaging delays to his advance in 1812, Wellington decided in 1813 to avoid siege works altogether. Instead, he would march his army along small mule-tracks through northeastern Spain, outflanking three French defensive lines as he did so. The nature of the roads meant that he could march with neither his supply train, nor his artillery train. The only heavy equipment he would take with him would be a pontoon train to enable him to cross rivers without the need to capture bridges. Meanwhile, the Royal Navy would transfer the British supply base from Lisbon to Santander on the north coast of Spain. The army would march with a month's supplies, but at the end of this, it would need to replenish its depots from Santander.

This was by no means guaranteed. Generally speaking, Wellington had enjoyed a reasonably good, if occasionally fractious, relationship with his naval counterparts in the Peninsula. The strongest relationship had been between Wellington and Berkeley, commander of the Lisbon station in 1809–10. He had been replaced by Keith, whom Wellington had initially disliked, but for whom he had developed a grudging respect during Keith's two-year-long command. By 1813, Lisbon was under the command of Admiral Martin, and Wellington enjoyed a well-balanced relationship with him. Unfortunately, the Lisbon station did not extend to northern Spain, which was the remit of the Channel Fleet, now under

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27 N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 561.

Keith. With a much wider area of sea to control, Keith could not help being overstretched when a war with America broke out in 1812. The result was a chronic, if unavoidable, under-resourcing of the Bay of Biscay. By 1813, Captain George Collier commanded just one large ship-of-the-line, the *Surveillante*, and five smaller vessels on the northern coast of Spain.

For Wellington, who was deeply concerned that American privateers might intercept and capture his supply vessels, the obvious solution was to extend the command of the Lisbon station to include northern Spain. 'I think it is not impossible that we may hereafter have to communicate with the shipping in one of the ports in the North of Spain', he wrote to Martin in late April. 'Under these circumstances, the communication along the coast becomes of the utmost importance, and I acknowledge that I feel a little anxious upon the subject, adverting to the weakness of the squadron under your command ...'<sup>28</sup> Focused entirely, as he was, on the Peninsula, and unable to comprehend the competing demands placed upon the Admiralty, Wellington became increasingly irate. 'For the first time I believe that it has happened to any British Army', he wrote, 'its communication by sea is insecure.'<sup>29</sup> He also attempted to influence Bathurst on the subject. 'The loss of one vessel only,' he wrote with some exaggeration, 'may create a delay and inconvenience which may be of the utmost consequence.'<sup>30</sup> If this were truly the case, then, as Christopher Hall has pointed out, Wellington had much more to fear from shipwreck than Yankee privateers.<sup>31</sup> In truth, Wellington's fears were overblown. As Melville, the First Lord of Admiralty, said to Wellington, 'ten times the amount of Admiral Martin's force could not give that entire protection against an active and enterprising enemy'.<sup>32</sup> As long as the convoy system was used, for which there were ample resources, then Wellington's supplies would not be in danger. Wellington, still unsatisfied, had to accept this conclusion.

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28 John Gurwood (ed.), *The Despatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington during His Various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries and France*, 13 Vols (London: J. Murray, 1852), (WD), x, Wellington to Martin, Freneda, 28 April 1813, 334.

29 WD, x, Wellington to Bathurst, Irurzun, 24 June 1813, 458.

30 WD, x, Wellington to Bathurst, Freneda, 7 April 1813, 273.

31 C. Hall, *Wellington's Navy: Sea Power and the Peninsular War, 1807–1814* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2004), 210.

32 SD, viii, Melville to Wellington, Wimbledon, 28 July 1813, 144–7.

Unfortunately, the deficit in shipping hampered the efforts made by Collier, who anyway had a reputation for sloth, to transfer the supply base to Santander. The situation became acute in mid-July. Wellington's advance through Spain had been outstandingly successful, culminating in the battle of Vitoria on 21 June that had all but destroyed French power in Spain. Thereafter, the devastated French army fled across the border. Wellington began a pursuit, but in order to invade France, he needed to capture the fortress of San Sebastian. Wellington required significant naval support for the siege: he requested that Collier blockade the port and transport siege artillery and magazines of ammunition and supplies.

Unfortunately, Collier just did not have enough shipping to transfer supplies to Santander. 'Ammunition required for the army has lately been delayed at Lisbon for want of a convoy, and it has not yet arrived at Santander', Wellington wrote in fury to Bathurst. 'I am obliged to use the French ammunition, of a smaller calibre than ours.' Facing the prospect of having achieved a decisive victory but with no means to exploit it, Wellington was insistent that the Admiralty act quickly to establish the new supply base at Santander. 'The army cannot remain in this part of the country without magazines,' he wrote. 'These magazines must be brought by sea.'<sup>33</sup> Two months later, and after an unsuccessful attempt to take the fortress by storm, Wellington again complained of the lack of naval support. 'I have never been in the habit of troubling the Government with requisitions for force, but have always carried on the service to the best of my ability with that which has been placed at my disposal,' he wrote disingenuously. 'If the Navy of Great Britain can not afford more than one frigate ... to cooperate with this army in the siege of a maritime place ... I must be ... satisfied and do the best I can.'<sup>34</sup> Make no mistake, though, unless the Admiralty adopted 'measures to give us secure and easy communication along the coast, and the means of using its harbours with convenience ... they will be responsible for any failure that may occur'.<sup>35</sup>

The deterioration of inter-service relations escalated when Wellington learned that the French were able to bring in supplies, reinforcements and evacuate casualties in *trincandores*, small craft piloted by two or three seamen. The truth was that Collier was unable to maintain a constant

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33 *WD*, x, Wellington to Bathurst, 24 June 1813, 458–9.

34 *WD*, x, Wellington to Bathurst, 8 August 1813, 615.

35 *WD*, x, Wellington to Collier, 22 July 1813, 561–2.

blockade because of the shallow waters around San Sebastian, and the inclement weather conditions that frequently blew frigates and sloops off stations. Wellington typically failed to understand the problems. 'The blockade of the coast is merely nominal', he wrote. 'The enemy has reinforced by sea the only two posts they have on the north coast of Spain.'<sup>36</sup> Melville was unforgiving. 'Our military officers on the frontiers of Spain do their duty most admirably', he wrote privately to Lord Keith, 'but they seem to consider a large ship within a few hundred yards off the shore of San Sebastian as safe in its position and as immovable by the winds and waves as one of the Pyrenean Mountains.'<sup>37</sup>

Melville informed Wellington that the problem was not necessarily the number of ships the navy had available, but the lack of sailors. Undoubtedly, more ships and men would be made available if a small-armed expedition could be sent to destroy the French naval ports that required constant blockade, but this, Melville smugly pointed out, would draw troops away from the Peninsula.<sup>38</sup> None of this sated Wellington's anger, which was further inflamed when Melville publicly suggested that the blockade of San Sebastian had never been broken, and if it was, then the boats that made it to harbour were so small that they carried 'nothing more than letters or eggs and fowls'.<sup>39</sup> Any attempt by Melville to cut short 'this paper warfare' was undermined when he wrote to Wellington insincerely, 'I will take your opinion in preference to any other person's as to the most effectual mode of beating a French army, but I have no confidence in your seamanship or nautical skill.'<sup>40</sup>

This unseemly spat continued into the winter, and undermined Wellington's relations with the navy, whose support now was crucial. The problem was that Collier exhibited no aptitude for joint operations. 'This is no joint service', Wellington exclaimed angrily. 'All that is required from His Majesty's navy is to convoy the supplies for the army coming from England and elsewhere, and to convoy back the empty transports.'<sup>41</sup> If this

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36 *WD*, x, Wellington to Bathurst, 10 July 1813, 522–3.

37 C. Lloyd (ed.), *The Keith Papers*, 3 vols (London: Navy Records Society, 1955), iii, Melville to Keith, 24 August 1813, 300–1.

38 *WP* 1/372, Melville to Wellington, 28 July 1813.

39 R. V. Hamilton (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Admiral of the Fleet Sir T. Byam Martin*, 2 vols (London: Navy Records Society, 1898), ii, Melville to Keith, 3 September 1813, 365.

40 *SD*, viii, Melville to Wellington, 3 September 1813, 223–6.

41 *WD*, xi, Wellington to Bathurst, 1 November 1813, 238–41.

was Wellington's true belief about the nature of the naval support he had received throughout the war, then he was right, this was no joint service. In reality, Wellington was having one of his well-orchestrated temper-tantrums, designed to achieve maximum political impact. Eventually in January 1814 the Admiralty replaced the ineffective Collier with Rear Admiral Sir Charles Penrose, enabling Wellington to start afresh with a new squadron commander. What efficiencies were made, were done so swiftly, but in the main Penrose faced the same shipping shortages as Collier had, and so the supply difficulties continued until the end of the war.

In part, the inter-service spat that dominated the concluding months of the war, reflected the high confidence of the British Army and of its commander. This increasing self-confidence was, however, intimately linked with Britain's naval supremacy. The poor grand strategic planning at the outset of the war had resulted in the virtual annihilation of the British Army in the disease-infested West Indies. The continued use to which the army was put as an extension of the navy as part of the re-evaluation of Britain's grand strategy, allowed the British Army to innovate and adapt to the new character of war it encountered. Beginning with the Egyptian campaign in 1801, the British Army demonstrated increasing self-confidence, jointery and tactical innovation. This was by no means a continuous process, and set-backs occurred throughout. In the end, naval power helped secure Britain's global position, maintain a constant debilitating war, and fund seven coalitions against Napoleonic France. When opportunities arose, naval power allowed the British government to deploy its army in locations where it could have an effect out of all proportion to its size, achieving important political advantages that enabled Britain at the post-war negotiating table to secure her war aims before any of the other European Great Powers.

# **‘The Army is a Projectile to be Fired by the Navy’: Securing the Empire 1815–1914**

*Andrew Lambert*

*While students of early Australian naval history have recognised the importance of the Royal Navy in providing hardware, ethos and policy the deep impact of British strategic culture has been underestimated. Shortly after Alfred Deakin’s Government ordered the battlecruiser HMAS Australia, the commonly accepted founding date for the new navy, the leading British strategist set to work to ensure the new nation understood how use an ocean going maritime force to control Australian waters, shipping lanes, and the ocean area surrounding the Imperial German territories of the South Pacific. Admiral Lord Fisher made it his business to harmonise local thinking with the wider Imperial strategy that he had done so much to create. With Australia committed to building a fleet that served his strategic agenda Fisher placed key supporters and expert personnel in the new naval establishment, to ensure the transition to Australian political direction of South Pacific naval power sustained an Imperial strategic vision. At heart this was a question of the correct balance between Army and Navy in the defence of Australia, and the Empire of which it formed major element and within which it acquired the level of security appropriate to its wealth and ocean-going trade. He summed up his message in a classic phrase, which is the title of this paper.*

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In May 1910 the Australian Defence Minister George Foster Pearce sought a high ranking British naval officer, to provide the Commonwealth Government with ‘sound, experienced and unchallengeable’ advice on the strategy, policy, structure, organisation and administration of a newly created Navy. In part the initiative was a logical successor to Field Marshal Lord Kitchener’s mission, which helped reshape the national military force. However, Pearce faced additional problems when addressing the navy, a grim combination of public disinterest and a clear preference for cheap, limited solutions. Pearce hoped an external expert would

'strengthen the hand of the Government in any action taken' in defiance of 'local or parochial interests'. This was a question of strategy, and more fundamentally of culture.<sup>1</sup> To this end he authorised Sir George Reid, Australian High Commissioner in London, to approach the Admiralty. Ignoring Pearce's uninspired shortlist of retired British Admirals Reid invited Admiral Lord Fisher, the recently retired First Sea Lord, architect of the *Dreadnought*, the battle cruiser and a massive strategic reorganisation designed to address the essentially European challenge posed by Imperial Germany and improve the defence of empire. Fisher, who had created the strategic system within which an Australian Navy would operate, could settle the force structure it would acquire. The new navy would be Fisher's creation and he considered 'it was so momentous that the Navy of the Pacific should be started on the right basis' that, subject to royal and ministerial approval, he accepted the invitation. 'I have only to make one unalterable proviso which is that I shall be accompanied by Captain Ballard RN, Commander Crease RN, Mr Narbeth Naval Constructor as they know my lines of thought ... And I don't want the bother of saturating a fresh set of satellites.' Fisher's choice of staff reflected his agenda. While Crease and Narbeth were respectively experts at turning Fisher's ideas into policy papers and ship designs Ballard, the most brilliant serving strategist, was a proponent of economic warfare on the grand scale. Fisher believed the new Imperial navies would 'eventually' lift the burden of defence in the Pacific from Britain, and 'manage the Yankees, Japs, and Chinese, as occasion requires out there!' This 'management' would be conducted with the threat or reality of sophisticated intelligence-led maritime economic warfare, with Australia as the South Pacific hub. To this end he planned to have all three purpose built *Indefatigable* class battle cruisers in the Pacific in 1913.<sup>2</sup> Australia would also support the Imperial

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1 Pearce Memo, 'Naval Defence', n.d. MS 213 1/3, Pearce MS, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM). He named four Admirals: Lewis Beaumont, Reginald Custance, Edward Seymour and Gerard Noel.

2 HMAS *Australia* laid down 23 June 1910, launched 25 October 1911, completed 21 June 1913. Designed for service on distant stations, as cruiser-killers, the *Indefatigable* class emphasised high sustained speed and long endurance, rather than balanced combat power. Essentially a stretched version of the original battle cruiser *Invincible*, using the same machinery and armament, *Australia* was ideal for Australian needs, where potential enemies were distant Japan and Imperial Germany. The Royal Navy began a far superior battle cruiser, HMS *Lion*, to engage German battle cruisers in the North Sea eight months before *Australia* was begun. R.A. Burt, *British Battleships of World War One* (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2012), 102-21, 172-90.



Pacific Fleet with bases, coal, dry-docks and infrastructure.<sup>3</sup> The following day Fisher cancelled his acceptance, due to 'private considerations'.<sup>4</sup> He told Lord Esher, 'I've declined, I'd go as Dictator but not as Adviser. Also they have commenced all wrong and it would involve me in a campaign I intend to keep clear of with the soldiers.'<sup>5</sup> He considered Kitchener's advice to the new Commonwealth, drawn up on narrowly military lines, ignored Australia's insular nature, and wider Imperial strategic considerations.

Instead Fisher suggested another retired Admiral, Sir Reginald Henderson, a trusted acolyte<sup>6</sup>, and sent a brief note to Reid, intended for Pearce. It opened with a typically emphatic statement, 'Australia is an island like England', and attached a review of Julian Corbett's *Campaign of Trafalgar* that encapsulated his strategic views in a single, striking paragraph.<sup>7</sup> As Minister for Defence Pearce controlled the policy and funding of Australia's armed forces, and could change the strategic balance between them without encountering the service loyalties that hampered British ministers. It appears Fisher's advice registered with Pearce, who consistently conceived national defence in maritime terms across a career lasting more than twenty-five years.<sup>8</sup>

Fisher knew the review had been compiled by *The Times* naval correspondent Charles Napier Robinson to epitomise Corbett's sophisticated text and endorse Fisher's strategy. The book was based on lectures delivered to the Naval War Course, where Corbett instructed the

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3 Fisher to Lord Esher, 13 September 1909, & Fisher to Gerald Fiennes, 14 April 1910: A.J. Marder (ed.), *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone. Volume II Years of Power* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956 (hereafter FG&DN II), 264-6, 321-2.

4 Fisher to Reid 25 & 26 May 1910: in Reid to Pearce 26 May 1910: MS 213 AWM 1/3

5 Fisher to Lord Esher, 27 May 1910: FG&DN II: 327.

6 Admiral Sir Reginald Friend Hannam Henderson placed on the reserved list 1 January 1910. Approval to accept the Australian invitation 'to give advice on naval questions and naval policy' from 8 October for approximately six months: ADM 196/38/650, The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA). He remained close to Fisher: FG&DN II: 405.

7 Fisher to Reid, 8 July 1910: G.F. Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet: Thirty-Seven Years of Parliament* (Melbourne: Hutchinson & Co., 1951), 100-01. Printing both the letter and the key passage of the review in a short, discursive memoir suggests the message registered. See also fn. 73.

8 Despite being written for an Army series John Connor's *Anzac and Empire: George Foster Pearce and the Foundations of Australian Defence* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011), demonstrates the long-term impact of Fisher's strategic tutorial.

navy's leadership cadre on the principles of maritime strategy through historical case studies that examined naval and military operations in a grand strategic context.<sup>9</sup> Unlike contemporary service-based strategists Corbett examined grand strategy through the interplay of ideas between Cabinet Ministers, and between the Admiralty and the officers in command of the great fleets.<sup>10</sup> By treating naval, military and diplomatic issues as part of a larger, seamless whole Corbett could demonstrate how a small-scale British military offensive in the Mediterranean in 1805 'led directly' to Trafalgar.<sup>11</sup> Robinson's clinching paragraph not only established 'the relative positions of the Army and Navy in the system of defence of a maritime power', but stressed that in 1805 'responsibility for the defence of these islands and for the maintenance of the Empire devolved upon the seamen; the functions of the soldiers were secondary and subordinate. It was essential, however, that the defence should take on the character of offence, and that the military should be used, as it were, *'as projectiles to the guns of the Fleet'*'. Fisher underlined these passages in copies sent to chosen political and media correspondents.<sup>12</sup>

### **Imperial Defence**

Fisher used the review to ensure that Pearce and other Commonwealth ministers recognised the strategic realities of Imperial power, and how they could make the most effective contribution to the system. He left Henderson to turn these ideas into a navy.

The nineteenth-century British Empire was an integrated global maritime network of commerce and capital that existed to make a profit. Linked by cutting-edge communications, and secured by command of the sea it placed little value on territory; indeed much of its land area was either empty or economically useless. By 1860 the British economy had adapted to 'Free Trade' following the repeal of the Corn and Navigation Laws in the 1840s. Any adverse effects were largely disguised by tremendous expansion of the world economy, the beginning of a ten-fold increase in

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9 A.D. Lambert, 'The Naval War Course, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* and the Origins of the 'British Way in Warfare', in K. Neilson & G. Kennedy (eds), *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856-1950: essays in honour of David French* (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2010), 219-56.

10 J.S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Year's War: A Study in Combined Strategy* (London: Longmans, 1907), I: 3-4.

11 'Pitt's Campaign, 1804-1806', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 July 1910 (my italics).

12 Fisher to Arnold White, 15 July 1910: FG&DN II: 329-30.

trade between 1850 and 1910, and the introduction of British-built iron-hulled steam ships. This was not accidental. The impulse provided by American and Australian gold discoveries, the ability of railways to open continental regions to trade, and falling long distance freight rates sustained this expansion. Britain's share of world trade was relatively stable, partly because her extensive formal and informal empire provided secure markets and key raw materials when American and European markets were closed by protectionist tariff barriers. Although the formal empire made a valuable contribution to the British economy it was never dominant, making up only 25 per cent of total economic activity. In fact the most dynamic sector of the British economy was the export of capital: by 1890 this amounted to around £100 million annually, largely invested outside the empire. This sector was intimately linked to the global financial services and commercial support systems of the City of London, including control of world shipping and related services. By 1900 Britain had over £2000 million invested overseas, providing a steady income that covered the balance of payments deficit on manufactured goods and food.<sup>13</sup>

Sterling and Free Trade made the world system fluid.<sup>14</sup> In this era of 'Gentlemanly Capitalism' the City of London and financial services came to dominate the economy, with links between the City and Governments growing ever closer. Domestic agricultural incomes declined, while manufacturing remained provincial. The wealth generated by the City became a vital source of national revenue, and the City used this influence to ensure governments recognised that the dominant roles of sterling and the City in global trade reflected cheap government, low taxes, balanced budgets, a gold standard, and the security afforded to global trade and investment by the Royal Navy. In balancing these qualities, in effect settling the premium to be paid on national wealth in the form of defence expenditure, successive Governments tried to steer a fine line between running risks and over-taxing the national resource.

Unlike the Roman Empire the British could not be defended by walls, or legions. If command of the sea were lost then the constituent parts of the structure would be disconnected, and consequently indefensible.

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13 The standard account of this process is P.J. Cain & A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914* (London: Longmans, 1993), 125-77.

14 P.J. Cain, 'Economics and Empire: The Metropolitan Context', in A. Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: vol. III. The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. 42-50.

It would be economically impossible to fortify the empire, or provide the manpower to stand on such walls. British politicians consistently rejected any suggestion of hardening the imperial periphery—at British expense. Instead the contribution of militarised masonry was restricted to securing the vital naval bases from which command was secured against damaging raids, from Portsmouth, Plymouth, Sheerness, Gibraltar and Malta, through Bermuda and many smaller outposts across the globe. These posts needed troops, but sea power meant the threat was small, as were local forts and the garrisons. To meet the possibility of invasion of Britain or any of her island colonies, a very slim possibility for all the excitement it occasioned among those ignorant of strategic realities, a small deployable army would be useful, but this rarely exceeded 20-25,000 men—and was based in Britain. This force would be a very useful element in a truly maritime strategy.

If the Royal Navy could contain or destroy the main fleets of any potential enemy, France, Russia, the United States and ultimately Germany, in their own waters, and this was the basis of nineteenth century strategic thinking, then the distant dominions faced little risk beyond a raiding cruiser or two. As a result the Imperial Defence debate in the colonies of settlement was driven by internal political concerns, especially the issue of responsible government. The Dominions rejected the option of paying for Imperial ground forces, although the Australian naval subsidy survived into the Commonwealth era, because just as British taxpayers saw no reason to subsidise Dominion defences, the Dominions wanted to spend their money at home and control any forces they funded.

Before 1880 Australians saw naval defence as a British responsibility, but by 1886 a tide of Imperial anxiety meant they were willing to subsidise the squadron. The challenge of European and then extra-European imperialist navalism from the late 1880s brought the potential of the colonies of settlement as defence partners into focus. In 1891 Colonial Defence Committee Secretary Colonel George Clarke argued that if the colonies contributed at the same level as Britain the Empire would become so powerful at sea that rivals would 'abandon the competition as hopeless'.<sup>15</sup> Critically Clarke, like Jacky Fisher, understood that the Royal

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15 L.F. Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: manipulation, conflict and compromise in the late nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), for the relationship between local politics and imperial ideology, 28-31; Clarke quote 101.

Navy was primarily a deterrent, designed to secure the empire without recourse to costly, and uneconomic, conflict. Victorian Britain had no ambition to conquer continents, or give the rule to Europe; it wanted to live in peace and expand the trade and investment that propelled the empire. Those investments were secured by a unique global system of sea control based on a unique combination of communications dominance, both by cable telegraph and shipping, dry-docking accommodation, coal depots and an intelligence system that combined the commercial input of Lloyds of London with the Admiralty's efforts.<sup>16</sup> The British had no more desire to rule Australia—local self-government had been granted decades earlier—than they had to rule Argentina, another emerging economy dominated by British capital and commerce. Instead they hoped that Australia would become a junior partner in an imperial security model based on sea control and limited applications of military power. When British naval dominance was challenged in the late nineteenth century the City of London took control of the Navy League, a big navy forum, unseated Prime Minister Gladstone and doubled naval expenditure to secure their investments.<sup>17</sup> The extra money was spent on cruisers to defend trade, not battleships to fight rival fleets.<sup>18</sup>

It was no coincidence that leading policy-makers at the Admiralty and the Colonial Office, and in Australia saw war as the obvious occasion to advance Australian Federation. The Boer War (1899-1902) provided the occasion for a Federation that satisfied British ambitions.<sup>19</sup> The next stage, bringing Australia into partnership, proved more complex. Having become a nation Australians wanted to control their own defence forces. While this model was perfectly reasonable for locally raised troops this political agenda ran directly counter to the British understanding that sea power, like God, was one and indivisible.

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16 A.D. Lambert, 'Wirtschaftliche Macht, technologischer Vorsprung und Imperiale Stärke: Grossbritannien als einzigartige globale Macht: 1860 bis 1890', in M. Epkenhans & G.P. Gross, *Das Militär und der Aufbruch die Moderne 1860 bis 1890* (Munich: Verlag, 2003).

17 S.R.B. Smith, 'Public Opinion, the Navy and the City of London: The Drive for British Naval Expansion in the late Nineteenth Century', *War & Society* IX: 1 (May 1991), 29-50.

18 J.T. Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy 1889-1914* (London: Allen Lane, 1989).

19 Trainor, *British Imperialism*, 153, citing Lord Goschen, George Clarke, Edward Hutton, George Reid and Alfred Deakin.

This mattered because the British strategic model worked. For all the uncertainties and anxieties of the century no major power invaded the British Empire after 1812, or ever appeared likely to do so. Consequently the Empire was secured on very low budgets until the 1890s and with ease thereafter. The only threat to the system was another total war of Napoleonic proportions, which could wreck the economic and political bases of global power. To deter any such conflict the Royal Navy maintained the capacity to annihilate the floating trade and economic activity of any major power, and project military force ashore to attack limited, specific objectives, usually naval bases, related infrastructure, or colonial possessions. The deterrent worked: between 1830 and 1905 France, Russia, the United States and Germany were deterred from war by the overt threat of naval power.<sup>20</sup> This well-established security mechanism remained effective as long as the power to be deterred was rational.

By 1900 British thinking on imperial strategy had begun to address the necessary integration of Navy and Army. The role of British or Imperial Armies would be to improve and exploit sea control—to enhance the impact of the main weapon—economic warfare. In the nineteenth century the British 'Army' rarely fought, outside central India and Afghanistan, without naval transport and logistics, technical back-up and a fighting Naval Brigade. The great Admirals of the age earned their spurs ashore, from Fisher and A.K. Wilson, to Jellicoe, Beatty and Andrew Cunningham, who fought his first battle at Graspan in the Boer War—a very long way from the sea. The Army may have been the 'projectile' of Imperial Strategy, but from the Crimea to the Western Front in 1914-18 the projectile analogy only went so far. The sailors had to make sure the soldiers hit the right target, and get them home again whether they succeeded or failed. Little wonder evacuation remains a defining image in British military history, Gallipoli, Dunkirk, Greece and Crete just the latest examples.

### **Sea power as Culture**

After Australia had established a conscript military and ordered an oceanic naval squadron Jacky Fisher made it his business to ensure the Commonwealth understood the core strategic culture of the Empire was

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20 See, for example A.D. Lambert, 'Winning with out Fighting: British Grand Strategy and its application to the United States, 1815-1865', in B. Lee & K. Walling (eds), *Strategic Logic and Political Rationality: Essays in honour of Michael J. Handel*. (Newport, RI: United States Naval War College Press, 2003).

maritime, and that Australia needed to conform. His intervention obliged Australian decision-makers to consider the relevance of a strategic culture, developed on the other side of the globe by a small island state close to the European mainland, one that depended on seaborne commerce for food and economic prosperity. It was profound weakness, notably vulnerability to invasion and blockade, that made Britain a sea power.<sup>21</sup> States that depend upon the sea, those that can be destroyed by losing access to the oceans, become sea powers by building navies to protect themselves. That England, later Britain, responded to this inherent weakness by creating and sustaining a dominant navy reflected political, strategic and ultimately cultural choices of the first order. These choices made modern Britain a maritime state, one with a total national engagement with the sea, where democratic politics linked economic and political power, harnessing the national effort by consent, not coercion, placing oceanic icons at the heart of national life and culture, building empires of economic access and sustaining naval strength over prolonged periods of time. It is no coincidence that the first modern western democratic states with advanced bureaucratic tax-raising mechanisms and national banks were sea powers with limited human resources, Venice, the Dutch Republic, England and Sweden.<sup>22</sup> All four were happy to recruit mercenary soldiers, reserving national manpower for naval service. Contemporary continental powers were absolutist, measured strength in military manpower, and success in territorial control. The clash of maritime and continental strategic cultures, exemplified by the Punic Wars, had been pondered by English intellectuals from Thomas More to Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon and Lord Bolingbroke. Their works shaped nineteenth-century thinkers, including John Robert Seeley, Alfred Thayer Mahan and Julian Corbett.

Yet the question remained one of culture, a lesson administered by John Ruskin, who read the nature of maritime culture into the very fabric of the state. Inspired by the art of J.M.W. Turner, who had elevated the imagery of sea power from the prosaic to the sublime, Ruskin examined the architecture of Venice as the ultimate expression of Venetian sea power, propelled by growing concern for the future of British power:

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21 A.D. Lambert, 'Sea Power', in G. Kassimeris & J. Buckley (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Warfare* (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2010), 73-88.

22 J. Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States* (London: Routledge, 2002), 165.

Since first the dominion of men was asserted over the ocean, three thrones, of mark beyond all others, have been set upon its sands: the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Of the First of these great powers only the memory remains; of the Second the ruin; the Third which inherits their greatness, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction.<sup>23</sup>

Ruskin used Tyre to bind Britain into a sea power chain that connected London with Venice and the Old Testament.<sup>24</sup> His text inspired a host of new Venetian Gothic buildings across the British Empire, and cemented the concept of precursor maritime states into the intellectual core of Britishness. Thirty years later the relationship between history, sea power and empire was restated by Seeley, Regius Professor of History at Cambridge. Seeley looked back to the glorious beginning of the British Empire, and stressed the connection with the modern age.<sup>25</sup> Not only was history 'the school of statesmanship', but sea power was among its key lessons.<sup>26</sup> He followed Bolingbroke's argument that Britain was an oceanic, not a land or mixed power, and should exploit her insular advantage by avoiding costly European military commitments.<sup>27</sup> Seeley agreed with Ruskin that the past mattered because it had contemporary resonance. In 1883 he argued there were two great land powers, Russia and America:

Between them, equally vast, but not as continuous, with the ocean flowing through it in every direction, lies, like a world-Venice, with the sea for streets, Greater Britain.

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- 23 J. Ruskin, J. *The Stones of Venice: the Foundations* (London: Smith, Elder, 1851), 1. A.D. Lambert, "'Now is come a Darker Day": Britain, Venice and the Meaning of Sea Power', in M. Taylor (ed.), *The Victorian Empire and Britain's Maritime World 1837-1901: The Sea and Global History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 19-42.
- 24 J. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice: The Sea Stories* (London: Smith Elder, 1853), 141. R. Hewison, *Ruskin's Venice* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 38.
- 25 M. Bentley, *Modernizing England's Past: English Historiography in the age of Modernism 1870-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70-5, for the late Victorian Imperial context of Seeley's work. J. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 231-50.
- 26 D. Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the Uses of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 41-2. J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 1, 14.
- 27 Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 89-97. G.M. Trevelyan (ed.), *Bolingbroke's Defence of the Treaty Utrecht; Being Letters VI-VIII of the Study & Use of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932). Bolingbroke's famous essay of 1738, *The Idea of a Patriot King*, develops these themes, and would be widely read for the next 150 years. I. Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 32-6, 185-7, 233-4.



While Seeley recognised sea power had important political and cultural consequences, they were frequently fleeting. Athens, Carthage and Venice were all destroyed by larger continental states. This emphasised the need for a larger British state to match these emerging superpowers. If a 'Greater Britain' based on oceanic power was the only safeguard for the future it had significant implication for the Dominions. Equally significant was his prescient warning that a major military commitment in Europe would endanger the Empire.<sup>28</sup> Consumed as a present-minded analysis of the rise and fall of nations *Expansion* secured a constellation of admirers among politicians, journalists and empire builders, from Lord Rosebery, Joseph Chamberlain and W.T. Stead to Alfred Milner and Cecil Rhodes.<sup>29</sup> It defined the epoch in which Australia was made and, of more direct relevance to the Australian defence debate, had a powerful impact on Edward Hutton.<sup>30</sup>

By 1900 the British understood that they were the latest in a long line of sea empires, maritime trading nations, stretching back to Ancient Athens, and could read their fate in older stories. To be a Great Power Britain had to be Imperial. While Australia and Canada had evolved into self-governing Dominions with responsibility for their own internal and border security, they made little contribution to naval power, or the deployable military force that was essential to effective maritime strategy. While these issues were being redressed Joseph Chamberlain and Alfred Milner decided to create another English-speaking Dominion in South Africa, pushing the Boer Transvaal Republic into a major war.<sup>31</sup> While the war tested the resolve of the Empire, it also revealed the depth of Imperial patriotism: volunteer Dominion military manpower provided the ideal complement to British sea power.

Yet the relevance of a strategic culture dominated by the oceans to Australian conditions was less obvious. The Commonwealth had a distinct culture, and it was definitely not maritime. Michael Evans has demonstrated that Australians define themselves in territorial terms, favouring military security over maritime power, leaving the oceans to the British, and then the Americans. In Frank Broeze's view they are a

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28 Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 288, 291-2, 301-2.

29 Wormell, *Sir John Seely*, 129, 154-6.

30 Trainor, *British Imperialism*, 172.

31 I.R. Smith, *The Origins of the South African War 1899-1902* (London: Longman, 1996), 146-7.

coastal people with a continental outlook.<sup>32</sup> In the words of John Hirst not only does Australia have 'a very strong military tradition', but 'the ordinary soldier, the digger, is the national hero'.<sup>33</sup> In essence Australian and British strategic cultures were diametrically opposed, reflecting the deeper reality that to be a true sea power is a reflection of weakness and marginality. Small islands and small states take to the sea seeking alternative measures of power to the normative list of land, population and resources in sea control, trade and money. It was England's expulsion from Europe that made her a sea power, and the construction of that identity was a long, complex process, in which successive rulers and governments created in the minds of their people the counter-intuitive identity that they were seafarers, their identity intimately bound up with ships and seas, represented in marine art, and maritime heroes, recorded by writers in all genres and sung by the masses. The English made themselves maritime, and in the process made English a world language, and built the globalised economy.<sup>34</sup>

While Australians inherited much of this culture, which was at its apogee in the years between the arrival of the First Fleet and the First World War, it never took root in the new land. White Australians, like the Aboriginal people, turned away from the ocean, building a sense of themselves in the land. Patrick McCaughey observed: 'the Australian imagination is formed by existing between a vast and under-populated hinterland and an ocean which serves as a perpetual reminder of isolation', leading to 'a stubborn belief that somewhere out there in the landscape lies "the real Australia"'. The idea that the ocean isolates Australia is strikingly incongruous, given the way in which pre-1960s immigrants arrived. McCaughey went on to praise the late nineteenth century Heidelberg School of artists for the 'comprehensiveness of their account of Australia'.<sup>35</sup> The complete absence of the ocean from their art—

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32 M. Evans, 'Strategic Culture and the Australian way of warfare: perspectives', in D. Stevens & J. Reeve (eds), *Southern Trident: Strategy, history and the rise of Australian Naval Power* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 83-96, at 92-3, and his essay in this collection.

33 J. Hirst, *Looking for Australia: Historical Essays* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 201), 33

34 Lambert, 'Seapower'.

35 P. McCaughey, 'Likeness and Unlikeness: The American-Australian Experience', in E. Johns, A. Sayers, E.M. Kornhause & A. Ellis (eds), *New Worlds from Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes* (Canberra/Hartford, CT: National Gallery of Australia & Wadsworth Athenaeum, 1998), 15-22, at 16-18, 205, 208.

Tom Roberts' beach and Arthur Streeton's Sydney harbour ferry hardly constitute a cultural response to sea power—reflected the marginal nature of the sea in late nineteenth century Australian culture. When the new Commonwealth decided to commemorate Federation in oils Roberts, artist of the bush, the shearing shed and bustling city street, and a friend of Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, took the commission.<sup>36</sup> Ultimately Australia generated a culture that explained the land to those who were in the process of finding it. Among the politicians of Federation Deakin and Andrew Fisher were actively involved in the cultural scene. Fisher supported both Australian and working-class Scottish identities, neither of which had any place for the ocean. Australian leaders who made the long journey to Britain, notably George Pearce, arrived with a far broader perspective on Imperial and maritime questions, while George Reid and Andrew Fisher who served as High Commissioner in London, imbibed more of the British model. In Australia continental cultural assumptions and social anxieties about the moral and physical health of the nation produced universal military training, but it took a stroke of fortune to create an ocean-going navy. Only then did Jacky Fisher try to harmonise Australian and British thinking. His pithy phrase about Australia being 'an island like England' was an attempt to shift the cultural paradigm, breaking the grip of the soldiers, stressing the primacy of naval power in the security of island empires, and role of an expeditionary army as the most potent enabling projectile of sea power.

### **Projectile Strategy**

After Waterloo the British Army was cut back to a bare minimum, and most troops were deployed to the colonies, where they provided security against internal unrest, rather than non-existent external threats. These garrisons dominated colonial budgets, well over 90% of the cost of governing Canada in the 1840s.<sup>37</sup> With the empire safe behind the Navy the British Government removed Imperial troops from the self-governing colonies to cut costs and reinforce the expeditionary capability. In 1854 the expeditionary army was projected into the Crimea, to destroy the Russian

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36 J.L. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography. Volume II* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1965), 230-1, 289-90, 511.

37 C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the British Army 1846-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, rev. edn, 1963), 59.

naval base at Sevastopol, a classic 'projectile' role.<sup>38</sup> In 1870 it was used to deter an invasion of Belgium.<sup>39</sup>

The ultimate role of the army of a sea power state was to improve or perfect sea control by capturing or destroying hostile naval bases and ships beyond the range of capability of purely naval means.<sup>40</sup> This had been the core strategy of England/Britain since the fourteenth century, the basis for the successful deterrent posture of the period 1815-1914, one that persuaded all of Britain's great power rivals to back down short of war.

Fisher's visceral understanding of the strategy of sea power was given logic and coherence by Julian Corbett, who recovered its historical and intellectual basis by systematically studying the evolution of British strategy, not least the critical importance of integrating naval and military force.<sup>41</sup> Corbett stressed that national strategies are unique, that they could only be understood at the political level, and in Britain's case must be maritime. This strategy did not require a mass conscript army, or a continental military role. He agreed with Fisher that a well-prepared military 'projectile' would suffice. This time-honoured and successful strategic posture was called into question by the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. This temporary measure had been designed to bolster France against Germany's European hegemonic ambitions, while France's main military ally, Imperial Russia, was distracted and then seriously weakened by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Anxious to take an independent role in national strategy, and escape the subordinate 'projectile' role the Generals argued that they

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38 A.D. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy against Russia 1853-1856*, 2nd edn (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2011).

39 R. Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister; 1865-1898* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), 88.

40 This is clear in the argument and structure of Admiral Philip Colomb's Royal Naval College teaching text *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically treated* (London: W H Allen, 1891), which moved from gaining and maintaining sea control to the perfection of sea control by destroying hostile fleets and their bases. It may be the source for G.F.R. Henderson's 1902 line that 'the naval strength of the enemy should be the first objective of the forces of the maritime power, both by land and sea'—which Corbett took to heart. G.F.R. Henderson, *The Science of War: A Collection of Essays and Lectures 1891-1903* (London: Longmans, 1906), 28. The quote comes from Henderson's 1902 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* essay 'War', and the volume advertises Corbett's books.

41 D.M. Schurman, *Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922: Historian of British Maritime Policy from Drake to Jellicoe* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981), 67. J.S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* ([1911] Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 1988), ed. E. Grove, xxiv, including the 'Green Pamphlet'. P. Kemp (ed.), *The Fisher Papers: Vol. 2*. (London: Navy Records Society, 1964), 318-45.

had a 'Continental' role. They ignored Britain's fundamentally deterrent posture, which had been upheld in the Moroccan Crisis of 1905 by a powerful forward movement of the British Channel Fleet to Kiel, and talk of 'Copenhagening' the German Fleet. Deterrence was essential because the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars had taught British policy-makers that a major European conflict would be long, expensive and essentially unproductive, while the debts incurred defeating Napoleon continued to exercise a powerful grip on economic policy into the 1890s. The cost of the second Boer War provided a stark reminder of that lesson, making defence economies imperative. Coming into office in late 1904 Fisher achieved deep cuts in the naval estimates, a major coup for the hard pressed Government, while increasing the effective power of the fleet—restructuring Imperial strategy and improving naval technology. However, the Conservative ministry of 1902-05 failed to adjust their defence forces to the core strategy of sea power and Imperial defence, because the 'continuing importance of the landed element within the Unionist Alliance' made cutting the army and the reserve land forces politically impossible.<sup>42</sup> It was left to the succeeding Liberal Government of 1906-15 to abolish the ancient Militia and Yeomanry formations, create a small Expeditionary Force and Territorial reserve, and block the General's desire for a mass conscript army.<sup>43</sup> There would be no national training in Britain. British security anxieties remained naval, not military, and they led to the 'Dreadnought' panic of 1909, and the offer of an Australian dreadnought.

The Anglo-French Entente of 1904 effected a revolution in British strategic policy. After ninety years the strategy of deterring European and American threats with the classic naval-maritime tools of economic blockade, littoral assault and colonial conquest was no longer adequate. British planners had to consider how they would operate in a European conflict as the ally of a major continental power. This challenged the assumption that British military expeditions would be used to improve sea power, and opened the possibility that the Army might have an

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42 R. Williams, *Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy 1899-1915* (London: Yale University Press, 1991), 52.

43 A.J.A. Morris, 'Haldane's Army Reforms 1906-8: The Deception of the Radicals', *History* 56: 186 (1971), 17-34, places the creation of the BEF in the context of a divided cabinet, in which home defence was a politically acceptable role, but a Continental intervention was not. Also H. Strachan, *The First World War: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 201-03.

independent continental role. The Entente made it imperative that Britain support France in the event of a German invasion with military force. The question was how and where. While Fisher wanted to use the army in classic amphibious roles, supporting sea power strategy, the soldiers preferred a stand-alone continental role. This prompted a vicious inter-service struggle for primacy in defence down to 1914, rendered all the more acrimonious by the pressure for retrenchment following the Boer War, and the domestic reforms of the 1906 Liberal Government.

### **Every projectile needs a target**

Fisher rejected the idea of a continental army because he looked to deter Germany by winning the Dreadnought arms race, thereby sustaining the independence and integrity of British diplomacy. He recognised that the German High Seas Fleet was being built as a diplomatic tool, to compromise Britain's ability to act as balancing power in the European system, to prevent a major conflict that would threaten her economic well-being and global security. Alongside new battleships Fisher exploited German fears of a pre-emptive British strike, to 'Copenhagen' their fleet—referring to the British brilliant amphibious operation of 1807 when an army had occupied Copenhagen and seized the Danish Navy. Effective deterrence ensured the Entente survived the First Moroccan Crisis of 1905, using the Royal Navy to balance the European system, while the 'Copenhagen' threat redirected German defence expenditure into coastal defences. Projectile strategy deterred war, and subordinated the Army to the Navy in strategic planning and funding.<sup>44</sup>

As the threat of war receded in July 1905 Fisher and his planning team began laying the foundations for a national strategy to enshrine the twin pillars of maritime strategy and deterrence. While the Army had created a General Staff Fisher kept naval planning secret, and diffuse. He understood that the German approach to strategy, designed to plan the invasion of France and Russia down to the last train journey, was utterly irrelevant to the needs of a global sea power that would only go to war on the defensive, when the enemy had seized the initiative.

Fisher needed a broad doctrinal concept of how Britain would fight: this would be refined into detailed responses to address diplomatic, legal and operational limitations, the capabilities of potential enemies, trade

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44 A.D. Lambert, *Admirals* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), 291-333, for Fisher's thinking.

routes, colonial defences, cable telegraph connections, fuel stocks and dry docking accommodation. Under his direction men like George Ballard and Julian Corbett developed strategic thinking and doctrine around the Naval War Course, teaching strategy through case studies and theoretical principles.<sup>45</sup>

Before addressing national strategy Fisher made a fundamental change in naval strategy, creating a new Home Fleet based in the Thames Estuary directly facing Germany. He filled it with all the latest capital ships, starting with the epochal battleship *Dreadnought*. In addition he shifted British destroyer and submarine flotillas from the South Coast to the East Coast, to prevent an invasion. This released the Army for 'projectile' operations, and emphasised its subordination to the Navy.

Meanwhile Corbett examined how Anglo-French sea power could achieve strategic effect against Germany. While blockade remained the key strategy this was hardly going to satisfy France. With Germany unable to invade England, and Russia unlikely to attack India, the Army was available. Corbett advised throwing 'an expeditionary force ashore on the German coast somewhere in addition to any naval action we might take. No other attitude would be worthy of our traditions, or would be acceptable to France.'<sup>46</sup> His thinking had been inspired by his lectures on the Seven Year's War (1756-63) at the Army Staff College at Camberley, where Colonel Commandant Henry Rawlinson proposed he examine 'the Function of the Army in relation to gaining command of the sea, and in bringing war with a Continental Power to a successful conclusion'. With the Moroccan Crisis unresolved the November 1905 Camberley course examined 'how we can confine enemy's strategy if we are acting with an ally as in 7 Years War'.<sup>47</sup> In these lectures Corbett skilfully exploited the work of celebrated Staff College teacher Colonel G.F.R. Henderson, notably his emphasis that the naval force of the enemy was the first objective of any British strategy.<sup>48</sup> Henderson's essays also introduced Corbett to Clausewitz, a text Corbett used to demonstrate that national strategies are unique, essentially cultural constructions. If German strategy

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45 Lambert, 'War Course'.

46 Captain Charles Ottley [Director of Naval Intelligence] to Corbett, 3 July 1905, Admiralty Secret: RIC/9, Richmond MS, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (hereafter NMM).

47 Rawlinson to Corbett, 25 August 1905, & Corbett notes on: Rawlinson to Corbett, 30 August 1905: Corbett Lectures: Liddell-Hart Centre, King's College London.

48 Corbett Lectures: Liddell Hart Centre, King's College London.

was necessarily 'continental' and military, that of Britain was 'maritime' and naval. In the event of a major European war Britain should emulate the strategy of 1756-63, a limited commitment to continental campaigning with extensive amphibious operations, both Imperial and on the European littoral, including the possibility of operating in the Baltic. Little wonder the Army rapidly lost interest in maritime strategy.

Corbett's *England in the Seven Years' War: a Study in Combined Strategy* of 1907 repays study by those concerned with national, as opposed to service, strategic thinking. The Navy recognised that occupying Antwerp and the Scheldt estuary, which Henderson considered the historic focus for British military intervention on the Continent, would be the correct response if Germany violated Belgian neutrality to attack France.<sup>49</sup> This would block German access to the Belgian coast, a core British interest, and threaten their flank if they advanced into France. The Army, bent on a European role and the mass conscript army that it required, rejected this analysis. The soldiers did not stop to think how a global empire could be secured by short-service troops and a Navy weakened to fund a larger army. When the General Staff challenged the maritime nature of national strategy, by reviving the age-old invasion bogey, Fisher, determined to take control of national strategy, reduce the Army to a 'projectile' and ensuring defence cuts fell on the War Office and not the Admiralty, issued a devastating counterblast:

With the British Fleet at its present strength, and as at present distributed and with its present fighting efficiency, a German invasion or raid can be only a dream! That is not to say that the military forces are unnecessary or that they should not be organised and exercised. A force of 70,000 British troops, complete in all arms, is a weapon essentially necessary to give effect to the activity of the Fleet, 'a projectile to be fired by the Navy', as Sir E. Grey said.

Such a military force, organised to be embarked at a few hours' notice, and to be capable of being assembled within a few days at a secret rendezvous in the North Sea, and always shifting its position, as would be easy and essential, would constitute such a menace to Germany as would probably occupy a very

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49 Henderson, *Science of War*, 26-7, for Antwerp.



considerable portion of the German Army in providing for the unknown point of landing of the British raiding force.<sup>50</sup>

Although Fisher had demolished the invasion bogey, and the continental vision, the Liberal Government fudged the conclusions of the resulting report. Despite retaining the maritime strategy and the small 'projectile' army, the Government denied Fisher the pre-eminence he wanted. Fisher explained 'projectile' strategy to his greatest supporter, King Edward VII:

[I]t does seem such simple common sense that for our Army we require mobile troops as against sedentary garrisons—that our intervention in [a] Continental struggle by regular land warfare is impracticable, and combined naval and military expeditions must be directed by us against the outlying possessions of the enemy, or, in the splendid words of Sir E. Grey, 'The British Army is a projectile to be fired by the Navy.' The foundation of our policy is that the communications of the Empire must be kept open by a predominant fleet, and *ipso facto* such a fleet will suffice to allay the fears of the old women of both sexes in regard to the invasion of England or her island colonies'

Although he recognised Canada was defenceless, Australia was not.<sup>51</sup>

### **Australian Projectiles**

Here Fisher faced a major problem: Australians were not sea-minded. The enemies of an Australian Navy were widespread public indifference, a potent continental culture and the stronger political pull of military formations that had local electoral impact, and helped shape a new nation. When Prime Minister Edmund Barton brought the renewal of the naval subsidy agreement to Parliament in 1902 he silenced his critics by inviting them to fund local naval development instead. As he had anticipated there was no interest.<sup>52</sup> However the Labor Party followed public opinion into the local navy camp the following year.<sup>53</sup>

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50 R.F. Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), & Cabinet Paper, 9 October 1907: CAB 1/7/740 TNA, 15-19. Crediting Grey, the Foreign Secretary, with the phrase was intended to stress the higher principles involved.

51 Fisher to King Edward VII, 4 October 1907: FG&DN II, 139-43.

52 G. Bolton, *Edmund Barton* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 265-89, at 289.

53 P. Bastian, *Andrew Fisher: An Underestimated Man* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 188.

After decades of debate the Admiralty had ceased to expect any help from Australia. In 1907 Fisher observed: 'The Colonies one and all grab all they possibly can out of us and give us nothing back. They are all alike!'<sup>54</sup> A year later he accepted Commonwealth plans to end the naval subsidy agreement, and create a local defence force of destroyers because at least 'the Admiralty [would] recover their freedom of action'.<sup>55</sup> He did not anticipate any useful assistance from a handful of destroyers. They could not secure the shipping that connected Australia to the world, or prevent an invasion. Even so it was the latter threat that prompted Andrew Fisher's Government to order the first pair of destroyers in February 1909, after an alarming speech by former Governor-General Lord Northcote, who pointed out that 'an Asiatic force' could 'seize Port Darwin and march southward at its leisure'. Andrew Fisher's concerns, which he shared with Defence Minister George Pearce, were wholly domestic: his call to protect the 'civilisation', 'institutions and ... safety of a white people' addressed post Russo-Japanese war anxiety about wage rates and Asian labour.<sup>56</sup>

The move to a local solution collapsed a month later, on 16 March 1909 to be precise, when Jacky Fisher's carefully choreographed naval scare, propelled by the Conservative press, reached the floor of the House of Commons. Liberal First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKenna's speech prompted a naval scare, known as 'We Want Eight and We Won't Wait', that echoed across the Empire.<sup>57</sup> Although caused by German battleships in the North Sea New Zealand offered to pay for a Dreadnought only five days later. While many in the Australian commercial community called for a similar gesture Prime Minister Andrew Fisher stuck to the coastal force agenda set by his Liberal predecessor Alfred Deakin.<sup>58</sup> Yet in a 'hasty and opportunistic' gesture Deakin, as opposition leader, promised to offer a Dreadnought if he returned to power, claiming a 'gift' would not interfere with the development of an Australian coastal Navy.

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54 Fisher to Lord Tweedmouth, 1 October 1907: FG&DN II, 39.

55 Fisher, Minute on 'Australia's Naval Scheme'; Draft letter to the Colonial Office, 14 August 1908. N. Lambert (ed.), *Australia's Naval Inheritance: Imperial Maritime Strategy and the Australia Station, 1880-1909* (hereafter ANI) (Canberra: Royal Australian Navy, 1998), 165.

56 D. Day, *Andrew Fisher: Prime Minister of Australia* Canberra: Fourth Estate, 2009), 16-20. G.L. Macandie (comp.), *The Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1949), does not address the underlying agenda.

57 Williams, *Defending the Empire*, 171. The phrase was coined by a Conservative MP.

58 Bastian, *Fisher*, 193-7.

Despite Deakin breaking the domestic political consensus Andrew Fisher maintained his position.<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere Canadians hinted they might act, while South Africans sought a suitably small gesture. Even so all four Dominions were talking about the defence of Empire, and the ultimate symbols of sea power, for the first time.

Before making his explosive announcement of apparent weakness McKenna asked Vice Admiral Reginald Poore, Commanding the Australian Station, for observations. He may have been hoping for Dominion contributions to bolster the Dreadnought balance against Germany, despite Deakin and Andrew Fisher committing the country to a local destroyer solution. Poore acknowledged that most Australians did not care about, or wish to pay for a Navy and doubted the sincerity of any politicians who advocated one. More significantly he probed the underlying culture of the country:

I have after a year's experience, come to the conclusion that the Australians who are being trained as seamen are excellent material ... intelligent, smart and of excellent physique, but they do not take to sea life ... I do not think one single man will reengage for a further period: there is no discontent, but they have had enough.

The Australian is not a seaman by instinct. There are no sea traditions: no Australian deeds at sea. Their romance lies, not in the sea, but in the bush. Boys' literature teems with stories of 'the Bush': pioneers, explorers, bushrangers; gold fevers etc.

No Australian boy runs away from school to go to sea: he runs away to bush life: gets tired of it later on, and comes back to swell the population of the towns.<sup>60</sup>

Suitably informed McKenna invited the leaders of the self-governing dominions to London in April to discuss naval issues. The long sea voyage and the location would limit the impact of national culture, allowing the Admiralty to focus on a few individuals. A slick program of shipyard visits, fleet reviews and navalist meetings might shake the resolve of little

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59 La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, II: 486, 553-5.

60 Poore to Reginald McKenna (First Lord of the Admiralty), 8 March 1909: *ANI*, 173-4.

navy men. Before the Australian delegation sailed Deakin won the election and made good on his promise to offer a Dreadnought. As the crisis had abated he may have hoped that the offer might be allowed to lapse.<sup>61</sup> He quickly realised that the outright gift of a large sum of money to Britain would be financially embarrassing, and politically damaging. Trying to make the best of his predicament Deakin persuaded the Governor-General to cable London that if the vessel was committed to the South Pacific it would avoid 'considerable difficulty' for his Government, and 'harmonise patriotic offer with local prejudice.'<sup>62</sup> This posed no problems for the Admiralty, which had already linked the Dreadnought offer to the long-rumoured Australian Navy scheme and New Zealand's outright gift to re-build Imperial Naval power in the Pacific, just as enthusiasm for the Anglo-Japanese alliance was cooling.<sup>63</sup>

Finally Jacky Fisher had something concrete to work with. He and McKenna developed a bullish Admiralty Memorandum for the Imperial Conference. They recognised that although in purely strategic terms the question of imperial naval defence was best handled by a single navy, serving a single master, it was politically imperative that each part of the Empire contribute 'according to their needs and resources'. This cultural sensitivity was a direct response to the South Pacific Dominions. Having accepted money payments, and a ship, the Board was also prepared to indulge Australia's 'wish to lay the foundation of a future navy'. Australia could combine assisting the Empire with building a new service by ordering a 'Fleet Unit' consisting of a battle cruiser, three light cruisers and smaller craft. Exploiting cutting-edge wireless systems, which Fisher's Admiralty had driven, this force could deal with any realistic naval threat to Australia. It was also large enough to provide a naval career structure, and some hope of building a naval culture. Finally, and rather more significantly, it was a direct ship-for-ship replacement of the current Australian Squadron. Replacing the British force would reduce British costs, while the new turbine-powered ships possessed the sustained high speed and mechanical reliability to change Pacific strategy.

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61 J. Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1809-1914* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 210-11. A book heavily influenced by the Republic debate of the early 1990s.

62 La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, II:581.

63 N. Lambert, 'Introduction': ANI 20-1.

The Australian delegation met Fisher, McKenna, Captain Bethell, Director of Naval Intelligence, and Captain Ottley RN, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, on 10 August 1909. McKenna opened by bluntly enquiring what Australia would do to share the burden of naval defence, contrasting the petty, local destroyer force with a potent Dreadnought 'Fleet Unit'. Then Fisher demolished the flotilla concept. He stressed the crisis was at hand, war was likely in the next four to five years, and there was no time to build up a fleet from domestic resources. He also dismissed the existing subsidised British squadron as 'of little value for Imperial defence', a reference to technological obsolescence. Having brow-beaten the Australians into acquiescence he revealed his ultimate object, to order the battle cruiser as soon as possible, 'to meet the crisis that was anticipated in a few years' time.'<sup>64</sup> Although this crisis was far closer to London than Melbourne Fisher had no intention of wasting the opportunity to secure additional naval resources. Although they were destined for the Pacific he wanted these powerful ships to win the naval arms race with Germany—and he needed the sailors from the Australian station to help man the 'Eight' new dreadnoughts. If Australia would build and man the fleet unit Britain would reverse the flow of subsidy. Handing over Sydney dockyard and other Admiralty assets cleared a budget item, and just might help to instil a sea-sense into the most continental of all island nations, and harmonise it with the wider Empire. As Professor La Nauze observed:

The naval scare made it possible to propose a more expensive navy than any Australian government would have contemplated before 1909, and it also meant that the Admiralty's views about its composition would necessarily prevail. The solution of a long argument left both parties happy.<sup>65</sup>

### **Taking the medicine: the Henderson Mission and after**

When Andrew Fisher's Labor party returned to power in late 1910 Australia had acquired a Fleet designed to serve Imperial rather than domestic agendas. Despite his consistent refusal to offer a dreadnought Fisher immediately owned the decision, shifting the cost from a loan to

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64 Proceedings of the Imperial Conference Admiralty 10 August 1909: *ANI*, 180-4.

65 La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, II: 583.

direct taxation, and refusing the proffered British subsidy.<sup>66</sup> Predictably he wanted to make as much use as he could of Australian workers, sailors and officers. However, this was a huge task for a country that still depended on the Royal Navy for ocean-going security.<sup>67</sup> Little wonder George Pearce sought advice about how to develop a force that he and his Prime Minister had refused to contemplate little more than a year before. Although his background lay in organised labour, 'White Australia' and social improvement through compulsory training, Pearce was a quick learner, and took his portfolio seriously. If his defence interests dated back no further than the Russo-Japanese War, they were serious, and would be sustained. Jacky Fisher grabbed the opportunity Pearce provided because he had a far grander object in view—changing Australian strategic culture from military to maritime.

Jacky Fisher sent Reginald Henderson to create an Australian Navy in his own image, relying on Henderson's expertise in administration and organisation, qualities shared by his staff.<sup>68</sup> The Henderson Report, submitted on 1 March 1911, provided the Commonwealth with a Fisherite sea vision based on oceanic sea power, not local defences. In a line that reflected his own conversion Pearce claimed that Australians had 'learned to think in Battleships for their Fleet and in Oceans for their Policy'.<sup>69</sup> Confident the report would be accepted Jacky Fisher attributed opposition in Britain to 'damned fools' who did not realise 'that half a loaf is better than no bread', and 'will not understand that our great Colonies are partially independent nations and are not going to subscribe to other people's navies'.<sup>70</sup>

However, the deeper impact of Henderson's mission lay in the transmission of concepts and culture. Two members of Henderson's staff became key players in pre-war naval policy-making. Captain Francis Haworth-Booth became naval adviser to the High Commissioner in

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66 Macandie, *Genesis*, 249.

67 Bastian's argument that Andrew Fisher created the RAN is sound as regards the institution, but ignores the critical role of Jacky Fisher and British strategic culture.

68 George Reid to George Pearce, 17 July 1910: Pearce MS 1/3, AWM. Henderson was endorsed by Jacky Fisher and current First Sea Lord Arthur Wilson. Jacky Fisher also linked Mr Slee, the Admiralty wireless expert, to the mission.

69 Pearce, Draft speech, nd: Pearce MS 1/7, AWM

70 Fisher to Reginald Henderson, 10 February 1914 & 29 September 1911: FG&DN II: 266, 386-7.

London, while Staff Paymaster Eldon Manisty joined the Australian Naval Board to carry the report into effect, along with Naval War Course-educated officers Commander Hugh Thring and Captain Constantine Hughes-Onslow.<sup>71</sup> It was no coincidence that the naval officer seconded to direct the new Canadian Naval Service, Canadian-born Captain Charles Kingsmill, was another to have profited from Corbett's teaching.<sup>72</sup> The arrival of suitably educated maritime strategists helped to instil Corbett's teaching, published that year in hard covers as *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, and the Fisher 'projectile' concept that it encapsulated into Australian policy. It seems George Pearce was an early convert.<sup>73</sup> The impact of the new strategic culture was clear: in 1913 Andrew Fisher's Government, dismayed by Churchill's decision not to send two British battle cruisers to the Pacific, planned to order another battle cruiser, more destroyers, depot ships and naval aircraft. By 1914 political turmoil saw these plans whittled down a single Australian-built light cruiser.<sup>74</sup>

By 1914 the Henderson Report and the Australian Naval Board had harmonised strategic doctrine between London and Melbourne, while Commander Thring remained in post until 1919, helping shape post-war policy, along with Corbett's official history of *Naval Operations*. By 1919 the maritime strategic case had been hard-wired into the Australian service, making it the least 'national' of the armed forces. Nor was the Army unaffected: by 1914 Pearce had created the structures to ensure the army was ready to mobilise an expeditionary force 'capable of deploying beyond Australia'. It proved to be a very impressive 'projectile'.<sup>75</sup> As John Connor observed, Pearce favoured a forward defence beyond Australia's shores, and he 'wanted an army capable of deploying beyond Australia', 'alongside British forces'.<sup>76</sup>

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71 Thring attended the 13th Naval War Course, 5 October 1909-28 January 1910, and was rated 1st class.

72 Information from Dr Alec Douglas.

73 Connor, *Anzac and Empire*, 43 & quote at 168. B. Beddie, 'George Foster Pearce', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10 (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 177-82. Hankey to Pearce, 16 November 1933: Pearce 1/7, MS 1827 ANL, for Pearce's Corbettian perspective.

74 Bastian, *Fisher*, 197. The light cruiser was HMAS *Adelaide*.

75 Connor, *Anzac and Empire*, 157, 168.

76 Comments by the Minister of Defence on the Memorandum of the War Office of 15 December 1908 on the subject of an Imperial General Staff: Folder 19a 5/120 Andrew Fisher MS 2919 ANL.

## Conclusion

When the ships of the first Australian Fleet made a grand entrance into Sydney on October 4th 1913 Prime Minister Joseph Cook celebrated the arrival of 'the Australian section of the Imperial Fleet', as a harmonious sharing of cultural values, not a jarring clash of rival identities. Yet there would be no great Australian cultural response to the Fleet, no picture that linked the ships to the nation. It simply did not fit into the existing continental culture. While all could see the British-built hardware it was the transmission of Corbettian concepts and ideas through Jacky Fisher, the Henderson Mission, and Naval War Course-educated officers Haworth-Booth, Thring and Onslow-Hughes that had a lasting impact. This harmonisation of ideas worked because it was perfectly possible for Deakin, Andrew Fisher, Cook, Pearce and other leading Australian politicians to be at once Australian and Imperial. In 1914 Australia depended on the economic and security structures on the Empire. The question was how it could make the best contribution to Imperial security in the Pacific, by defending Australia, or by joining a larger, more flexible structure that included the world's largest navy, and a chain of imperial bases, dry-docks and telegraph cable links that connected Australia with the rest of the Empire. These choices, as Alfred Deakin stressed, should be distinctively Australian in character and content, 'but Imperial in end and value'.<sup>77</sup> Plans for a local destroyer force, and a Swiss-style militia army simply did not work for a nation that operated, then as now, in a fully globalised economy and based its security on a strong relationship with the dominant sea power. There was no alternative to taking an active part in Imperial defence, which required an ocean-going navy and a deployable 'projectile' army.

While peace-time soldiers in Britain and Australia ignored 'projectile' strategy the grim logic for island nations waging war within a coalition that possessed effective sea control was that they must either become expeditionary, or stand aside from serious land fighting with obvious diplomatic repercussions. In 1914 both Britain and Australia were secure from day one, the Germans High Seas Fleet having scuttled back into Wilhelmshaven while the weak, isolated German cruiser force in the Pacific posed no threat. The mere presence of a superior force in Australia

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<sup>77</sup> Mordike, *Army for a Nation*, 170.



hastened Admiral Maximilian von Spee to Chile, and the Falkland Islands. HMAS *Australia* was the ideal deterrent. It also covered the conquest of Germany's Pacific colonies by a 'projectile' army, reinforced the Imperial army in the Middle East and eventually took the field in Northern France. The Navy secured the oceanic lines of communication before the major units joined the Grand Fleet, while the smaller units worked in the Mediterranean and beyond.

Unfortunately while the imperial system conceived by Jacky Fisher and Julian Corbett worked well in 1914 British decision makers blundered into a mass continental army, something wholly alien to English/British traditions, and in the process wrecked the very things they were in office to sustain, the economic structures that underpinned British power. In 1914 the British ministers did not know their history, they did not recognise that it had been the ruthless, remorseless, relentless application of overwhelming sea power, exploited by potent military 'projectiles', that saved Britain from Philip II, Louis XIV and Napoleon. All three had their fleets burnt, and their naval bases wrecked without Britain needing to raise a mass army.<sup>78</sup> Once sea power had been secured all three had their economies wrecked by naval blockade. With or without the Dominions Britain lacked the human resources to wage war like Russia and Germany: the best interests of the Empire were served by focussing on deterrence through the possession of overwhelming sea power and carefully honed military projectiles. Yet the events of the war would be read in a very different way, transforming the largest projectile operation of the war into the defining emblem of an entrenched continental culture.

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78 Henderson, *Science of War*, 26-30, is essential reading on this subject.

# Gallipoli: A flawed strategy

*Chris Roberts*

In the debate between ‘Westerners’ and ‘Easterners’ the strategy of the Gallipoli campaign looms large, one side maintaining it simply drew off scarce resources from the principal theatre of war and the main enemy, while the other argues it was a brilliant conception flawed only in its execution. It is an example, supporters say, of Liddell Hart’s strategy of the indirect approach, that by bypassing the stalemate of the Western Front and using the naval might of Great Britain and France, Turkey could have been knocked out of the war, and the conflict shortened. It was a campaign, others claim, that came agonisingly close to success—the subject of Winston Churchill’s ‘terrible “ifs”’. It is hard, however, to reconcile the theory with the reality.<sup>1</sup>

As a strategy of the indirect approach, Gallipoli was nothing of the sort. The premise of the indirect approach is that the attacker avoids a line of operation that confronts the enemy head-on, or assails his strength. Instead it proposes, from the enemy’s perspective, taking the line of least resistance against a sensitive objective that will disrupt his equilibrium, and by upsetting his physical and psychological balance will lead to victory with fewer casualties. It places strength against weakness from an unexpected direction.

For the allies faced with stalemate on the Western Front, with big hands on small maps, the idea of bypassing Germany and attacking her weakest partner may have seemed an attractive option. For Germany, however, it was hardly an indirect approach to her war-fighting capabilities

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1 For discussion of various views see, for example: Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis* Vol. II (Sydney & Melbourne: Australasian Publishing Company, n.d.), 515-16; Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli* (London: Pan, 1974), 352-3; Eric Bush, *Gallipoli* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), 307; Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. edn (New York: Meridian, 1991), 179; Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The end of the myth* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), xiii, 249-52; Peter Hart, *Gallipoli* (London: Profile, 2011), vii-ix; Don Schurman, ‘Easterners versus Westerners’, in Barrie Pitt (ed.), *Purnell’s History of the First World War. Vol. 2* (London: BPC Publishing, 1970), 712-15.

or a sensitive objective. Nor was it likely to disrupt her equilibrium, or upset her physical and psychological balance. Knocking Turkey out of the war was unlikely to knock the props from under Germany, and or even mildly affect her ability to continue waging the war.

Looking down into the theatre of operations, where the rubber would hit the road, from Turkey's perspective, the allied strategy of attacking via the Dardanelles was a direct approach through the front door. Not only was it along the line of greatest expectation, but with a strongly fortified Dardanelles it was also along a line of great resistance. Thus in considering a strategy of the indirect approach, one should not be blinded by the big sweep illusion if at the point of application it evaporates.

Nor was the Gallipoli strategy based on sound assumptions and pragmatic assessments, either as regards the strategic aim or the means and chances of achieving it. The view that Turkey was easy pickings came from the presumption that it was the sick old man of Europe. After the humiliating defeat in the Balkan Wars it was assumed the Turks would simply crumble. Churchill's view of 'scandalous, crumbling, decrepit, penniless, Turkey echoed the prevailing view in Britain. His comment, 'a good army of 50,000 men and seapower, that is the end of the Turkish menace', and Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Skeen's that the Turk 'has never shown himself as good a fighter as the white man' summed up opinions of the Turkish naval and military capabilities.<sup>2</sup> The Ottomans, however, had undertaken drastic military reforms following their Balkans defeat, with incompetent commanders being replaced with men of demonstrated ability. New training programs had been undertaken, and the reserves had been integrated into the active divisions. They were a more formidable foe than the British thought.

The first shots of the campaign were fired before any serious consideration of an appropriate strategy was undertaken. On 29 October 1914, an Ottoman flotilla bombarded Russian installations bordering the Black Sea, triggering Turkey's entry into the war. In an impulsive action that Admiral Sir Roger Bacon described as 'an act of sheer lunacy' and Admiral Sir John Jellicoe considered 'an unforgivable error', Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, immediately ordered the British Mediterranean squadron to bombard the forts at the entrance to

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2 Churchill quoted in Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*, 11, and Skeen quoted in *ibid.*, 86.

the Dardanelles.<sup>3</sup> Carried out on 3 November, two days before Britain declared war on Turkey, it served no strategic or operational purpose, achieving little other than encouraging the Turks to hasten their defensive preparations on the peninsula. This ill-considered decision presaged the approach the British War Council would take in its discussions on naval strategy leading up to the campaign.

Robin Prior has described the Council's deliberations as discursive, rambling and incoherent.<sup>4</sup> By any measure their approach to strategy was disjointed and lacked clarity of thought, as they moved back and forth between proposed naval-military operations against German islands in the North Sea, in the Baltic, against the Belgian and Syrian coasts, a couple of Balkan ventures, as well as the Dardanelles. It was within this dysfunctional and shifting atmosphere the Gallipoli campaign was conceived. As an example of the development of a joint naval-military strategy it bears all the hallmarks of muddled thinking, and wildly over-optimistic expectations.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of a Dardanelles campaign emerged as early as August 1914, when Churchill asked the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to examine the feasibility of seizing the Gallipoli peninsula using a Greek army.<sup>6</sup> What Churchill hoped to achieve by attacking a still neutral Turkey is not known. Rather than any considered strategic thought, he may have been driven by the humiliation suffered when the Ottomans acquired two

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3 Bacon and Jellicoe quoted in Arthur J. Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher era, 1904-1919, Vol. II, The War Years to the Eve of Jutland* (London: Oxford University Press, London, 1965), 201. Churchill's instruction to Carden is reproduced in Dan Van Der Vat, *The Dardanelles Disaster: Winston Churchill's Greatest Failure* (London/New York: Duckworth Overlook, 2009), 75-6.

4 Prior, *Gallipoli*, 19.

5 The War Council's deliberations on strategy and the inception of the naval and military operations in the Dardanelles are covered in Sir Julian Corbett, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Naval Operations, Vol. I* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), Chapters VI, VII and XII; Brigadier General C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli, Vol. I, Inception of the Campaign to May 1915* (London: William Heineman, 1929), Chapter III; Lord Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914-1918, Vol. I* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), Chapters XXII to XXVII inclusive; The World War 1 Collection. *The Dardanelles Commission 1914-16* (London: The Stationery Office, 2001), 14-76; Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, II, Chapters IX and X; Van Der Vat, *Dardanelles Disaster*, Chapters 4 to 8 inclusive; Prior, *Gallipoli*, Chapters 1 to 5 inclusive.

6 Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 41; Hankey, *Supreme Command*, I: 223-4; *The Dardanelles Commission*, 34.

German warships that had evaded the British Mediterranean Fleet in the first week of war. These replaced two British-built battleships due to be delivered when Churchill requisitioned them in August. Subsequently the British Naval Mission, which had been advising Turkey on naval matters, was dismissed, and a German-Turkish alliance was announced, although Turkey remained neutral.

In November, when the War Council considered the defence of the Suez Canal, Churchill argued a combined naval-military operation to take the Gallipoli peninsula would best achieve this, optimistically commenting that, 'if successful, would give us control of the Dardanelles, and we could dictate terms to Constantinople'.<sup>7</sup> How simply holding the peninsula and controlling the Dardanelles would enable the Allies to dictate terms to the Ottoman Government was not explained. The army, moreover, was stretched to its limits maintaining sufficient forces in France, and Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, responded that no troops could be made available for the venture, and the idea lapsed.

In late December, presenting an option to overcome the stalemate on the Western Front, Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the War Council, proposed a coalition among the Balkan states, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Russia, to 'weave a web around Turkey to end her career as a European power'. The ultimate object was to occupy Constantinople, the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. Opening up this sea route, Hankey argued, would enable wheat to be exported to the allies. Britain's contribution to the alliance would be three army corps.<sup>8</sup> This received some support within the War Council, especially from Churchill and Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, despite several difficulties: the British Army was struggling to maintain four corps in France and Belgium; the withdrawal of three of them would have seriously weakened the Western Front and created an open breach with the French; the proposed members of the coalition were deeply suspicious of each other; and several of them were still neutral. The proposal received no endorsement.

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7 Quoted in Van Der Vat, *Dardanelles Disaster*, 72. See also Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, II: 201-02; Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 44; Hankey, *Supreme Command*, I: 242.

8 The Memorandum is reproduced in full in Hankey, *Supreme Command*, 244-50. See also Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 49-50.

The fuse was finally lit on 2 January 1915 when the Russians requested a demonstration against the Ottoman Empire to relieve pressure on the Caucasus Front. Kitchener floated the idea of a purely naval demonstration, noting 'the only place [it] might have some effect in stopping reinforcements going east would be the Dardanelles'.<sup>9</sup>

Next day, in a rambling memorandum reflecting fanciful ideas rather than realities, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher, First Sea Lord, proposed a combined operation be mounted immediately. He envisaged the Indian Corps and 75,000 British troops being withdrawn from France for an attack on the Asiatic shore south of the Dardanelles; the neutral Greeks capturing the Gallipoli peninsula; the neutral Bulgarians marching on Adrianople; and the neutral Rumanians joining the Russians and Serbs in an attack against Austria. At the same time, he wrote, the Royal Navy should 'force the Dardanelles'.<sup>10</sup> Fisher's memo simply ignored the same problems and implications associated with Hankey's proposed alliance, and was an extraordinary piece of poorly conceived advice.

Churchill, however, seized on the final point. He immediately cabled Admiral Sir Sackville Carden, commanding the British Mediterranean squadron, seeking advice on the feasibility of forcing the Dardanelles by naval gunfire alone, noting older battleships would be used, and 'Importance of results would justify severe losses'.<sup>11</sup> The cable seems to have been worded to elicit a positive result, rather than seek a pragmatic assessment. Carden replied while the forts could not be rushed, they 'might be forced by extended operations with large numbers of ships'.<sup>12</sup> Asked for a detailed plan, Carden proposed a four-stage step-by-step operation with a probable time of a month. This was enough for Churchill who, against Fisher's advice, took the proposal for a purely naval operation to the War Council.

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9 Corbett, *Naval operations*, 64; Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 53; Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, II: 204.

10 Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 54; Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, II: 204; Van Der Vat, *Dardanelles Disaster*, 82; Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*, 27; Prior, *Gallipoli*, 12-13; Les Carlyon, *Gallipoli* (Sydney: MacMillan, 2004), 52-3.

11 Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 55; Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, II: 205; *Dardanelles Commission*, 92; Van Der Vat, *Dardanelles Disaster*, 83.

12 Corbett, *Naval operations*, 64; Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 55; *Dardanelles Commission*, 38; Hankey, *Supreme Command*, I: 267.

Kitchener again advised no troops were available, but considered a naval demonstration was worth attempting, noting that it could be cancelled should the bombardment prove ineffective. This fueled Churchill's enthusiasm, but there were fundamental differences between Kitchener's idea, Fisher's intent, and Churchill's proposal. Kitchener suggested a naval demonstration that could be abandoned if it proved ineffectual; Fisher proposed a full-blown naval-military operation against the peninsula and the Asiatic shore; while Churchill advocated a purely naval assault up the Dardanelles. These varying views of the objective continued to pervade future discussions, and failed to clarify the aim of the strategy, and the objectives of the operation to be embarked on.

Swayed by Churchill's enthusiasm, and his claims of the capabilities of the 15 inch guns of the new battleship, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, which he would add to Carden's squadron, the Council gave planning permission for the Admiralty 'to prepare for a naval expedition ... to bombard and take the Gallipoli peninsula with Constantinople as its objective'.<sup>13</sup> As an example of vague strategic and operational direction and wishful thinking, the Council's permission could hardly be bettered. One wonders, for example, how the Navy was expected to 'take the peninsula' which at the time was occupied by three Ottoman infantry divisions, with substantial numbers of troops garrisoning the fortified and mobile batteries there.

Fisher continued to object to a purely naval attack, but much to his dismay, the War Council formally approved the operation on 28 January. This was despite accepted naval wisdom that attacks by warships against forts without military help rarely produced worthwhile results, and against the naval advice that a combined naval-military operation was the only realistic option. Ironically, Russian successes in the Caucasus meant the original request for a demonstration was no longer required, but they neglected to advise the British.

Concerns now arose about the Serbs who were in need of urgent assistance. Britain and France each proposed to send one infantry division to Salonika to guard Greece's communications, while the still neutral Greeks were to be induced to march to Serbia's aid. Kitchener agreed to release the 29th Division as Britain's contribution. The project was soon dropped, but Kitchener had undermined his argument that no troops could be made available for the Dardanelles.

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13 Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 59; Marder, *Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, I: 207; *Dardanelles Commission*, 46.

On 13 February the Admiralty, having no faith in the purely naval attack, now pressed its case for a combined operation. Three days later, the War Council directed the 29th Division be despatched to Lemnos, and arrangements be made to send additional troops from Egypt. This was not, however, an endorsement of a combined naval-military assault. The troops were 'to be available in case of necessity to support the naval attack on the Dardanelles'.<sup>14</sup> It would still be a naval operation, with army support *only* should it be needed. However, most members of the War Council still saw the operation as a naval attack that could be broken off if unsuccessful.

Further confusion followed. On 19 February, the same day the naval operation began, Kitchener argued the 29th Division could not be sent to the Dardanelles. Instead he offered the partially trained Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). Unable to change Kitchener's mind, the Council reversed its earlier decision, leaving the navy to push on alone to implement a strategy it had no faith in, the result of conflicting views, poor advice, ill-considered decisions, and confused objectives.

This confusion of the aim and objectives became immediately apparent. Without the consent of the War Council, Churchill trumpeted the supposed success of the opening day's bombardment in a press announcement. Hankey recorded its effect on the Council: 'The announcement had a remarkable effect on the attitude of the War Council. When the decision had been reached to undertake the naval bombardment it had generally been assumed that the attack could be broken off in the event of failure. But when the War Cabinet met on 24 February, notwithstanding that the Outer Forts had not yet been finally reduced, it was felt that 'we were now committed to seeing the business through'.<sup>15</sup> Thus, as a result of Churchill's announcement, the intention now became to force the Narrows.

How realistic was it, however, to expect the Navy to subdue the forts, take the peninsula and force the Dardanelles? Carden's force comprised 17 battleships, the battle cruiser *Inflexible*, two cruisers, two light cruisers and several destroyers. While impressive on paper, 16 of the battleships were pre-dreadnoughts dating from between 1895 and 1906, most of

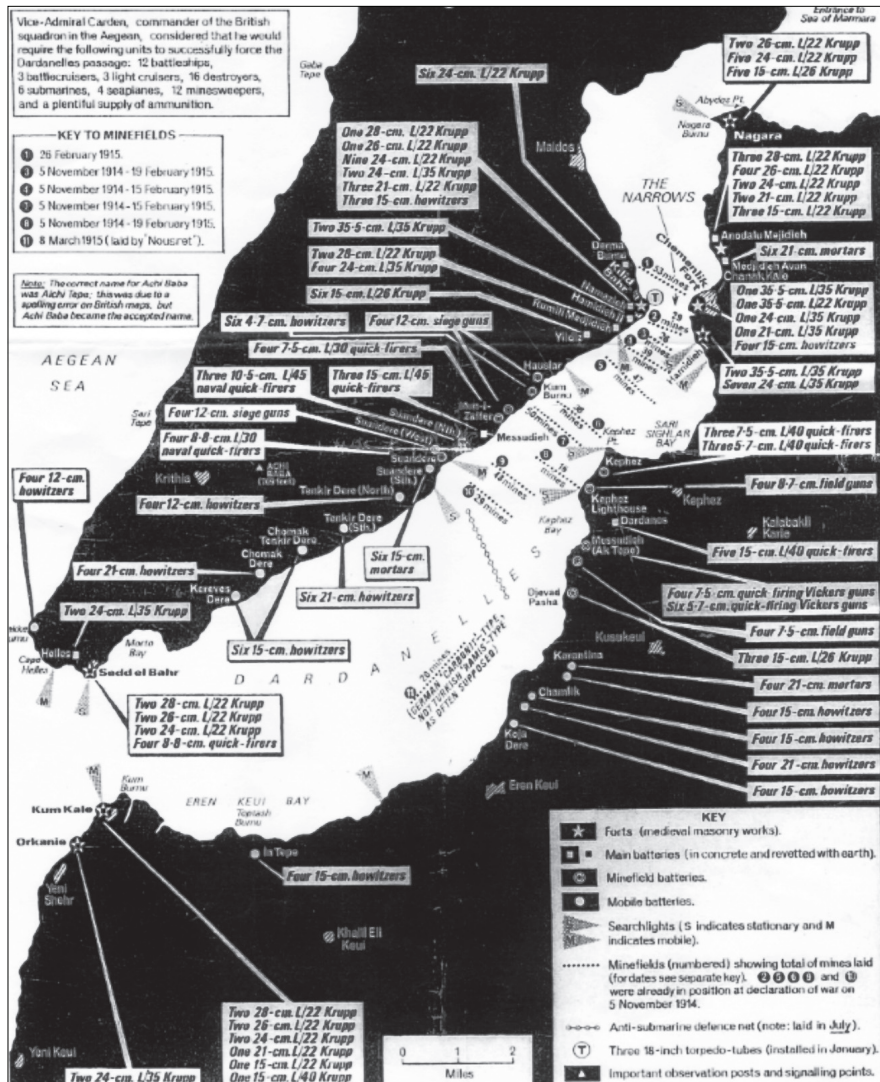
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14 Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 68; *Dardanelles Commission*, 61; Hankey, *Supreme Command*, I: 281.

15 Hankey, *Supreme Command*, I: 283.



which were considered expendable.<sup>16</sup> Only *Queen Elizabeth* and the battle cruiser *Inflexible* were considered modern warships. Furthermore, the minesweepers required to clear the minefields were unarmed North Sea trawlers, operated by their civilian crews who were unwilling to work under fire. Confronting them was a formidable obstacle.



16 Prior, *Gallipoli*, 23, lists 12 pre-dreadnought battleships, but these are the British ships (*Agamemnon*, *Lord Nelson*, *Vengeance*, *Irresistible*, *Albion*, *Ocean*, *Majestic*, *Prince George*, *Swiftsure*, *Triumph*, *Canopus*, and *Cornwallis*). To these must be added four French pre-dreadnoughts (*Gaulois*, *Charlemagne*, *Bouvet*, and *Suffren*).

The Dardanelles is 61 kilometres long, and at between 1.2 to six kilometers wide, the whole length of the waterway can be covered by gunfire. In the narrower portions, there is little or no room for manoeuvre under gunfire. The strongest defences were in the lower half, where the *Canakkale Area Fortified Command*, controlled over 300 guns, ranging from 35.5 cm to 4.5 cm pieces, arrayed along both shores of the strait.<sup>17</sup> Of these, over 100 of the heaviest calibres were in fortified batteries, with the strongest concentration around the Narrows, where any warship was a sitting duck. The remainder were in 25 mobile batteries between Cape Helles and the Narrows, which could be moved to alternative firing locations, and avoid shelling from the ships. Supplementing them were ten minefields, with a total of 344 mines, laid across the waterway in the restricted waters approaching the Narrows.<sup>18</sup> It was highly optimistic to think that Carden's antiquated ships alone could destroy these defences to enable unimpeded sailing up the strait, let alone do it in a month. Even if they did, having slogged their way up the Dardanelles, on entering the Sea of Marmara the surviving vessels would have to fight the Ottoman fleet, including the modern ex-German battle cruiser *Goeben* manned by its German crew, which had the advantage of being able to cross the Allied fleet's 'T' as it emerged from the narrow strait.

Even had the Anglo-French fleet been able to overcome these enormous challenges, and appeared outside Constantinople, how realistic was it they would overawe the Ottoman Empire into capitulating? This assumes that once a nation's capital is threatened, or captured it will surrender. Such a view ignored the numerous examples where this did not occur. For example, the Russians in 1812; the Confederates when Richmond was threatened in 1862, and they later moved the seat of government when the city fell in 1865; as did the French when the Prussians besieged Paris in 1870, and the Germans threatened it in 1914. It was highly likely the Ottoman Government would do the same, and continue directing the war from Anatolia. Furthermore, there is evidence the Turks intended to

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17 Ed Erickson, *Gallipoli: The Ottoman campaign* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2010), 13, 16; Ed Erickson, *Ordered to Die. A history of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (London/Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 79. Erickson states the Ottoman records give 82 guns operational in fixed positions and 230 mobile guns and howitzers. The map in the end pocket of Corbett lists 239 guns of all types. Also see Map 1 on page 82 which shows 220 guns. I have taken Erickson's figures which are likely to be more accurate.

18 Prior, *Gallipoli*, 35.

defend their capital, against a fleet that had been ordered not to fire on the city. An expected capitulation under these conditions was wishful thinking in the extreme.

The commitment of the army followed a similar line of flawed thinking and operational planning on the run. Stating after Churchill's press announcement that '[t]he publicity of the announcement has committed us',<sup>19</sup> Kitchener issued instructions to warn ANZAC to be ready to embark 'to assist the navy ... give any co-operation ... required ... and to occupy any captured forts'.<sup>20</sup> In response, the partially trained 3rd Australian Brigade embarked for Lemnos on 2nd March. The navy would now have some military support, but given the unreadiness of the brigade, its influence would be minimal and largely restricted to occupation duties, that is, should the Turkish III Corps elect to roll over.

By 10 March 1915 the naval effort had made little headway, and Kitchener changed his mind, advising that the 29th Division could now support the Navy. The next day General Sir Ian Hamilton was appointed to command the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF). With a hastily arranged staff he departed London on 13 March. Kitchener's instructions were that any large-scale land operations were only to be contemplated if the fleet failed to penetrate after every effort had been exhausted. He added that, '[h]aving entered the project of forcing the Straits, there can be no idea of abandoning the project'.<sup>21</sup> For the Army, the possibility of the Dardanelles becoming an unwanted, alternative theatre of operations was quickly becoming reality.

Ignoring that stage two of Carden's four-stage operation was nowhere near complete, on 13 March Churchill now decided to force the Dardanelles. Contrary to his previous advice, Carden agreed to attack the forts at the Narrows (stage three) with his entire force, while silencing the inner batteries and clearing the minefields (stage two) under cover of this attack.<sup>22</sup> Then, suffering a nervous breakdown, he requested leave and

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19 Ibid.

20 Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 73. See also Kitchener's cable to Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood, GOC, ANZAC, through General Sir John Maxwell GOC, EEF, limiting the nature of the army's involvement: *Dardanelles Commission*, 64.

21 Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 90; *Dardanelles Commission*, 119; Prior, *Gallipoli*, 67.

22 The cables between Churchill and Carden are quoted in *Dardanelles Commission*, 104-05.

departed the scene. This was hardly an endorsement of the forthcoming attack. On 18 March, while Hamilton undertook a reconnaissance of the Aegean coast, the Anglo-French fleet steamed into the Dardanelles determined to blast its way through, only to suffer defeat and the loss of three battleships, and three so badly damaged they were out of action for some time, including the modern battle cruiser *Inflexible*. This represented a loss of one-third of the main battle fleet for no gain. Contrary to the belief the Turkish guns were running short of ammunition, a theme first established by Winston Churchill,<sup>23</sup> only four of the fourteen permanent forts had engaged the fleet on 18 March. While ammunition in these batteries had been depleted, but not exhausted, substantial quantities remained in the remaining forts, including those of the inner defences covering the Narrows.<sup>24</sup>

Having seen the concluding stages of the battle, Hamilton was convinced the Straits could not be forced by the fleet alone. Cabling London, he advised that rather than playing a subsidiary role, the army should undertake 'a deliberate and progressive military operation ... to make good the passage of the Navy'.<sup>25</sup> Kitchener replied, 'if large military operations on the Gallipoli peninsula are necessary to clear the way, they must be undertaken, and must be carried through'.<sup>26</sup> Churchill acquiesced and cabled that a combined naval-military operation was now essential. Thus in the space of a few cables, and without reviewing the situation, the strategy was changed and the roles reversed. The army, with a force never intended to mount an offensive operation, would now take the lead, with the navy providing support.

How realistic was this new approach? Hamilton's MEF was an ad hoc formation in every sense. Cobbled together under a hastily formed General Headquarters, it comprised formations and units in various stages of training and capabilities. The best trained were the British 29th Division and probably the French Corps Expeditionnaire D' Orient (CEO), but even they were new formations. The 29th was formed in early

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23 Churchill, *World Crisis*, I: 257.

24 See Erickson, *Gallipoli: The Ottoman campaign*, 22-8, for a fuller discussion of the Turkish ammunition situation.

25 Sir Ian Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary, Vol. I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), 37; *Dardanelles Commission*, 73, 122; Prior, *Gallipoli*, 68.

26 Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, 39; Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, 99; *Dardanelles Commission*, 122.

1915 from regular units withdrawn from garrisons around the Empire. Likewise, the CEO was an infantry division largely created from drafts in the regimental depots from a mixture of French, Algerian, Senegalese and Foreign Legion units. The Royal Naval Division (RND) was a mixed bag, a brigade of trained Royal Marines and two brigades of raw Royal Naval Reserve volunteers excess to requirement, and now training as infantry. It had no artillery and was short of support troops. In a similar category was the partially trained ANZAC. While the 1st Australian Division was at full strength, the New Zealand and Australian Division had only two infantry brigades and was short of artillery and other arms and service units.<sup>27</sup> Neither ANZAC nor the RND could be regarded as ready for offensive operations.

Opposing them was the new Ottoman Fifth Army, comprising the III and XV Corps, and the independent 5th Division, giving a total of six divisions largely composed of well-trained combat veterans. III Corps was regarded as the best in the Ottoman Army, having performed well during the Balkan Wars. It was assigned the defence of the Gallipoli Peninsula as early as September 1914, and had worked hard in developing the defences and practising anti-invasion drills.<sup>28</sup> The only compensation for Hamilton was the Fifth Army had to cover 150 miles of coastline. The strongest defences were at the isthmus covered by the 5th and 7th Divisions; on the Asiatic shore defended by newly formed XV Corps, comprising the veteran 3rd and 11th divisions; and at Cape Helles, defended by two battalions, supported by a field artillery battalion, and 27 howitzers of the Fortified Command's Tenger Artillery Group. Elsewhere the coast was held lightly, with strong reserves positioned inland.

Hamilton's objective was to clear the batteries covering the Dardanelles. To do the job properly required both shores to be cleared, but this task was beyond the capabilities of his resources. He had insufficient troops to clear both shores, and the approach from the Asiatic shore would open up a long and vulnerable right flank, and eventually swallow up his

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27 See Chris Roberts, *The landing at Anzac, 1915* (Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2013), 26-33.

28 Ed Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I: A comparative study*. (London/ New York: Routledge, 2007), 8-30, discusses the reform, training and experience of the Turkish Army and III Corps. See also Erickson, *Gallipoli: The Ottoman campaign*, 30-41.

whole force. Besides, Kitchener had forbidden him to attack there.<sup>29</sup> The only option left was the peninsula.

One approach was land on the western coast opposite the Kilid Bahr plateau, which sits like a great bastion astride the peninsula, and drive straight for it. Overlooking the narrowest portion of the Dardanelles, the plateau is a strong natural defensive position, housing the heavy artillery fortifications covering the Narrows. Securing it first would not only eliminate these guns, but would also isolate the Ottoman forces in the south, enabling the remaining batteries to be taken by an advance from the high ground to the low. Hamilton would have preferred to land his whole force as close to the Kilid Bahr plateau. Because of insufficient small craft, the beach space was so cramped that men and stores could not be put ashore, and from his reconnaissance noted all the natural landing places, except Cape Helles, were covered with an elaborate network of trenches, he rejected the idea.<sup>30</sup> Unbeknown to him, however, the coast here was lightly held.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, a landing in this area, would have meant his line of communication between the beach and the plateau was open to attack on both flanks.

Had he thrown his whole force ashore there, and succeeded, it might have gone down as an example of the strategy of the indirect approach. The approach lay on a line of least resistance and expectation, as the Turks expected the main attack to come either at the isthmus or on the Asiatic shore, with the third priority being an attack on Cape Helles.

Hamilton eventually decided his main attack would be at Cape Helles, which he believed was lightly held, supported by a subsidiary attack and two feints.<sup>32</sup> The two feints would occur on the Turkish flanks. Against the isthmus the RND transports would make a demonstration in Gulf of Saros to hold the 5th and 7th divisions in place. On the Asiatic shore

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29 Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, 9, 88.

30 Ibid., 96. HQ MEF General Staff War Diary, entry for 8 March 1915.

31 One company of the 2nd Battalion 27th, Infantry Regiment, and one company of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, covered the five kilometres of coast opposite the Kild Bahr plateau. Aspinall-Oglander, *Gallipoli*, Sketch Map 5A, opposite 159. *Birinci Dunya Harbinde Turk Harbi, V Nci Cilt Canakkale Cepshesi 2 Nci Kitap*. Ankara, 1978 (Turkish Official History), Map 28.

32 MEF Force Order No 1 dated 13 April 1915. In appendices to HQ MEF General Staff War Diary, March-April 1915. AWM 1/4/1 Part 2, AWM website/Collections/Records/First World War Diaries.

the French would undertake a limited landing at Kum Kale to prevent the Turkish field batteries there from engaging the Helles landing, and stop reinforcements being sent from XV Corps.<sup>33</sup>

Forced by the limited beaches available at Helles, the main assault was spread over five small and widely dispersed beaches, to be followed by an advance taking the longest route to the Kilid Bahr plateau in the teeth of enemy resistance. His flanks, however, would be secure, and the navy advised they could provide fire support from the flanks in enfilade to his advance. Once the 29th Division had secured the Achi Baba feature, they would be reinforced by the CEO for the push to the plateau.<sup>34</sup>

The subsidiary attack would be made against the Sari Bair range, with the ultimate objective of taking the Mal Tepe ridge, cutting the north-south road communications, and hopefully drawing off Turkish reinforcements from the main thrust. This was entrusted to the inadequately trained ANZAC, and although they scored an initial success with overwhelming numbers against a light screen, they lacked the experience to complete such a complex offensive operation.<sup>35</sup>

Irrespective of which plan Hamilton adopted, being confined to the peninsula, the army could only do half the job. The obvious weakness was that the batteries on the Asiatic shore remained a threat to any shipping in the Dardanelles. Most of them were mobile guns which could move when engaged, and most of the fortified batteries on that shore were beyond the crook of the Narrows, making them difficult targets for naval gunfire, unless they lay almost under them. Considering the naval efforts to date, there was no guarantee they would be any more successful in subduing them, or getting through the ten lines of minefields without further loss. Nor was there any guarantee they could clear all the minefields, although they no longer had to contend with fire from both shores. Even if the Asiatic guns could have been subdued by the Navy, there was the very real probability that once the fleet passed, Ottoman mobile batteries

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33 Letter from General Commanding MEF to Commandant CEO dated 18 April 1915. In appendices to HQ MEF General Staff War Diary, March-April 1915, AWM 1/4/1 Part 2.

34 Instructions to G.O.C. Corps Expeditionnaire Francis [sic] D'Orient dated 21 April 1915. In appendices to HQ MEF General Staff War Diary, March-April 1915, AWM 1/4/1 Part 2.

35 MEF Instructions to G.O.C. A&NZ Army Corps dated 13 April 1915. In appendices to HQ MEF General Staff War Diary, March-April 1915. AWM 1/4/1 Part 2.

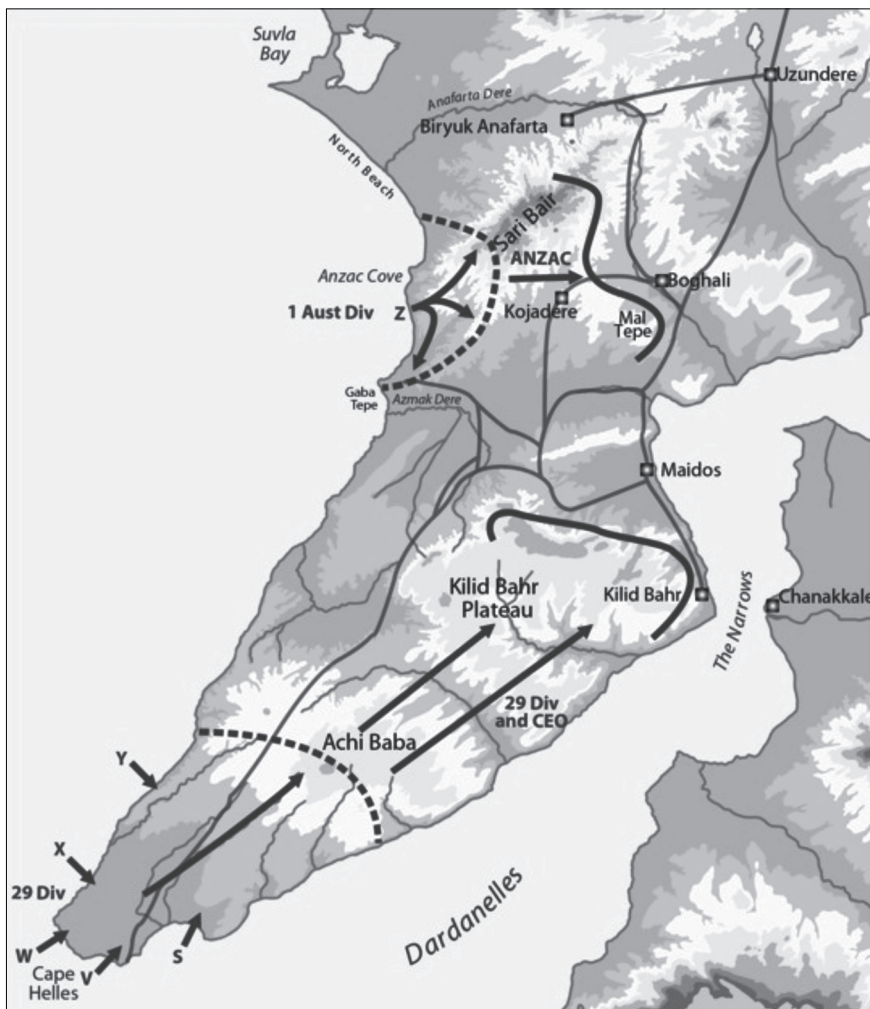
would return to interdict the waterway and disrupt the transports needed to support any occupation of Constantinople. Thus the army's strategy to assist the fleet was just as flawed as the naval strategy to force the Dardanelles, in the expectation that Constantinople would capitulate to the fleet.



Map 2. Overall plan.



The strategic use of armies and navies in an expeditionary role has generally seen the navy convey the army, launch it on a distant shore and support it in subsequent operations. At Gallipoli the reverse was true. The army was despatched belatedly to support a faltering naval operation, but it was worse than that. The intended role of the army was premised on the assumption it would secure the forts after they had been reduced by the navy, and garrison the peninsula. It was only after Hamilton arrived that a full blown amphibious assault was decided on, and that with an ad hoc and inadequate force poorly prepared to do the job.



Map 3. The main and subsidiary attacks and objectives.

In the realm of maritime strategy and armies, Gallipoli is an example of how not to proceed. Conceived on a gross underestimation of the enemy, and a fanciful strategic aim, both the naval assault and the subsequent army operation were cobbled together with little real analysis, and were assigned inadequate resources to do the job. They evolved through the muddled thinking of the British War Council, and Churchill's unfounded enthusiasm. Although Churchill had been the strongest advocate of the venture, the War Council was not well served by Kitchener or Fisher. Despite being technically competent officers within their own Services, both failed in their responsibility to provide sound and pragmatic advice to facilitate educated decisions at the strategic level. Fisher's ill-judged proposal of 3 January simply fanned Churchill's determination to wage war on the Ottoman Empire, when more measured and pragmatic advice was needed. Kitchener's opposition to committing military forces was undermined when he agreed to release the 29th Division for the equally suspect Salonika venture. While Fisher tried to put the brakes on the naval operation, he eventually succumbed to an operation in which he had no faith. So did Kitchener, who allowed the army to be dragged into a campaign it neither wanted nor could resource properly. Neither Fisher nor Kitchener presented a sound case on the merits or otherwise of the campaign, or the resources required to prosecute it to a successful conclusion. Instead they eventually acquiesced in a fanciful strategy and poorly conceived operation, echoing Julian Corbett's pre-war concern: 'How often have officers dumbly acquiesced in ill-advised operations simply for lack of mental power and verbal apparatus to convince an impatient Minister where the errors of his plan lay?'<sup>36</sup> Succumbing to Churchill's enthusiasm, the loudest voice carried the day in the Council. It was a critical failure in collective strategic direction and operational resourcing that current leaders could do well to remember.

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36 Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* ([1911] Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 5.

# Marine Corps Doctrine and the War with Japan<sup>1</sup>

*David J. Ulbrich*

The US Marine Corps' amphibious doctrine had its genesis at the dawn of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Following the Spanish-American War in 1898, American strategists worried about the possibility of war between the United States and Japan because both nations vied for influence in East Asia and the western Pacific. Acquiring the Philippines, Guam, and Wake islands after winning the Spanish-American War gave the United States a presence in East Asia and the Pacific Ocean. China especially represented an important commercial resource for the United States. Americans wanted expanded markets in China and hoped to maintain an 'Open-Door' trade policy with that nation's large population. These commercial interests required sufficient forces to protect them. A few years later, in 1905, victory in the Russo-Japanese War turned Japan into the dominant nation in the region. Due to severe deficiencies in natural resources, the Japanese leaders coveted the raw materials and agricultural production of the Asian mainland. Any southward or westward expansion would inevitably bring this rising power into conflict with America's strategic and commercial interests in that region.

As early as 1900, the senior admirals of the US Navy argued that the new strategic situation required American power to be projected across the vast Pacific Ocean. American strategists prepared a number of scenarios with potential allies and enemies designated by colours. The

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- 1 Portions have been drawn from author's 'Clarifying the Origins and Strategic Mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Defense Battalion, 1898-1941', *War & Society* XVII: 2 (October 1999), 81-109; 'Document of Note: The Long-Lost *Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases* (1936), *Journal of Military History* LXXI: 4 (October 2007), 889-901; *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936-1943* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011); and as co-author with Matthew S. Muehlbauer, *Ways of War: American Military History from the Colonial Era to the Twenty-First Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).
  - 2 Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880-1898* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 168-210; and Jack Shulimson, 'The Influence of the Spanish-American War on the U.S. Marine Corps', in *Theodore Roosevelt, the U.S. Navy, and the Spanish-American War*, ed. Edward J. Marolda (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 81-94.

US Navy's planners focused their attention on the Pacific Ocean and on Japan, otherwise known by the colour designation 'Orange' in American war plans. This potential threat gave the Marine Corps two new roles: amphibious assault and island defence. Marines would no longer expect to subsist in nineteenth-century duties as shipboard police, legation guards, and constabulary troops. Doing so would only relegate the Corps to insignificance and eventual extinction.<sup>3</sup>

As the plan to defeat Japan, War Plan ORANGE spanned the next several decades until 1938. All its variations shared several tenets (Figure 1). American strategists expected that the Japanese would launch a pre-emptive strike, likely without a formal declaration of war. That attack would presumably be directed against American bases on the Philippines and Guam. Following the initial Japanese onslaught, the US Fleet would sortie from Hawaii and sail across the Pacific. During this offensive campaign, the Marines would seize and hold 'temporary advanced bases in cooperation with the Fleet and ... defend such bases until relieved by the Army'.<sup>4</sup> These roles constituted a new dual mission for the Marine Corps. The newly-captured bases would subsequently function as coaling stations, safe anchorages, repair facilities, supply depots, and eventually aircraft bases. The US Fleet would either relieve besieged American forces in the Philippines or liberate the archipelago, if it already had fallen. As the US Fleet menaced the Japanese home islands, American planners hoped that the Imperial Japanese Navy would contest the American offensive. This ensuing naval battle, as was unquestioningly assumed in every iteration of War Plan ORANGE, would result in a decisive American victory. If the Japanese chose not to fight, then the US Fleet would blockade their home islands. Regardless, the American victory would consign Japan to the status of a diminished, isolated regional power.<sup>5</sup>

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3 For the seminal works, see Mark R. Peattie and David C. Evans. *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), and Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991).

4 Holland M. Smith, *The Development of Amphibious Tactics in the U.S. Navy* (Washington: DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1992), 22.

5 George C. Dyer (ed.), *On the Treadmill to Pearl Harbor: The Memoirs of Admiral James O. Richardson* (Washington, DC: Naval History Division, Department of the Navy, 1973), 256-68; George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 44, 51-3, 90-2, 119-28; Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1890-1939* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Press, 2002), 7-9, 49, 80, 137, 167-74; and Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 202-03, 226.

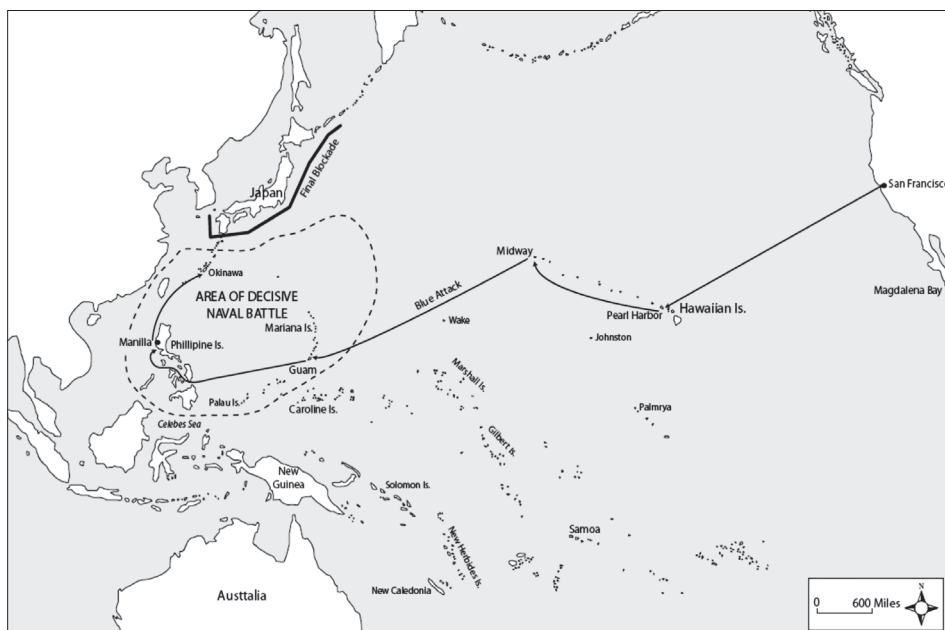


Figure 1: Map of the ORANGE War Plan in the 1920s-1930s.

This paper traces the progression from America's strategic plans to operational doctrines to force structure development and to equipment procurement in decades leading up to the Second World War. During the planning process behind the ORANGE War Plan and subsequent plans, missions were dispensed downward from Navy to the Marine Corps. Once strategic priorities were set for offensive or defensive portions of the Marines' dual mission, their planners worked to fulfil those needs.<sup>6</sup> The doctrines for advanced base defence and amphibious assault formed the pivot point for the Marine Corps to match operational, force structure, and material capabilities to the Navy's strategic needs in the Pacific

6 'The Marine Corps in War Plans', lecture by S.L. Howard, 3 May 1929, Box 7, Strategic Plans War Plans Division (SPWPD), Series I, Record Group 38 Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (RG 38), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (NACP); Memo for the Officer in Charge, War Plans Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, 4 May 1936, Box 22, Division of Plans and Policies War Plans Section General Correspondence 1926-1942 (DPPWPGC 1926-42), Record Group 127 General Records of the U.S. Marine Corps (hereafter RG 127), National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter NADC); Donald F. Bittner, 'Taking the Right Fork in the Road: The Transition of the U.S. Marine Corps from an "Expeditionary" to an "Amphibious" Corps, 1918-1941', in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *Battles Near and Far: A Century of Overseas Deployment – The Chief of Army Military History Conference 2004* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2005), 116-40; and Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 181, 197-9, 226.

Ocean. It should also be noted that the Marines embraced amphibious capabilities as a means of institutional survival during a resource-poor era. This paper also highlights a few of the personalities who helped drive this process. Ultimately, the Marines' efforts would bear fruit in the Second World War.

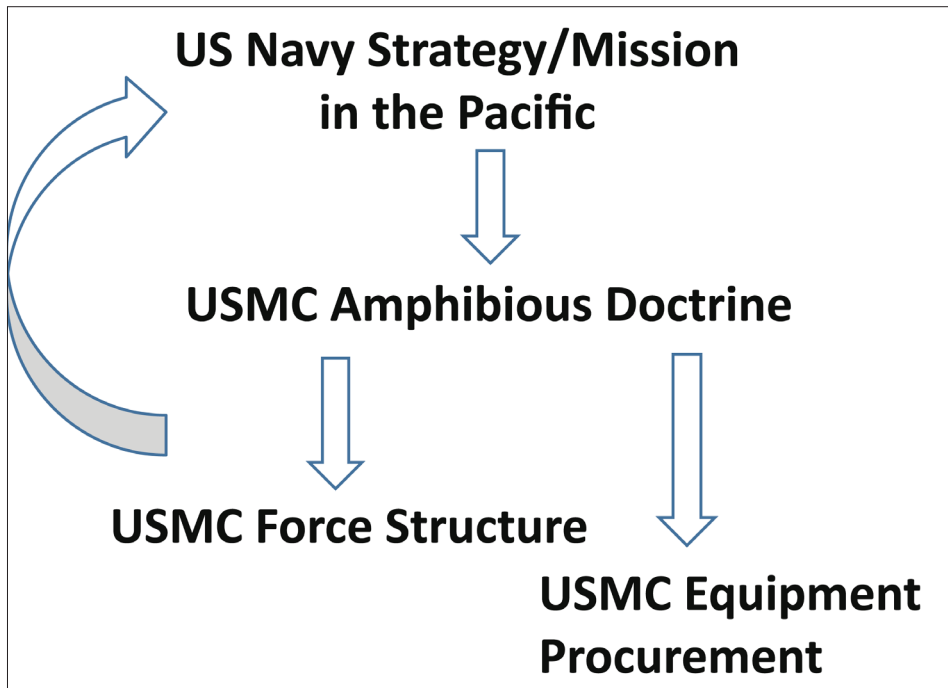


Figure 2: Depiction of the process by which the amphibious mission was dispensed downward to the USMC. Then Marines formulated the doctrines and created the force structures and procured equipment necessarily to fulfill the amphibious mission. Also depicted is a feedback loop from the USMC to the US Navy.

### **Establishing the Corps' place in American Strategy, 1900-1939**

The US Marine Corps made positive strides in developing its amphibious capabilities from 1900 to 1915. Marines specialising in this new type of warfare could attend their own Advanced Base School, where they studied operational issues important to any base defence such as artillery placement, communications, logistics, and staff organisation. Academic study and practical experience coalesced in 1914 with a simulated assault on Culebra, a small island near Puerto Rico in the Caribbean. Warships from the US Atlantic Fleet attacked 1700 Marines defending the island.

The Marine Advanced Base Brigade succeeded beyond expectations by quickly fortifying the island, harassing the Navy warships, and repulsing amphibious assaults.<sup>7</sup>

In 1915, the Marine Corps' Assistant Commandant Colonel John A. Lejeune created an ad hoc war plans committee comprised of himself and three promising Marine captains assigned at Headquarters Marine Corps—Ralph S. Keyser, Earl 'Pete' Ellis, and Thomas Holcomb. Of these, Ellis emerged as the premier amphibious assault theorist until untimely his death in 1923. However, Holcomb as well as another rising officer named Holland M. Smith provided the Corps with the continuity of purpose and the baseline of knowledge from 1915 through 1943 as they rose through ranks.

Among other issues, Lejeune's war plans committee set to work examining the Navy's evolving strategic needs and determining how the Marine Corps could best fulfil them. By 1916, however, it was not the spectre of a war with Japan or the possibility of amphibious operations in the Pacific that absorbed the Marines' energies. Instead, it was the bloody conflict raging in Europe. Lejeune and his war plans committee worked diligently to determine how new weapons technology and battlefield tactics might affect their service's combat capabilities. Mobilising and fighting the First World War in France demanded the Corps' entire attention. Although Marines acquired the nickname 'Teufel Hunden' ('Devil Dogs') and gained invaluable combat experience, the First World War did little to help the Corps as an amphibious assault or base defence force. Indeed, Marines worried that their service might be seen as a second American land army that could be disbanded during the post-war demobilisation.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, similar soul-searching is occurring as the present-day Marine Corps attempts to return to its roots as the United States' premier amphibious force, after having served as a second land army in Iraq and Afghanistan for more than a decade. There is a generation of mid-career Marines who have limited knowledge or experience of amphibious operations.

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7 Graham A. Cosmas and Jack Shulimson, 'The Culebra Maneuver and the Formation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Advance Base Force, 1913-1914', in Robert William Love, Jr (ed.), *Changing Interpretations and New Sources in Naval History* (New York: Garland Press, 1980), 293, 299-306.

8 See David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1935-1943* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press), 14-27.

Returning to the post-war anxieties in the 1920s, the Marine Corps did not disband after the conflict's end. Instead, recently promoted Major General John A. Lejeune helped solidify its place in American naval strategy when he became commandant in 1920. At his behest, then Major Pete Ellis authored two definitive reports on amphibious operations that very next year. His 'Navy Bases: Their Location, Resources, and Security' and 'Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia' served as primers on how advanced bases could support fleet operations. Two decades before the American entrance into the Second World War, Ellis predicted with uncanny accuracy the base defence and amphibious assault operations that characterised that conflict in the Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

Because Japan was 'the only purely Pacific world power', Ellis saw it as the only major threat to the United States. His report, 'Navy Bases', anticipated that Japan would take the offensive and try to capture outlying American island bases. These bases would then form a strategic defence-in-depth.<sup>10</sup> Ellis's other report, 'Advanced Base Operations', stood as a companion work to 'Navy Bases'. It outlined a strategy for seizing and defending various Pacific islands, including the Marianas, Marshalls, and Carolines, which the Japanese already controlled. Imagining a potential campaign in the Pacific, Ellis outlined targets for amphibious assaults and anticipated certain sea battles. He suggested that Marines receive simultaneous training for the offensive and defensive components of their mission. Knowledge of how to defend an island against an enemy amphibious assault could only improve the attackers' abilities to make a successful assault in the future, and vice versa.<sup>11</sup>

Both of Ellis's seminal reports cast the Marine Corps in roles mandated by the ORANGE War Plan. Later in 1926, the interservice report, 'Joint Action of the Army and Navy', similarly called for training,

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9 Earl H. Ellis, *Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia* (1921; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992); Earl H. Ellis, *Navy Bases: Their Location, Resources, and Security* (1921; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992); Frank O. Hough et al., *History of the U.S. Marines in World War II*, vol. I, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, HQMC, 1958), 8-10; 459-61; and Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. edn. (New York: Macmillan, 1991). For the best biography of Ellis, see Dirk A. Ballendorf and Merrill L. Bartlett, *Pete Ellis: Amphibious Warfare Prophet, 1880-1923* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997).

10 Ellis, *Navy Bases*, 3-6, 10-23, 30, 48.

11 Ellis, *Advanced Base Operations*, 39-50.



supply, and maintenance of Marine units for the following priorities: 'For land operations in support of the fleet for the initial seizure and defense of advanced bases and for such limited auxiliary land operations as are essential to the prosecution of the Naval campaign.'<sup>12</sup> A dual mission was now the Marine Corps' strategic *raison d'être*, as well as the ongoing key to survival during an era of restricted resources. In this way, military necessity blended with institutional pragmatism.

Ellis was hardly alone in his advocacy of an amphibious focus for the Corps in the interwar years. Other ardent supporters included Lejeune, Holcomb, James C. Breckinridge, John H. Russell, Ben H. Fuller, Robert Dunlap, and Holland M. Smith. Naval officers like Rear Admiral Clarence Stewart Williams, in his role as head of the Navy's War Plan Division, also recognised the Corps' potential as an amphibious force in the early 1920s.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Corps' new mission was clearly distilled, two obstacles remained. First was the continued emphasis and commitment to 'banana wars' in Latin America. A power clique among Marine officers remained dedicated to constabulary security as the Corps' primary role. Lejeune, Russell, Holcomb and others needed to overcome this internal resistance to amphibious development. External to the Corps, obtaining the resources and writing the doctrine to fulfil that mandate became Lejeune's primary goals in the final years as commandant. Reductions in budgets and personnel, however, persisted throughout the 1920s, despite his best efforts. The Corps was not alone in experiencing these years of famine. The US Army and Navy also saw declining budgets.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, Lejeune decided to maximize the resources and expertise within the Corps. He put a premium on military education for his Marines and founded the Marine Corps Schools in the 1920s. The next

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12 'Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan—ORANGE', 6 October 1920, quoted in Frank J. Infusino, 'U.S. Marines and War Planning, 1940-1941' (M.A. thesis, San Diego State University, 1974), 145.

13 See relevant chapters in Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson (eds), *Commandant of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004); and Leo J. Daugherty III, *Pioneers in Amphibious Warfare, 1898-1945: Profiles of Fourteen American Military Strategists* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009).

14 See Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 38-42; and Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 205-08, 211-13.

Commandant, Major General Wendell C. Neville, followed in Lejeune's footsteps. He ensured that Marines would receive advanced training in all aspects of warfare at schools in the Marine Corps, the Navy, the Army, and at the prestigious institutions like the *École Supérieure de Guerre* in Paris. These opportunities afforded Marine officers to consider warmaking in systematic ways, as well as to interact with peers from other services.<sup>15</sup>

Among the Marines who took advantage of advanced military education was then Colonel Thomas Holcomb. As a highly decorated veteran of Belleau Wood in 1918 and a member of Lejeune's war plans committee two years earlier, Holcomb applied past experiences to his studies at the Naval War College from 1930 to 1931. He exemplified the type of professional development advocated by Neville and Lejeune. Holcomb's year at the Army War College from June 1931 to June 1932 proved to be still more fertile time in his development as a senior officer. He worked with other students to formulate plans for attacking enemy nations and defeating enemy forces. Some scenarios were fabricated, while others were realistic. In one course project, Holcomb played the role of naval commander of an American force conducting an amphibious assault on Halifax, Nova Scotia. This assignment reinforced his conviction that planning down to the minutest details was necessary for a successful landing operation. Another career officer—the Army's Major George S. Patton Jr—also worked on this group project with Holcomb. These academic exercises doubtlessly helped Patton during his amphibious operations a decade later.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally while working independently at the Army War College in 1932, Holcomb wrote a special report titled 'The Marine Corps' Mission in National Defense, and Its Organization for a Major Emergency'. He asked an important question about the Corps: 'What should be the most suitable organisation for a major emergency?' His lengthy answer

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15 W.C. Neville, 'The Marine Corps', *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute* LV: 10 (October 1929), 863-6, at 863; and Donald F. Bittner, 'Foreign Military Officer Training in Reverse: U.S. Marine Corps Officers in the French Professional Military Education System in the Interwar Years', *Journal of Military History* LVII: 3 (July 1995), 481-510.

16 'Report of Committee No 6. Subject: Plans and Orders for the Seizure of Halifax', 29 March 1932, File Number 386-6, and 'Analytical Studies, Synopsis of Report, Committee No. 5', 2 March 1932, File Number 388-5, both at Army War College (hereafter AWC), US Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (AHEC); and Daugherty, *Pioneers of Amphibious Warfare*, 359-99.

outlined the principles of seizing and defending advanced bases, and he discussed all aspects of training and supplying Marine units. Amphibious operations represented the Corps' future role in the nation's war plans. No longer did Holcomb see the Marine Corps as a constabulary force fighting small wars, or 'other minor operations' as he called them.<sup>17</sup>

Although Holcomb's report drew on existing ideas and documents, its significance as an original endeavour should not be discounted. In an appendix, he also anticipated the creation of the Fleet Marine Force that next year in 1933, the end of the Corps' constabulary duties in Central America in 1934, the creation of a triangular Marine division-sized unit, and lastly the publications of doctrinal manuals on amphibious assault operations in 1934 and base defence operations in 1936. The degree to which Holcomb's report circulated beyond the confines of the Army War College is not clear. This report, however, did constitute a blueprint for the Corps' future that Marines could follow and that he himself did follow later in the 1930s and during the war years.<sup>18</sup>

After graduating from the Army War College in 1932, Holcomb's critical academic study and practical experiences prepared him for his next duty station in the Navy Department, where he served on the Navy's War Plans Division and offered advice on amphibious operations and strategic planning relating to War Plan ORANGE. In this position, Holcomb advocated what military historian Edward S. Miller calls a 'cautionary' strategy. The US Navy would strike at the Japanese forces across the Pacific using island bases seized and held by Marine Corps units as stepping stones, rather than the seeking a single climactic battle between Japanese and American fleets as a primary goal. Japan's acquisition of the Micronesia Islands in the Pacific from Germany after the First World War necessitated this more realistic and cautious strategic mindset.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Thomas Holcomb, 'The Marine Corps' Mission in National Defense, and Its Organization for a Major Emergency', 30 January 1932, pp. 1-4, File 387-30, AWC, AHEC.

18 Holcomb, '[Appendix] Discussion of the Marine Corps' Mission in National Defense, and Its Organization for a Major Emergency', 30 January 1932, p. 13, File 387-30, AWC, AHEC.

19 Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 36, 181, 183, 329, 377-8.

### **Codifying doctrine, creating force structure, and procuring equipment, 1933-1938**

Despite the best efforts of President Roosevelt and his pro-defence allies in Congress, the US military's funding slipped to low levels. The Marines also felt this crunch in which the Corps' annual expenditures ran between \$15 and \$25 million from 1935 to 1939 (in then year dollars). To put this in perspective, these figures amounted between 3 and 4 per cent of the US Navy's annual expenditures. Nevertheless, the decade of famine also saw the flourishing of force structure improvements, doctrinal developments, and technological adaptations that easily surpassed any decade before or since in the history of the Corps, if not the entirety of American military history. In 1933, for example, the creation of the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) gave the Corps a platform, albeit modest in size, to support amphibious assault and base defence units.<sup>20</sup>

With an amphibious force structure on paper, the Marine Corps needed to codify the amphibious doctrines to be employed by the FMF in future conflicts. Much work had already been underway at the Marine Corps Schools (MCS) in the mid-1920s when Brigadier General Robert H. Dunlap was the schools' commandant. His ideas and efforts, as well as the ideas outlined by Ellis, formed the foundations for the Tentative Manual for Landing Operations (1934) and the Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases (1936) produced by the MCS faculty and students.<sup>21</sup> The two 'tentative' surveys looked to the future; while a separate doctrinal

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20 MGC to Chief of Naval Operations (hereafter CNO), 'Expeditionary Force', 17 August 1933, File 1975-10, PDGC 1933-38, Box 135, RG 127, NADC; William J. Van Ryzin, interview by Benis M. Frank and Graham A. Cosmas, 1975, transcript, 74-6, Marine Corps University Research Archives (hereafter MCUA); Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 319, 330-7; and Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and amphibious war: its theory, and its practice in the Pacific* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 74-5.

21 Marine Corps Schools (hereafter MCS), Tentative Manual for Landing Operations, 1934, History Amphibious File (HAF) 39, MCUA; and MCS, Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases, 1936, War Plans and Related Material 1931-1944, Box 7, Entry 246, RG 127, NADC; Isely and Crowl, *The U.S. Marine Corps and Amphibious War*, 36-44; Kenneth J. Clifford, *Progress and Purpose: A Developmental History of the United States Marine Corps, 1900-1970* (Washington: History and Museums Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1973), 139-43; Allan R. Millett, 'Assault from the Sea: The Development of Amphibious Warfare between the Wars—The American, British, and Japanese Experiences', in Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett (eds), *Military Innovations in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 74-5; and Daugherty, *Pioneer of Amphibious Warfare*, 194-212.

survey titled the Small Wars Manual (1935 and 1940) enumerated past lessons from Marine deployments as constabulary units in Latin America. Taken together, these three manuals constitute what Marine Corps Chief Historian Charles D. Melson has called the 'holy trinity' of Marine Corps doctrine.<sup>22</sup>

Classes at the MCS were suspended from November 1933 to May 1934, so that faculty and students could compile the Tentative Manual for Landing Operations. They completed their work in June 1934. Not only did this resulting document outline lessons learned from past amphibious operations, but it also anticipated challenges in future operations. Despite the British amphibious fiasco at Gallipoli during the First World War, for example, American Marines postulated that careful planning, adequate training, and proper equipment could overcome the tactical advantages enjoyed by an enemy defending a shoreline. This document created a rational framework that would facilitate American amphibious assault operations in the Second World War. This process of systematic analysis regarding practical lessons of the past likewise demonstrated the institutional adaptability that has been the hallmark of the Marine Corps.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, this landing operation manual made no detailed examination of the complexities of advanced base defence, the other half of the Corps' new dual mission. Two years later in 1936, the Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases filled that void by providing a doctrinal foundation for advance base defence that had been so intrinsically tied to the Corps' roles since 1898.

In the meantime, Thomas Holcomb received his first star and became commandant of the MCS in February 1935. During the next twenty-two months of his tenure, the MCS made various revisions to the Tentative Manual for Landing Operations that would subsequently be folded into

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22 Charles D. Melson, conversations with the author, July 2003, cited in Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 36.

23 MCS, *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*, 1934, paragraphs 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.8, 1.22, 3.120, MCUA; James C. Breckinridge to John H. Russell, 6 November 1934, Holcomb Papers, Box 11, MCUA; Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious Warfare*, 5, 36-44; Hough et al., *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, 14-22; Bittner, 'Taking the Right Fork', 124-5; Gunther E. Rothenberg, 'From Gallipoli to Guadalcanal', in Merrill L. Bartlett (ed.), *Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute, 1983), 177-82.

the US Navy's Landing Operations Doctrine—Fleet Training Publication (FTP 167) in 1938. Holcomb also supervised the completion of manuals on base defence and small wars. Because of his previous work on war plans and his military studies, Holcomb brought especially significant knowledge about amphibious warfare to the writing of the Corps' new base defence manual. Just as he routinely conducted spot inspections in classrooms and on parade grounds at Quantico, it is reasonable to infer that he sat in on discussions about artillery placement, unit deployments, or other topics, as well as read drafts of the manual.<sup>24</sup>

Although no documents cite Holcomb by name, his tacit influence can be seen in the following lines in the Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases: 'Defense of advanced bases will involve the combined employment of land, air, and sea forces. Depending on the nature of the hostile attacks against a base, one arm or service may play the major role, but in the event of a general landing attack, the land forces will constitute the basic element of the defense. In any case, the ultimate success of the defense will depend upon the closest cooperation and coordination between the naval defense forces, the shore defense forces, and the aviation forces.'<sup>25</sup> This quote highlighted the need to utilise coordinated combined air, naval, and ground forces to mount a successful defence that was reminiscent of the report penned in 1932 by Holcomb at the Army War College. In summary, the Marines looked up from the operational and tactical levels to the US Navy's strategic needs and then formulated operational and tactical doctrines to fulfil those needs.

The year 1936 saw Thomas Holcomb's promotion to become Commandant of the Marine Corps. He jumped over several more senior Marine generals for several reasons. He maintained a friendship with President Roosevelt dating back to the First World War. Holcomb also fitted a particular political profile inside the Corps that placed him in the ascendant clique. He favoured the new dual mission of amphibious assault and base defence over the outmoded mission of constabulary security in small wars. Indeed, Holcomb's interest in amphibious doctrine

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24 Clifford, *Progress and Purpose*, 45-8, 58-9, 139-42; Bittner, 'Taking the Right Fork', 125-6; and David J. Ulbrich, 'Document of Note: The Long-Lost *Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases* (1936), *Journal of Military History* LXXI: 4 (October 2007), 889-901.

25 MCS, *Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases*, Preface, no pagination.

and strategic planning dated back twenty years to his membership on Lejeune's ad hoc war plans committee in 1916. This made Holcomb an ideal candidate for the sitting Commandant, John H. Russell, who was one of the most fervent amphibious warfare advocates in the Corps.

Holcomb's career track provides other concrete justifications for his promotion. In the first thirty-six exemplary years of his career, he climbed steadily through the commissioned ranks, gained valuable experience in the First World War, distinguished himself in the military's education system, demonstrated administrative skills in performing staff duties, supervised significant doctrinal developments at the MCS, and maintained cordial contacts with civilian and naval officials alike. He enjoyed high levels of prestige as a 'China Hand' and one of the 'Old Breed' of the First World War. Holcomb benefited from such high-ranking patrons as Lejeune and Russell, both of whom helped him into many key postings. Holcomb was the right person, in the right place, at the right time to become Marine Corps Commandant in 1936, just as he always seemed to be the right person for a given post throughout his career.

With the Fleet Marine Force established and amphibious doctrines codified, the next stage of readying the Corps for amphibious operations entailed conducting several 'Fleet Landing Exercises' between 1934 and 1941. When Holcomb became commandant, he continued these efforts despite facing severe budget constraints. Known as FLEXs, these simulated amphibious assaults and base defences gave the Marine Corps and Navy several opportunities to experiment with doctrines, troubleshoot problems, and field test equipment. The Navy performed several types of long-range shore bombardment, including counter-battery and interdiction fire. The Marines tested existing weapons and vehicles which they might employ in an actual amphibious assault, and they established a defensive position against possible counterattacks from land or sea. In so doing, the Marines discovered deficiencies in the Navy's landing craft. Only with great difficulty could Navy whale boats or motor launches transport troops from ships through the surf to the beach. These craft offered little protection to their occupants, moved too slowly, lacked seaworthiness in rough surf, and failed to traverse coral reefs. The Marines also found such weaknesses as combat loading, which would need careful consideration to ensure that transport vessels might be packed so that equipment could be off-loaded more efficiently. It became abundantly clear that existing

Navy warships, although absolutely necessary as weapons platforms, were not ideal for moving men or equipment. It took several years before the Corps found suitable landing craft and the money to pay for them, in part because the Navy would not fund these efforts. Eventually, however, the Marines identified two ideal civilian designs for landing craft—Andrew Jackson Higgins' 'Eureka' boat and Daniel Roebling's 'Alligator' amphibian tractor. Both could be adapted to military use, and both surpassed anything in the Navy or Marine Corps' existing inventory.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, tensions in East Asia grew more acute. The year 1937 represented a watershed because Japanese forces invaded China. By year's end, the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing fell to Japanese control. This did not, however, bring Japan victory in this Sino-Japanese conflict in 1938 or thereafter. Instead, the fighting dragged on with no end in sight. Over in Europe, Nazi Germany steadily expanded its territory by annexing Austria and occupying the Sudetenland in 1938. The fluid situations in East Asia and Europe reduced the utility of War Plan ORANGE. The new set of threats dictated that the United States prepare for several scenarios.<sup>27</sup>

The Japanese, for their part, also planned for a possible war with the United States. Military historians Mark R. Peattie and David C. Evans argue that the Japanese had long followed a 'wait-and-react' strategy. The Japanese anticipated three phases for naval operations during the conflict: 'first, searching operations designed to seek out and annihilate the lesser American naval forces ... in the western Pacific; second,

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26 'A History of the U.S. Fleet Landing Exercises', report by B. W. Galley, 3 July 1939, HAF 73, MCUA; Thomas Holcomb to Harold Stark, 26 May 1941, Box 50, SPWPD, Series III, NACP; Smith, *The Development of Amphibious Tactics*, 25-38; Isely and Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, 45-58; and Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 339-40.

27 Mark R. Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 295-308; Saburo Hayashi with Alvin D. Coox, *Kōgun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (1951; repr., Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 1959), 9; Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (London: Longman Press, 1987), 41-51; Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 18-20, 116, 84-90, 131; D. Clayton James, 'American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 710, 717; Ross, *American War Plans*, 177-83; and 'Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan—Orange (1938)', Joint Board No 325, Serial 618, p. 1, Microfilm 1421, Reel 10, NACP.



attritional operations against a westward-moving American main battle force coming to assist in the relief or reconquest of American territories there; and third, a decisive encounter in which the American force would be crushed and the Americans forced to negotiate.<sup>28</sup> It was a given that the Japanese would capture American-held advanced island bases in the western Pacific. The Japanese expected to use their own bases in the Marshalls, Marianas, and other Micronesian islands in offensive and defensive operations. Construction of airfields began on these islands as early as 1934 and accelerated military building programs thereafter. The Japanese plan to defeat the US Fleet mirrored the American ORANGE Plan. It seems that each side was playing into the other's hands. Japan's wait-and-react strategy remained intact until 1940, when such priorities as natural resources and such realities as American naval expansion caused the Japanese to shift toward an offensive mindset.<sup>29</sup>

In the United States, the outmoded War Plan ORANGE did not affect the Marine Corps, which continued to play an important role in the last ORANGE Plan as well as in subsequent war plans. Because the Corps' contributions were tactical and operational rather than strategic, the Marines kept their focus squarely on defending friendly bases or attacking enemy-held bases. They adapted to the evolving situations in 1938 and thereafter.<sup>30</sup>

Two important measures bore witness in 1938 to the US Navy's acceptance of the Marine Corps as its amphibious assault and base defence force. First, the Navy adopted the Fleet Training Publication 167 (FTP-167) as its blueprint for amphibious operations. Commandant Holcomb had ordered a committee to modify the Corps' own Tentative Manual for Landing Operations of 1934 according to the Navy's needs. The resulting revision added broad strategic and naval perspectives to the Marines' tactical and operational focuses.<sup>31</sup>

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28 Peattie and Evans, *Kaigun*, 464.

29 Ibid., 465-73; Ross, *American War Plans*, 168-69; Specter, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 43-5; and James, 'American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War', 705-07.

30 Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet (hereafter CINCUS) to CNO, 27 July 1937, Marine Corps Budget Estimate (hereafter MCBE) FY 1936-43, Box 1, Entry 248, RG 127, NADC; and Gerald C. Thomas to Alexander A. Vandegrift, 9 August 1945, HAF 204, MCUA.

31 Alexander A. Vandegrift and Robert B. Asprey, *Once a Marine* (New York: Norton, 1964), 93, 118; Holland M. Smith and Percy Finch, *Coral and Brass* (New York: Scribner's, 1948), 60-2; and Millett, 'Assault from the Sea', 76-7.

Second, US Secretary of the Navy Claude Swanson appointed Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn to head a board of naval officers to assess the strategic roles of bases on Guam, Wake, Midway, and other islands in light of Japanese threats in the Pacific. In December 1938, the so-called 'Hepburn Board' prioritised the advanced bases in the Pacific, according to strategic needs dictated by a given base's possible benefits for aircraft, submarines, and surface warships in a war with Japan. The board argued that Guam should become a 'Major Advanced Fleet Base' for operations in support of American forces on the Philippines and in the western Pacific. Wake and Midway Islands should become patrol plane bases for reconnaissance or supply bases for defensive and offensive actions. The Hepburn Board members believed that construction should be started as quickly as possible on those islands. Apart from recommendations regarding the bases proper, the board's final report instructed the Marine Corps to organise 'defence detachments' to hold those island bases against possible Japanese attacks in the opening stages of a conflict. This decision drew on ideas outlined in the MCS's Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases of 1936.<sup>32</sup>

Other important steps toward operational readiness occurred in 1938. American entrepreneurialism provided the technological means for effective ship-to-shore transportation during an amphibious operation. The American military possessed no landing craft capable of providing speed, durability, and seaworthiness during this transit. Furthermore, any craft needed to be able to land on a beach and extract itself from that beach with relative ease. Ironically, the commercial designs of Donald Roebling's 'Alligator' amphibian tractor and Andrew Jackson Higgins' 'Eureka' boat provided vessels to meet performance specifications. Both found enthusiastic supporters among Marine officers. Nevertheless, subsistence-level budgets restricted the Marines from supporting the two boat builders. To their great credit, Higgins and Roebling spent their

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32 'Report of the Board to Investigate and Report upon the Need, for Purposes of National Defense, for the Establishment of Additional Submarine, Destroyers, Mine, and Naval Air Bases on the Coasts of the United States, its Territories and Possessions', 1 December 1938 (hereafter Hepburn Board Report), 1-6, 62-70, 87-9, Strategic Plans Division War Plans Division (hereafter SPDWPD), Series III, Misc. Subject File, Box 50, RG 38, NACP; Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 241-3, 250-3; Gregory J. W. Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 48-52; and David J. Ulbrich, 'Clarifying the Origins and Strategic Mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Defense Battalion, 1898-1941'. *War & Society* XVII: 2 (October 1999), 81-107, at 90-1.

own money to modify their civilian designs to fit the amphibious assault applications.<sup>33</sup>

The fast-rising tide of Nazi Germany in Western Europe and a militarist Japan in East Asia made War Plan ORANGE obsolete by 1939. American strategists reacted by formulating the more realistic RAINBOW Plans with five versions addressing several possible wartime circumstances which might confront the United States. The versions ranged from RAINBOW Plan 1, which entailed a unilateral American defence of the Western Hemisphere and no involvement with conflicts in Europe or East Asia, to RAINBOW Plan 5, which envisioned combined American, British, and French offensives to vanquish Germany as quickly as possible. The United States, meanwhile, would remain on the strategic defensive in the Pacific against Japan. Once Germany was defeated, all available American and Allied forces would be re-directed to crush Japan. As a result of these new scenarios, the US Army re-oriented its strategic emphasis towards defence of the Western Hemisphere and war in Europe and away from Japan and the Pacific Ocean. East Asia held little or no interest among most Army planners, except for those who agreed with General Douglas MacArthur's delusional belief in the defensive viability of the Philippines in a war with Japan.<sup>34</sup>

All the RAINBOW Plans expected the Corps to play active operational roles in the Pacific. It mattered little what the Navy did at the strategic level. If the US Fleet launched an offensive campaign against the

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33 Unreferenced quotation in Austin R. Brunelli, interview by Norman J. Anderson, 1984, transcript, 25, MCUA; William Upshur to Holcomb, 26 February 1939, Holcomb Papers, Box 6, MCUA; Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 88-92, 100-02; Timothy Moy, *War Machines: Transforming Technologies in the U.S. Military, 1920-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 117-18, 150-7; and Jerry E. Strahan, *Andrew Jackson Higgins and the Boats that Won World War II* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 24-39.

34 'Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plans, Rainbow Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5', 9 April 1940, JB 325, Serial 642, M1421, Reel 11, NACP; Alexander Kiralfy, 'Japanese Naval Strategy', in Edward Meade Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943), 457-61, 480-4; Henry G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 108-09, 177-81; and Brian M. Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U. S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 177-82, 244-6; James, 'American and Japanese Strategies', 708-11; Ross, *American War Plans*, 164-78; and Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 83-4, 214-9, 324.

Japanese, then the Marines would capture enemy bases in support of the fleet and defend them against possible counterattack. Or, if the US Fleet stood on the defensive, then the Marines would also be called upon to hold American bases and recapture any bases taken by the Japanese.<sup>35</sup>

As American strategies shifted to meet new threats, the Marines honed their amphibious assault techniques and improved their landing craft in additional FLEXs in 1939. The force structure for the other half of the Corps' dual mission also began to take shape during that summer with the unveiling of the Marine Corps' 'defence battalion'.<sup>36</sup> As envisioned on paper, this 1000-man unit boasted an impressive array of weapons: 12 Navy 5-inch artillery pieces for coastal defence, 12 3-inch anti-aircraft artillery guns for air defence, 48 .50-caliber machine guns for either anti-aircraft or beach defence, and 48 .30-caliber machine guns for beach defence. All units would also receive high-intensity search lights and radar systems. Some defence battalions might even receive larger 7-inch artillery pieces. The proportion of Marines per heavy weapon far exceeded the Corps' typical light infantry unit. Indeed, the defence battalion's firepower rivalled that of a U.S Navy light cruiser.<sup>37</sup>

Once ensconced on a fortified island, defence battalions provided the American naval or aviation forces with self-sufficient bases of operations. Nevertheless, the Marines did depend on the Navy for logistical support and eventually relief during a campaign. They could not hold out indefinitely against determined enemy assaults.

The defence battalions became part of the FMF and complemented the amphibious assault units therein. They represented the reincarnation of the Marine Corps Advanced Base Force of the early twentieth century, as well as the realisation of the Tentative Manual for Defence of Advanced

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35 Unsigned editorial, 'The Idea of the Fleet Marine Force', *Marine Corps Gazette* XXIII: 6 (June 1939), 61; Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 227; and Ulbrich, 'Clarifying the Origins', 93.

36 Hepburn Board Report, 1-6, 62-70, 87-9, hereafter SPDWPD, Series III Miscellaneous Subject File, Box 50, RG 38, NACP; and CNO to MGC, 16 February 1939, Holcomb Papers, Box 6, MCUA, 1-2.

37 Holcomb to Commanding General of Fleet Marine Force (FMF), 28 March 1939, Robert D. Heintz, 'Defense Battalions', 15 August 1939, and unsigned memorandum, 'Material Requirements for four Defense Battalions', 15 August 1939, all in DPPWPSGC 1926-1942, Box 4, RG 127, NACP.

Bases in 1936. The defence battalions thus fitted strategic and doctrinal moulds perfectly.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the fact that global war appeared ever more likely, the United States armed forces remained ill-prepared for any conflict. Isolationism maintained its hold on an American public who did not wish to get entangled in the conflicts in Europe or Asia. Instead, they turned their attention to feeding their families during the last years of the Great Depression.

During the summer of 1939, the Navy conducted a detailed self-assessment to answer the question, 'Are We Ready?'. A negative answer came out in the final report. Both seaborne services, according to Chief of Naval Operation Admiral Harold R. Stark, suffered from numerous and 'critical deficiencies' in manpower and equipment. Of relevance to the Corps was 'the lack of Pacific bases west of Hawaii'. Stark further cited the inability of the Navy and the Marine Corps to seize any island bases or protect those bases once they had been captured. The CNO saw it as his major task to alleviate these deficiencies, and he spent the next thirty months in office trying to do so. Rarely did the Marine Corps enjoy a better advocate than Admiral Stark, who began deploying Marines to island bases in the Pacific. He subsequently asked the Corps to organise four fully-manned and equipped defence battalions. This task, however, caused severe strains in the thinly-stretched and under-funded Marines.<sup>39</sup>

### **Shifting American strategies, consistent Marine missions, 1938-1941**

When German forces rolled over the Polish border on 1 September 1939, the governments of France and Britain promptly declared war on Germany. That same month, President Roosevelt reacted by declaring a 'limited national emergency' with two goals in mind: 'safeguarding' American neutrality and 'strengthening our national defense within the limits of

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38 Annual Report of the MGC to the Secretary of the Navy (hereafter SecNav) for the FY 1940, 27 August 1940, pp. 24, 38-40, MCUA; Robert Debs Heinl, Jr, *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* (1962; repr., Baltimore: Nautical & Aviation, 1991), 306-307; Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds*, 192; and Charles D. Melson, *Condition Red: Marine Defense Battalions in World War II* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1996), 2-5.

39 Ernest J. King, *The U.S. Navy at War, 1941-1945: Official Reports to the Secretary of the Navy* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1946), 37; Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, 152-3; and Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 342-3.

peacetime authorizations'.<sup>40</sup> War in Europe likewise affected American strategic planning and caused a rapid succession from RAINBOW War Plan 2 with its focus on Japan, to War Plan 3 with its focus on Germany, and finally to War Plan 4. This last change occurred when France surrendered to Germany in June 1940. The strategic situation degenerated to a point that the United States stood only with beleaguered Great Britain against the Axis powers. RAINBOW War Plan 4 reduced the United States to defending the western hemisphere against potential Axis incursions. American forces in the Pacific would set up a defensive parameter from the Panama Canal Zone to Hawaii to Alaska.

No more was there question of whether the United States would enter the Second World War. The new seminal questions concerned how much and how fast the nation could mobilise and prepare itself for conflict. President Roosevelt adopted a short-of-war strategy.<sup>41</sup>

The Marine Corps exercised little influence over the changes in strategic planning process, so the Marines focused on fielding a force adequate to meet those expectations of fighting on one and maybe even two oceans. Making matters worse, the Corps could not hope to mobilise quickly enough to keep up with any of the RAINBOW Plans' timetables.<sup>42</sup> The Marines did their best to augment their amphibious assault and base defence capabilities between the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and the end of 1940. Marine units participated in FLEX 6 in January-March 1940. The simulated attacks showed the greatest improvements and achieved the highest level of realism to date, though

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40 F. Roosevelt, 'The Five Hundred and Seventy-Seventh Press Conference (Excerpts)', 8 September 1939, in *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1939*, vol. 8, *War and Neutrality* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 483-4.

41 'Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plans, Rainbow Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5', 9 April 1940, Joint Board No. 325, Serial 642, M1421, Reel 11, NACP; Stetson Conn, 'Changing Concepts of National Defense in the United States, 1937-1947', *Military Affairs* XXVIII: 2 (Spring 1964), 1-4; Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 260-1, 270; James, 'American and Japanese Strategies,' 705-06, 710-11; Calvin L. Christman, 'Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Craft of Strategic Assessment', in Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett (eds), *Calculations: Net Assessment and the Coming of World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 243-5; Linn, *Guardians of Empire*, 180-2; Peattie and Evans, *Kaigun*, 464-7; and Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 63-5.

42 Memo for MGC, 16 June 1940, DPPWPSGC 1921-43, Box 34, RG 127, NACP; Furer, *Administration of the Navy*, 34-5, 587; and Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 38-40.

limitations and deficiencies in equipment and manpower still plagued the Americans. Doctrine intersected with practice as the Marines recognised the following principles as essential to successful assaults: naval gunfire and aviation close air support could be combined with Marine forces to effect an amphibious assault; logistical capabilities could be expanded to supply those troops on shore; and specially trained and equipped defence battalions could secure islands against counter-attack by enemy forces. The Eureka boats and Alligator tractors proved themselves superior to all competitors. Their respective designers, Higgins and Roebing, finally received large contracts for the Eureka and Alligator, would become officially known as the 'Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel' (LCVP) and the 'Landing Vehicle Tracked' (LVT-1).<sup>43</sup> Even so, funds took a long time to get disbursed to contractors, and the manufacturers procured new materials at an interminably slow pace. This sluggishness vexed Marines leaders like Holcomb and Holland M. Smith.<sup>44</sup>

The final months of 1940 brought into clear view the fact that the United States could expect only Britain to be an ally. In the Pacific, token resistance by British and Dutch forces could not hope to halt the determined Japanese expansion. Not even RAINBOW Plan 5 accounted for the complexity of the new circumstances or the flexibility required to meet them.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, the United States adopted a 'Germany First' strategy. In so doing, the Navy's Chief of Operations Admiral Harold R. Stark conceded what the Army's strategic planners wanted when he formulated Plan DOG. In this newest scheme, the war in Europe would be dominated

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43 Dyer, *Amphibians Came to Conquer*, 206-08; Robert D. Heinl, Jr, 'The U.S. Marine Corps: Author of Modern Amphibious Warfare', in Merrill L. Bartlett (ed.), *Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1983), 189; Memo for Director of Plans and Policies, 3 July 1940, MCBE FY 1936-43, Entry 248, Box 1, RG 127, NADC; Annual Report of the MGC to the SecNav FY 1940, 15 August 1939, 61-3, MCUA; Krulak, *First to Fight*, 93-5, 101-4; Smith, *Development of Amphibious Tactics*, 29-33; Strahan, *Andrew Jackson Higgins*, 42-50; and Moy, *War Machines*, 159-60.

44 J.B. Earle to CNO, 8 September 1939, Stark to SecWar, 24 October 1939, Director of Division of Plans and Policies to MGC, 12 October 1939, and H. B. Saylor to Holcomb, 3 October 1940, all in DPPWPSGC 1926-1942, Box 4, RG 127, NACP; and Holcomb to Robert L. Denig, 5 November 1939, Holcomb Papers, Box 6, MCUA.

45 Conn, 'Changing Concepts of National Defense', 5-6; and Utley, 'Roosevelt and Naval Strategy', 53-7.

by the Army, leaving the Navy in a subordinate role. The seaborne services would play a larger, albeit defensive, role in the Pacific against Japan. Plan DOG formed the nucleus for America's wartime strategy.<sup>46</sup>

Although the Marines remained observers of the process surrounding Plan DOG and successive war plans, this did not mean that the Corps was ignored as irrelevant. Stark and the Navy concentrated on strategic and national goals, which only concerned the Corps in terms of mobilisation timetables and resource allocation, but mattered very little to it in terms of its dual missions. Both base defence and amphibious assault fitted into operational requirements of Plan DOG, because they concerned the prosecution of the war. With help from the Marines, the US Fleet would hold the defensive perimeter from Alaska to Hawaii to Central America against Japanese incursions. American forces were also expected to preserve the logistical lifeline through Australia to British-held Malaya. Stark hoped that advanced bases on Wake, Midway, and other islands could be maintained as American for future operations. Japanese-held island bases would have to be assaulted and defended in turn. Any American islands taken by the Japanese would need to be recaptured by American forces. In sum, the Navy would conduct limited operations utilising its air, surface, and amphibious forces to maintain the strategic status quo in the Pacific. Once Germany was eliminated as an enemy, the United States could turn its full weight against Japan. Herein lay the significance of Plan DOG and its successive plans for the Corps: Marines could expect to play active roles in both base defence and amphibious assault, whether in operations supporting defensive or offensive operations.<sup>47</sup>

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46 Harold R. Stark, memo for SecNav (hereafter Stark Memorandum), 12 November 1940, in Stark, summary notes, Box 142, MCOHC, MCUA. Various drafts of the Stark Memorandum can be found in Steven D. Ross (ed.), *American War Plans, 1919–1941*, vol. 3, *Plans to Meet the Axis Threat* (New York: Garland, 1992), 225–30; Mark M. Lowenthal, 'The Stark Memorandum and the American National Security Process, 1940', in Robert W. Love (ed.), *Changing Interpretations and New Sources in Naval History* (New York: Garland, 1980), 358–9; B. Mitchell Simpson III, *Admiral Harold R. Stark: Architect of Victory, 1939–1945* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 70–5; Gole, *Road to Rainbow*, 102–21; and Linn, *Guardians of Empire*, 177–83.

47 Stark Memorandum; Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, 154–7; and Hough, Ludwig, and Shaw, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, 64.





Figure 3. Senior American leaders observing a joint Marine Corps-Army amphibious exercise at New River, North Carolina, in July 1941. From left to right: Major General Holland M. 'Howlin' Mad' Smith; Major General Commandant Thomas Holcomb; Secretary of the Navy Franklin Knox (looking through binoculars); and then-Colonel Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. of the US Army's 1st Infantry Division. It is worth noting that Roosevelt's division was the only major unit in the US Army with amphibious experience before outbreak of war later that December.

Because naval campaigns outlined in the war plans would require larger amphibious assault units, the Corps received authorisation to create more viable, larger division-sized units of approximately 18,000 Marines capable of seizing enemy-held islands. The creation of two paper divisions in the FMF occurred in early February 1941. Later in July that summer, elements of the US Army's 1st Infantry Division, the 1st Marine Division, and the US Atlantic Fleet made simulated amphibious landings in the Caribbean and at New River, North Carolina. The new force structures and exercises followed the doctrinal principles laid down in the Tentative Manual for Landing Operations from 1934 and the FTP-167 from 1938. Although these exercises suffered some setbacks, the

participating Marines, soldiers, and sailors learned what not to do.<sup>48</sup> This Marine Corps' emphasis on amphibious warfare took on another element as well—institutional survival.

### **Epilogue: From pre-war doctrine to wartime application**

The last few months of peace in late 1941 passed very quickly. The Marines struggled to ready themselves on far-flung Pacific islands as well as mobilise back in the United States. Commandant Holcomb's efforts to meet expectations resembled robbing-Peter-to-pay-Paul as he ordered units with full complements to be split apart to create cadres for separate units. The US Navy and Army's senior leaders experienced similar problems in matching resources to needs.<sup>49</sup>

While American strategic planners anticipated Japanese attacks on the Philippines, Guam, or Wake, the idea of a massive air attack against the main US Navy and Army bases at Pearl Harbor seemed too far-fetched to be plausible. Sadly, underestimating the skill and audacity of the Japanese had dire consequences on the Sunday morning of 7 December 1941. On that infamous day, the Japanese caught the Americans unawares and launched pre-emptive strike that destroyed the US Fleet's battleship component and laid waste to the ground-based aircraft on Oahu in Hawai'i.<sup>50</sup>

In the hours, days, and months thereafter, the Japanese launched attacks against Wake, Guam, the Philippines, and Midway. Those were consistent with the anticipated Japanese actions. Elements of a defence battalion on Wake Island proved its mettle for more than a fortnight before succumbing to overwhelming Japanese force in late December. The few Marines on Guam surrendered without a fight in December. The Philippines fell five months later after American and Filipino forces fought desperate holding actions, waiting for the relief force envisioned in War Plan ORANGE would take nearly three years to arrive.

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48 'Training of Units of the FMF', unsigned report, n.d. [c. February 1941], GBSF, GB 425, Box 135, RG 80, NACP; H. Smith to CNO via MGC, 10 September 1941, Holland M. Smith to King, 14 November 1941, and Deputy Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army to CNO, 10 October 1941, all in Holcomb Papers, Box 27, MCUA; Holcomb to Marston, 22 November 1941, Holcomb Papers, Box 4, MCUA; Smith, *Development of Amphibious Tactics*, 36-8; Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, 63-5; and Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 348-9.

49 See Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 92-102.

50 The best single volume survey of the Pacific War remains Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*. See also relevant chapter in Millett, *Semper Fidelis*.

Although attacked, Midway was not secured by the Japanese. It would later be the scene of a decisive naval battle in 1942. Indeed, Marines in two defence battalions held Midway against Japanese aerial attacks. Their anti-aircraft fire downed ten Japanese planes during their aerial assault which did not destroy the ground defences on Midway in anticipation of an amphibious assault in the coming days. It is also worth noting that the defence battalion opposed daily Japanese aerial bombing raids and frequent Japanese Navy bombardments on Guadalcanal from August 1942 to February 1943. The Midway and Guadalcanal Marines' tactics and unit structure followed the doctrines laid down in *The Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases* (1936).<sup>51</sup>

During the War in the Pacific, the doctrines in the *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations* were successfully applied in the island-hopping and leapfrogging campaigns, though not without halting progress and severe casualties. At Guadalcanal, the 1st Marines made an unopposed landing on 7 August 1942. The real challenge came not in defending their tenuous beachhead and all-important airfield against Japanese air, land, and sea incursions, but in the Navy's maintaining the supply lines to the American units on the island. Although suffering severe losses in men, aircraft, and ships, the US Navy succeeded in this logistical mission and also destroyed the Japanese supply system.<sup>52</sup>

More than a year after the amphibious operation on Guadalcanal, the long-anticipated drive across the Central Pacific began in November 1943. The Marines' bloody assault against Tarawa stood as one example of how, even with the most sound doctrines, the fog and friction of war can conspire to bring about near defeat. The Marines and their Navy counterparts used a feedback loop that created a learning curve. The Americans adapted doctrines, equipment, and force structure to overcome the Japanese corresponding evolution of tactics in their defensive efforts on the likes of Peleliu, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.<sup>53</sup>

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51 The more thorough examination of Wake Island is Urwin, *Facing Fear Odds*. For an overview of defence battalions in the Pacific War, see Melson, *Condition Red*.

52 Aptly titled is Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* (New York: Random House, 1990). See also David J. Ulbrich, 'Thomas Holcomb, Alexander Vandegrift and Reforms in Amphibious Command Relations', *War & Society* XXVIII: 1 (May 2009), 113-47.

53 Even after more than 60 years since publication, the seminal work on amphibious operations in the Pacific War remains Isely and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious Warfare*. For the latest study, see Sharon Tois Lacy, *Pacific Blitzkrieg: World War II in the Central Pacific* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2013).

The value of the Marine Corps' doctrines extended beyond the Central Pacific into the Southwest Pacific and European Theatres of Operations, where the U.S. Army and Navy conducted several large scale amphibious assaults.<sup>54</sup> The principles outlined the Tentative Manual for Landing Operations found their way into Navy's Landing Operations Doctrine—FTP-167 (1938) and subsequently on to the War Department and Army in FM 31-5 Basic Field Manual—Landing Operations on Hostile Shores (1941). This document's preface stated that it 'is based to large extent on the Landing Operations Doctrine, U.S. Navy, 1938. The arrangement of subject matter is similar to the Navy publication and many illustrations are taken from it.' The Army's Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall's name appeared on the signature block 'by order the Secretary of War'.<sup>55</sup> Perusals of the tables of contents of the 1941 FM 31-5 and later revisions as well as wartime revisions of FTP-167 reveal that the US Army and Navy continued to borrow and adapt the Marines' doctrines.

### **Conclusion**

The operation and tactical applications of amphibious assault and base defence in the Pacific and European Theatres remained means to strategic ends as determined by the senior Allied leaders. Although tentative and untested in the 1920s and 1930s, the Marine Corps' amphibious doctrines laid out in the tentative manuals, in ideas presented by the likes of Earl 'Pete' Ellis, Holland Smith, and Thomas Holcomb, in simulated amphibious assaults, and in equipment procurement proved to be remarkably forward-looking in fulfilling strategic needs in the Pacific and Europe. They took their doctrine, force structure and equipment procurement cues from the American strategic plans and missions. The late military historian Russell F. Weigley saw great value in this process: 'Simply by defining the specific problems into which amphibious operations divided themselves, the Marine Corps made it evident that the problems most likely were not insoluble; and the Corps went on to delineate many of the solutions.'<sup>56</sup>

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54 See chapters on General George S. Patton, Jr, Lieutenant General Arthur G. Trudeau, and Rear Admiral Walter C. Ansel in Daugherty, *Pioneers of Amphibious Warfare*, 298-400.

55 US War Department, FM 31-5 *Basic Field Manual –Landing Operations on Hostile Shores* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), II.

56 Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (1973; repr., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), 264.

Such problem-solving efforts are needed as much in the twenty-first century as they were in the Second World War. In 2013, the new term is 'Anti-Access/Anti-Denial' (A2/D2). The new operational challenges to successful assaults can be seen in accurate long-range rockets, advanced underwater obstacles, fast jet aircraft, and even tactical nuclear weapons. Overcoming these requires the amphibious assault forces to have plans and preparations to breach obstacles, establish beachheads, and maintain logistical networks. All these missions can only be achieved under an umbrella of air superiority and a cordon of naval (surface and underwater) superiority that reaches several hundred miles in all directions. From the defensive perspective, the key elements include disruption of enemy assault forces and logistical support efforts. Indeed, so effective have Improvised Explosive Devices been on land, that they will doubtlessly be utilised to impede ship-to-shore transit and on-shore manoeuvre by amphibious assault forces.<sup>57</sup>

New technologies have dramatically increased speed and extended distance. Nevertheless, if one traces the operational challenges through the Second World War to Gallipoli, then one can see that the principles of amphibious assault and base defence certainly differ in degree today, but not in kind. Moreover, eight decades hence, the foundational doctrines still ring true in *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations* (1934) and the *Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases* (1936).

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<sup>57</sup> For a recent analysis of the implications of A2/AD for amphibious warfare, see Sam J. Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare: Countering A2/D2 Strategies* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013).

# The Army, the Navy and the Defence of Australia and the Empire 1919–1939

*David Horner*

To Australia's political leaders in the inter-war years the task of deciding upon an appropriate Defence policy for the nation seemed an almost insoluble problem. Throughout this period of two decades, however, there was a remarkable consistency in the understanding of the nature of the problem, which was identified clearly within eighteen months of the end of the First World War. This chapter describes how the two key Services, the Army and the Navy, sought to advise the Government on a suitable Defence policy.

The problem had actually been identified well before the First World War. The new Commonwealth of Australia occupied a vast continent, but it had a tiny population and was economically weak. As early as 1895, when Japan had defeated China in a short war, Japan had been identified as a potential threat, and this threat had become clearer following Japan's success against Russia in 1904-05.

In formulating its defence policies successive Australian governments sought to reconcile two apparently opposing views. On the one hand it was argued that Australia was too small to defend itself properly and it should seek to ensure its security within the framework of the British Empire. Australia was, after all, an integral part of the Empire and Australians were as much citizens of the Empire as they were of Australia. On the other hand, many Australians were wary of sending forces overseas on British imperial adventures. If Japan were to attempt to invade Australia, Britain might not be able to assist, and hence Australia should have large enough forces to deter, or even defeat, a possible invasion.

In fact it was desirable and possible to shape defence policies that took account of both of these views. The broad parameters for the Army were set by the 1903 *Defence Act*, which stated that Australian defence

would rely on the part-time militia. There would be no permanent army except for the small numbers of officers and NCOs that would be required to train the militia, and the equally small numbers of permanent gunners, plus a few engineers, needed to man the coastal fortresses. There was to be no permanent field force, and the part-time field force was not permitted to serve overseas. In 1911 the Government introduced a new defence scheme under which all young men were required to undergo compulsory military training on a part-time basis, with the purpose of forming a militia force of some 80,000 men by 1919.

The First World War threw this plan into disarray. In 1911 Australia had agreed to prepare plans to send an expeditionary force overseas—an acknowledgement of the importance of imperial defence. There was no definite commitment at that stage, but once war was declared in 1914 Australia knew that it needed to support the British Empire. Australia therefore raised a huge, voluntarily enlisted force, eventually numbering over 300,000 men and known as the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), for service overseas. Meanwhile, the part-time militia for the defence of Australia was given little priority for resources.

Australia also looked to its naval defences. During the 19th century the Australian colonies had always relied on the ships of the Royal Navy to protect the sea routes around the island continent. Following the Russo-Japanese war, and Britain's decision to withdraw its battleships from the Pacific, the Australian Government decided to form its own navy. In 1909 Britain agreed to help but wanted to ensure that Australia's ships would be suitable to play a role as part of the Royal Navy in time of war. Assisted by Britain, in a remarkable achievement the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was formed in four years, its main ships being three cruisers and three destroyers. Again the Defence policy balanced the demands of imperial and home defence. In the First World War these, and additional ships which were loaned by Britain, generally served under the control of the British Admiralty.

Despite Australia's large and expensive commitment to the Great War (as part of the Empire's contribution), the war did little to ensure Australian security in the Pacific. Although the Anglo-Japanese alliance provided some security during the war, the treaty was due to expire soon after the war. Further, by the end of the war Japanese naval strength, unharmed by the war, had grown considerably in comparison to the

British. Japan's industries had expanded as they provided munitions for the Allies, and Japan was awarded mandated territories in the Pacific, which extended to about 1000 kilometres north of the Australian territory of New Guinea.

The Australian Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, believed strongly that Japan was a potential threat. Ironically he exacerbated this threat by his efforts at the Versailles peace conference in June 1919 when he ensured that Japan's efforts to achieve 'equality of nations and of equal treatment of their nationals' was not approved in the final treaty. The Japanese were humiliated and furious.

In framing its postwar Defence policy the Government first sought advice from Britain's Admiral of the Fleet Lord Jellicoe when he visited Australia in 1919. This was clear recognition that while Australia had deployed 300,000 men overseas during the Great War, the defence of Australia was fundamentally a maritime problem. Jellicoe concluded that when Britain was involved in conflict in Europe Japan might invade Australia and seize the Netherlands East Indies and New Guinea.<sup>1</sup> Jellicoe advocated the creation of a Far Eastern fleet to be based at Singapore and recommended close collaboration between the Royal Navy and the RAN. Australia would never be able to form a navy that would be powerful enough to challenge Japan by itself. The assumption was that Australia's defence had to be achieved in the broader framework of imperial defence.

Next, the Government sought advice from a conference of six senior wartime military commanders, led by Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel. Their report, delivered in February 1920, became the Army's most important strategic planning document for the next two decades. It determined the threat, assessed the strategic situation and set out the force structure to deal with it. While governments changed and the Defence policy was refined, the Army hierarchy dogmatically clung to the report as accepted wisdom, even when the Government had a different view.

The Senior Officers concluded that the safety of Australia rested on two factors: its membership of the British Empire; and 'Australia's own ability to prevent an invading enemy from obtaining decisive victories

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1 Report of Admiral of the Fleet, Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia, May-August 1919, 4 Vols, Hughes Papers, National Library of Australia (NLA): MS 1538/19/2-3.



pending the arrival of help from other parts of the Empire'.<sup>2</sup> That is, like Jellicoe, the Senior Officers accepted the importance of imperial defence. While they considered that Japan posed the greatest threat, the Senior Officers had to rely, to a large extent, on British intelligence.<sup>3</sup> Using this advice, the Australian Senior Officers assessed that Japan could, without difficulty, place in the field an army of 600,000 men. In peace the Japanese field army comprised 25 divisions, but in war it could expand to 42 divisions. Japan had sufficient mercantile shipping to transport an army of 100,000 fully-equipped men in one convoy. Like Jellicoe, the Senior Officers believed that Japan would strike when Britain was involved in Europe. Hence they concluded that while Australia might rely on the Royal Navy for protection, Australia would also need to 'maintain an Army capable of preventing an enemy from attaining a decision ashore'.

During the Great War Australia had raised and maintained five infantry and almost two light horse divisions, so it was not surprising that the Senior Officers—who had all experienced large-scale land operations—assessed that Australia could maintain a field force of two cavalry divisions and four infantry divisions, with the necessary army, corps and auxiliary troops making, upon war establishment, a total of about 180,000 all ranks. Before the war the Australian Army had had no formations larger than a brigade; but the experience of the war showed the necessity to train commanders and staffs at divisional and corps levels. The Conference recommended that officers and NCOs from the AIF be used to staff the new militia formations and units.

The proposed organisation almost exactly paralleled that of the AIF in the last year of the war, and the Report recommended that one cavalry division be organised in New South Wales and Queensland and the other in Victoria and South Australia. Since the area of strategic importance was south-east Australia, two infantry divisions were to be formed in New South Wales, supplemented by units from Queensland, and another two in Victoria, supplemented by units from South Australia. Three mixed brigades would be located in each of Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, and these could form a fifth division if necessary.

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2 Report on the Military Defence of Australia, 6 February 1920, Australian War Memorial (AWM) 1, 20/7.

3 See D.M. Horner, 'Australian Estimates of the Japanese Threat, 1905-1941', in Philip Towle (ed.), *Estimating Foreign Military Power* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).

The Conference recognised that the need for coast defences and garrisons would be largely determined by naval considerations, which had yet to be discussed by the Committee of Imperial Defence in London. However, the Conference accepted that the Army would probably have to defend Sydney, Cockburn Sound in Western Australia, Newcastle, Melbourne and Hobart against attack by unarmoured surface vessels, submarines, aircraft and enemy landings. The coast defence equipment at Thursday Island, Townsville, Brisbane, Adelaide and Albany should be maintained until the views of the Committee of Imperial Defence were known. The Conference could not avoid commenting on the existing *Defence Act*:

the advantages, moral and material, of fighting in the enemy's country are so enormous that it is folly to await the enemy's attack on our own soil, if there is any possibility of going to meet him ... The community must, therefore, make up its mind, however unwillingly, that all preparations for the defence of Australia, thorough and complete as they may be, may break down absolutely if, at a final and decisive moment, the weapon of defence cannot be transferred beyond our territorial waters.

On 12 April 1920 the Council of Defence met to consider the advice from both its naval and military advisers. The Council included Hughes, who chaired it, two senior ministers, Sir Joseph Cook and George Pearce, three naval officers, including the First Naval Member, Rear Admiral Sir Percy Grant, and Chauvel and three other officers from the Senior Officers Conference. The Council agreed to provide funds for the two Services and the yet to be formed air force in order to maintain them at their existing levels, and noted that 'this minimum expenditure would give Australia a "sporting chance" of holding out till British command of the Pacific can be established. With any less expenditure there would be no chance of security to Australia in the event of war.' The Council agreed to the organisation of the Army as recommended by the Senior Officers. But it noted that it would need to wait on advice from Britain about Jellicoe's proposed Far East fleet.<sup>4</sup> The Council did not take up the Conference's implied request to change the *Defence Act*. So there would be no regular

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4 Minutes of a Special Meeting (11th) of the Council of Defence, 12 April 1920, National Archives of Australia (NAA): A9787, 2.

force and hence the Australian Army could not be—as the Royal Navy’s Admiral Sir John Fisher advocated—‘a projectile launched by the Navy’, unless a special force was raised.

Realising the financial constraints under which the Government was labouring, Admiral Grant moved quickly to protect his service. He advised the Cabinet that the universal military training scheme was a waste of money, for ‘if the British fleet were beaten this Army could not hold out against the teeming millions which the Japanese would bring to Australia’.<sup>5</sup> There was no explanation how the ‘teeming millions’ were to be transported to Australia and, more importantly, how they were to be supported once they arrived. It was the first shot in a conflict between the Army and the Navy over the allocation of resources that was to last for most of the interwar period.

The Government did not accept this advice to scrap the universal training scheme, and on 1 May 1921 the Army introduced its new divisional system. Home training of the Citizen Forces, which had been suspended with broken periods since 1 November 1915, recommenced on 1 July 1921. The militia numbered 127,000 with a permanent cadre of 3500. Much of the first year was spent in the re-organisation of units under the divisional scheme and in the issuing of clothing and equipment. The Government’s response to the recommendations of the Conference of Senior Officers was disappointing, but worse was to come.

There was, however, one positive development: on 31 March 1921 the Royal Australian Air Force was formed as a separate service. The RAAF had only small numbers and very limited capacity, and the leaders of the RAAF concentrated more on building their new service than on the wider issues of defence policy.

Conscious of the possible threat from Japan, the Government preferred the Anglo-Japanese alliance to continue and Hughes pressed the case for it when he visited London in mid-1921 for the Imperial Conference. He was not successful. He also learned that the idea of Jellicoe’s Far East fleet had not been accepted, although there was news that the British were thinking of building a naval base at Singapore.

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5 Quoted in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World Crisis 1914-1923* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 448.

Towards the end of 1921 representatives of Britain, France, Italy, the United States and Japan met for a disarmament conference in Washington where they agreed to reduce the numbers of their battleships and restrict the size of new vessels. The Government believed that Australia's security was now assured; as George Pearce, who attended the conference, said, 'Japan is peaceful'.<sup>6</sup> As a result, in mid-1922 the Government drastically reduced the Defence vote from £8 million in 1921-22 to £5.2 million in 1923-24. Nearly half the ships of the RAN were decommissioned.

The Army was cut savagely. Although the seven militia divisions were retained, the overall strength of the militia was reduced to 31,000 men - only 25 per cent of their war establishment. Training was reduced to six days in camp and four days in local centres a year, and was confined to youths of eighteen and nineteen (i.e. two annual quotas instead of the normal seven). The permanent army was reduced to 1600 while 72 permanent officers were retired. As A.J. Hill wrote: 'Thus the best hopes and the best advice of the Conference of Senior Officers were jettisoned. Economy was elevated to the prime aim and Defence lay defenceless before the political onslaught.'<sup>7</sup> The Senior Officers had hoped to have an army that could repel a possible invader. All that was left was a skeleton force which, with ten days' training per year, could hardly be described as a real army.

It was soon obvious that the Washington Treaty was no guarantee of long-term peace, and the Australian Government now hoped that security might be provided by the naval base which the British government had recently decided to construct at Singapore. Under the so-called Singapore strategy, Britain undertook to send its main fleet to Singapore in time of threat from Japan. In turn, Australia accepted responsibility for the protection of maritime trade in the Australia station, and agreed to contribute towards a naval force based at Singapore and to maintain a secondary base at Darwin. The Army was to have the capacity to expand to provide an expeditionary force as well as to defend the Australian continent.

The Singapore strategy was discussed a meeting of the Council of Defence, chaired by the Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, in Melbourne on

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6 Quoted in *ibid.*, 498.

7 A.J. Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 203.

30 August 1923. Generals White, Monash and Chauvel, who was now Chief of the General Staff (CGS) as well as Inspector-General, all agreed with the views of the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) that 'if Singapore were made impregnable as a base for all types of ships including capital ships, Australia would be reasonably safe'.<sup>8</sup> In a letter the next day Chauvel wrote that 'the Singapore Base, lying as it will on the flank of an enemy moving to attack Australia, will be of inestimable value to Australia and will in fact be the pivot of Australian defence'.<sup>9</sup>

From the Army's perspective, the key issue would be the defence of Singapore. If Australia was required to send troops to Singapore to contribute to its defence it would need to raise a separate force, as it had done in the First World War. In fact the Army had such a plan, called Plan 401, which had been prepared in 1922 when it looked as though Australia might be required to send an expeditionary force to Turkey during the so-called Chanak crisis.<sup>10</sup> Plan 401 provided for different expeditionary forces ranging from an infantry or cavalry brigade group through to a complete division. Chauvel assessed that if the militia were mobilised for this possible overseas commitment, there would be insufficient equipment for it. Further, if the Government wished to send troops to Singapore they would be 'largely untrained and would require intensive training after arrival at Singapore'.<sup>11</sup> In view of Australia's efforts to reinforce Singapore in the Second World War and the fate of the untrained troops sent there in January 1942, these comments made in 1923 are of particular interest.

Bruce discussed the details of this policy at the Imperial Conference in London later in 1923. Armed with advice from Chauvel, and from the Australian Army representative in London, Brigadier General Thomas Blamey, Bruce questioned the British officials about the problem of defending Singapore, but eventually told the Conference, 'while I am not quite as clear as I should like to be as to how the protection of Singapore is to be assured, I am clear on this point, that apparently it can be done'.<sup>12</sup>

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8 Minutes of Meeting of Council of Defence, 30 August 1923, NAA: A981, 330.

9 Letter, Chauvel to Blamey, 31 August 1923, AWM 113, 1/21.

10 Lieutenant-General Sir Carl Jess, Report on the Activities of the Australian Military Forces 1929-1939, c. 1946, 88 (copy in author's possession).

11 Letter, Chauvel to Blamey, 31 August 1923, AWM 113, 1/21.

12 Imperial Conference 1923, Stenographic Notes of Meeting, 22 October 1923, The National Archives, Kew (TNA): CAB 32/9.

It is doubtful whether Chauvel or Blamey would have supported this view. The resolutions of the Conference became the basic principles of Australian defence policy and for cooperation with Britain on defence matters between the wars.

At this stage the Army had not determined how it was going to defend Australia. Indeed, the concept of militia divisions was relatively new, and the focus was primarily on the training of units rather than on preparing for higher level operations. Faced with financial restrictions, the best that the Army could do was concentrate on the training of commanders and staff, the purchase of essential equipment, and the training of rank and file in that order of priority.

Already the Army had doubts about the efficacy of the Singapore strategy. Senior Australian Army officers like Chauvel rejected the idea that the only threat to Australia would be from raids and wanted to prepare to resist a full-scale invasion. Over the next twelve years other senior officers such as H.D. Wynter, J.D. Lavarack and H.C.H. Robertson argued that Japan would attack only when Britain was pre-occupied in Europe, and therefore Australia had to look to its own defences. The Australian Army failed to win this argument with the Government, which continued to give priority to the Navy. The Government seemed to overlook that securing Australia against raids or invasion was integral to the Singapore strategy.

In 1924 the British Government suspended construction of the Singapore naval base, and the Australian Government responded by introducing a five-year naval building program as part of Australia's contribution to imperial defence. Australia ordered two 10,000-ton cruisers, two submarines and a seaplane carrier. As it turned out the Admiralty's advice was poor, for it created an unbalanced fleet. HMAS *Australia* arrived in 1928 and HMAS *Canberra*, and the sea-plane carrier, HMAS *Albatross*, arrived in 1929. *Albatross* did not prove to be a suitable ship and lasted barely four years before it was placed in reserve. These decisions were not made with any consideration to how those forces would be integrated into a joint strategy for the defence of Australia.

Although the Navy received the largest slice of the Defence vote, the army was permitted to expand to 45,000 men, and a special allocation was made to purchase a small number of anti-aircraft guns, medium artillery and tanks to allow the development of skills for later expansion.

During the next five years there were modest improvements in the field army, but little progress with coast defences. In December 1925 the Committee of Imperial Defence recommended a five-year program for coastal re-armament, costing a total of £2,795,000, including establishing defences for a naval refuelling base at Darwin, and also for Albany, which had been selected as the principal convoy assembling port in Australia in time of war.

The Australian Military Board recommended an expanded version of this scheme, and General Chauvel did what he could to persuade the government to accept it. In a secret annex to his 1926 report he advised that, with the increased range of naval guns since the war, 'the armament of our forts has given cause for grave anxiety ... As we are frankly depending on the British navy for protection from invasion, it is considered that the provision of secure bases to enable ships to operate in our waters is of sufficient importance to warrant special financial provisions being made.'<sup>13</sup> The following year he pointed out that the relative power of the Royal Navy had declined: 'The British navy is now maintained at a one-power standard, and Japan is no longer an ally and is relatively stronger at sea than she was twenty years ago.'<sup>14</sup> However, in the Council of Defence the Chief of the Air Staff argued that aircraft could be substituted for coast artillery and, faced with conflicting views, the Council deferred a decision until 1929.

Chauvel did not give up, and in his 1928 report pointed out that if Singapore were lost then Australia would depend on the efficiency of its coast defences. To tie Australia's limited numbers of aircraft to the defence of particular points around the coast would be 'a complete misuse of this arm', and the only sound course was to proceed with the rearmament of the coast defences.<sup>15</sup> In his 1929 report Chauvel simply wrote: 'I regret to say that no progress whatever has been possible towards the re-armament of our coastal defences.'<sup>16</sup>

In 1928 Chauvel persuaded the Defence Committee to prepare an appreciation of the threat to Australia under the conditions then existing;

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13 Report of the Inspector-General, Part II, 30 June 1927, AWM 1, 20/8 pt 2.

14 Ibid.

15 Report of the Inspector-General, Part II, 30 June 1928, AWM 1, 20/8 pt 2.

16 Report of the Inspector-General, 31 May 1929, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers.

that is, without the Singapore base being completed. Australia still did not have its own capacity to gather intelligence and, as with the early studies, the Australian planners had to rely on British advice. Nonetheless, they put greater emphasis on Japanese capabilities than their British counterparts. This appreciation, dated 9 August 1928, reaffirmed the view of the 1920 Senior Officers Conference that Japan might make demands 'such, for example, as the abrogation of the "White Australia" policy, ... when the British Empire is engaged in European complications'. The appreciation noted that Japan's traditional policy was 'to commence hostilities without warning and to attack the foundations of her opponent's sea power at the start' (as had happened at Port Arthur in 1904, and would happen at Pearl Harbor in 1941.) The appreciation assessed that Japan could embark and maintain a maximum of three divisions. In time of war there would be extensive raiding of trade routes. Raids on important centres such as Darwin, Sydney, Newcastle and possibly Fremantle and Albany were 'to be expected and must be provided against'. An attack on Singapore, if the British Fleet was delayed, was a possibility but not until after Hong Kong had 'been effectively disposed of'. An invasion of Australia 'but only on a limited scale', was 'within the bounds of possibility and not so improbable as to allow of it being definitely ruled out'.<sup>17</sup>

The Defence Committee endorsed this appreciation and Chauvel directed his small staff to begin preparing plans to deal with a possible Japanese landing. The officer responsible for these plans was the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, Colonel John Lavarack, who had attended the Imperial Defence College in 1928. He was an outstanding officer who was to be CGS in the 1930s. In the Second World War he commanded both the 1st Australian Corps and the First Australian Army and ended his career as the Governor of Queensland.

Lavarack and his staff began work on two papers. The first was an examination of the Defence Committee's appreciation, which Lavarack thought did not give enough emphasis to the likelihood of a Japanese invasion. He wanted to make it quite clear that there was a case 'for the retention in Australia of mobile land forces'.<sup>18</sup> As might be expected, the Navy did not agree with this assessment. The Army's appreciation

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17 Appreciation War in the Pacific, 8 August 1928, NAA: MP1185/8, 1846/4/363.

18 Memorandum by the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, 5 May 1931, AWM 54, 910/2/4.



of the threat was progressively up-dated as the strategic situation deteriorated.<sup>19</sup>

The second paper was the so-called 'Plan of Concentration', the first draft of which was circulated in September 1929. Not surprisingly, it was based on the contention that Japan would bide its time until Britain was involved in Europe.<sup>20</sup> Japan might seek a rapid decision by landing at one of three locations that were vital to Australia; that is, Sydney, Newcastle or Melbourne. The invading force would probably be about three divisions, and it would receive substantial reinforcements about two months after its initial landing. The Japanese would be 'fanatics who like dying in battle, whilst our troops would consist mainly of civilians hastily thrown together on mobilization with very little training, short of artillery and possibly of gun ammunition'.<sup>21</sup>

The first priority of the Australian war plans was to defend the Sydney-Newcastle area which would be treated as one defended locality (see map). Newcastle and Sydney would each be defended by a corps consisting of one cavalry and two infantry divisions. Local forces would be required to defend Melbourne, Fremantle, Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart and Adelaide. Victoria would be the principal source of supply and maintenance, with the main base at Albury. Reconnaissances and studies were carried out secretly by permanent staff officers to see whether the concentration areas could support the formations to be deployed there.<sup>22</sup>

The need for secrecy was emphasised by the new Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, Lieutenant Colonel Vernon Sturdee, when he described the plan, on which a forthcoming exercise was to be based, to the senior officers' course in 1933. He explained that:

Any leakage of information about the exercise which might reach the press may be sufficient to produce the most wonderful scare headlines such as 'Military chiefs consider invasion imminent. Staff are now concentrated in Sydney to make full

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19 Appreciation of Australia's position in case of war in the Pacific, March 1930, revised 23 March 1932, AWM 54, 910/2/4.

20 Appreciation—The Concentration of the Australian Land Forces in Time of War, and covering memo by the CGS, 20 September 1929. Appreciation—The Concentration of the Australian Land Forces in Time of War, 6 January 1931, AWM 54, 243/6/6.

21 Lecture on the Plan of Concentration, 1933, AWM 54, 243/6/150.

22 The studies are in AWM 54, 243/6/159.

preparations to repel Japanese attack before Christmas'. Just imagine the political and diplomatic repercussions—so please watch your step.<sup>23</sup>

This plan remained in existence throughout the 1930s, was the basis of several senior officers' exercises, and was the reason for the 1st Infantry Division's exercise in the Port Stephens area, near Newcastle, in October 1938. The plan had many weaknesses. There was no guarantee that the Japanese would land in the Sydney-Newcastle area. No corps headquarters were formed, and until 1938 the divisions had no opportunity to exercise as formations. Indeed without the necessary resources the plans were quite unrealistic.

The plan of concentration was the second stage of a three-stage planning process, even though it was the first element to be completed. The first stage was to be the preparation of mobilisation plans and the third was to be the preparation of a plan of operation.<sup>24</sup> Towards the end of the 1930s the mobilisation plan was subsumed in work on the Commonwealth War Book, which set out the actions to be taken by various government agencies on the outbreak of war, and was detailed in the more specific Army War Book.

In 1929, when the first plan of concentration was prepared, all this was in the future. Towards the end of that year the change of government and the onset of the Depression made it even more unlikely that the resources necessary to support such a plan would be provided for many years. Immediately, without consulting the Department, the new Labor Government suspended compulsory service, and soon after introduced a voluntary scheme. Within a few months the economic situation had deteriorated, and in 1930 the Government undertook more drastic cuts. The Defence vote was reduced, ships were paid off (including the recently-purchased submarines) and Army officers and men were required to take up to eight weeks' annual leave without pay. By 1932 the Citizen Forces were down to 28,000 volunteers, from 47,000 in the late 1920s, and the permanent army numbered 1536.

These pressures heightened the arguments between the Services as each sought to maintain its share of the Defence vote. At the Defence Committee in March 1930 the CGS, Chauvel, suggested that the RAN be

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23 Lecture on the Plan of Concentration, 1933, AWM 54, 243/6/150.

24 Memo, DMO&I to divisional commanders, 9 January 1931, AWM 54, 243/6/6.

abolished and that the Australian Government contribute to the upkeep of the Royal Navy. Naturally the CNS, Vice Admiral W. Munro-Kerr, could not agree to this. In opposition to Chauvel's claim that the Defence vote should be allocated to local defence, Munro-Kerr stated that: 'Invasion of the country on a large scale by Japan was so remote that in the present financial condition of the country it should not be considered.' The Defence Minister, Senator John Daly, seriously considered handing the Navy to Britain and amalgamating the Army and the RAAF; but he was replaced as Defence Minister after only a brief tenure and the plan did not proceed.<sup>25</sup>

The Army's case, that preparations had to be made to forestall a possible invasion, was argued strongly by Colonel Lavarack, supported by Chauvel. The Navy was capable of arguing its own case, but it was supported by the new secretary of the Defence Committee, Mr Frederick Shedden. Like Lavarack, Shedden had attended the Imperial Defence College in 1928, but had stayed in London for most of 1929. There Shedden had written a paper arguing that Australia's defence was best assured within the framework of imperial defence. This paper was keenly criticised in an Army report prepared by Lavarack. Paragraph by paragraph Lavarack pulled Shedden's arguments to pieces, and concluded that there was no substitute for a trained army.<sup>26</sup>

With his own reputation at stake, Shedden questioned Lavarack's knowledge of naval matters and claimed that Lavarack did not appear to understand the difference between raids and invasion.<sup>27</sup> Lavarack had made an enemy of Shedden, who by 1937 was Secretary of the Department of Defence, and this was to have unfortunate consequences for Lavarack. Writing in the 1960s, Shedden claimed that during the Second World War Chauvel told him that, 'having seen the course of the war', he now knew 'that the Naval view that the security of Australia ultimately depended on the command of sea communications, had been correct, but it had been necessary for the Army to maintain "the bogey of invasion and seven divisions for local defence", in order to resist any attempt by the Government to reduce the Army organization and its Vote'.<sup>28</sup>

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25 David Horner, *Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the Making of Australian Defence Policy* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 38.

26 Comments on Paper, 'An Outline of the Principles of Imperial Defence with Special Reference to Australian Defence', 7 March 1930, NAA: A5954, 39/2.

27 Annotations on *ibid.*

28 Shedden manuscript, Chapter 71, 10, NAA: A5954, 1294/2.

In 1931 the new United Australia Party Government came to power led by Joseph Lyons, and the following year the Government confirmed that its policy was 'that it would be better to provide efficient protection against raids rather than inefficient measures against invasion'.<sup>29</sup> The new CGS, Major General Julius Bruche, would not let the matter rest and continued to question the policy.

The movement of Japanese troops into Manchuria in 1931 had little impact in Australia. In Britain, however, without public announcement, the Committee of Imperial Defence decided to resume work on the Singapore base. There was still little reaction in Australia. As Paul Hasluck noted: 'by the beginning of 1933 the Australian defence system had reached its lowest point in twenty years'.<sup>30</sup>

As the economy improved slightly, however, the Government sought to increase Defence spending. The big question was how the money was to be spent. With its Navy and Army advisers offering conflicting advice, the Government looked to Britain for direction. Towards the end of 1934 the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, Sir Maurice Hankey, visited Australia and persuaded the Government that it should continue to rely on the Singapore strategy. In April 1935 Lavarack was appointed CGS and he continued the argument with the government. Hankey thought that Lavarack was 'a bit of an invasionist'.<sup>31</sup>

The 1933-4 budget showed a slight increase in the Defence vote and thereafter it increased each year; in 1932-3 it had been a little over £3 million, in 1933-4 it was a little over £4 million and by 1935-6 it was £7 million. But initially this increase had little effect other than to revive an almost moribund force. As usual, and in keeping with the importance of the Singapore strategy, the majority of the money went to the Navy. HMAS *Albatross* went into reserve and the Government purchased a new cruiser, HMAS *Sydney*, two sloops, *Yarra* and *Swan*, and obtained the loan of five British destroyers, later known as the famous 'scrap-iron flotilla'.

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29 Quoted in Claude Neumann, 'Australia's Citizen Soldiers, 1919-1939: A Study of Organization, Command, Recruiting, Training and Equipment' (MA Thesis, UNSW, 1978), 48.

30 Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939-1941* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952), 20.

31 Letter, Hankey to Dill, 30 November 1934, TNA: CAB 63/70.

The sum allocated to the Army in 1935-6 was £1.8 million; but at least some new equipment such as heavy guns, anti-aircraft guns and vehicles could be purchased.

In overseeing this re-armament Lavarack's priorities were: first, to train commanders and staff; second, to purchase equipment; and third, to begin training the militia. These were similar priorities to those determined in 1924. Lavarack and the Military Board wanted to build up the field army, but the Minister for Defence, Senator George Pearce, advised by the Navy, was adamant that priority had to be given to coast defences. Lavarack pointed out that anti-aircraft defences and mobile land forces would be needed to prevent raids on the guns, but the Minister's view prevailed.

On 25 September 1933 Pearce announced a major program to install two 9.2-inch guns at each of North Head (Sydney), Cape Banks (entrance to Botany Bay, Sydney) and Rottnest Island (off Fremantle), and 6-inch gun batteries at Cowan Cowan (Brisbane), Rottnest, South Head (Sydney) and Henry Head (entrance to Botany Bay, Sydney).<sup>32</sup> The Government's program was the result of months of discussion in the Defence Committee, in which the CGS, General Bruche, had proposed a more ambitious three-year program for the purchase of new equipment.<sup>33</sup> His proposals were not supported by the Navy, which relied on the views of the Committee of Imperial Defence that the Japanese would not attempt an invasion of Australia.<sup>34</sup> With the threat of Singapore in their rear the Japanese would not send their battleships or aircraft carriers south to Australia, and they would only attack with cruisers, armed merchant vessels, submarines and aircraft carried on these vessels. So it was decided to install only 9.2-inch guns, rather than larger calibre guns.

However important these developments might have been, Lavarack was still convinced that Australia needed to prepare the field force so that it could deal with an invasion, and before long the government was accusing Lavarack of disloyalty. The Director of Military Training, Colonel H.D. Wynter, who had written about the weakness of the Singapore strategy

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32 'Australian Defence Policy Outstanding Questions and Their Background', 8 February 1935, NAA: A5954, 841/3.

33 Memo, CGS to Secretary, Defence Committee, 30 November 1933, NAA: A2031, Vol. 2.

34 Defence Committee Agenda No 7/1934, 2 March 1934, NAA: A2302, 1934.

in the 1920s, continued the argument with an address to the United Service Institution in 1935. The Opposition used the article to criticise the Government's Defence policy. The Minister for Defence, Sir Archdale Parkhill, accused the Military Board of leaking information to the press, and Parkhill criticised Lavarack for permitting Wynter to address the United Services Institution. Wynter lost his temporary rank of colonel and was sent to a less important posting. Encouraged by Shedden, Parkhill withdrew his recommendation for Lavarack to be created a Companion of the Bath.<sup>35</sup>

The Government continued to rely on British advice. At the 1937 Imperial Conference Parkhill observed that if there was any danger of Singapore falling within the seventy days allowed for the arrival of the British main fleet, 'then Australia might as well abandon the programme for increasing her navy and concentrate all her defences on her army and air force'. Hankey replied that the whole British 'defence policy in the Far East was directed towards ensuring that Singapore *would* hold out'. Parkhill still seemed unsure but eventually accepted the assurances given to him.<sup>36</sup>

There was, however, a slight modification in the Navy's acceptance of the Singapore strategy. The Navy's prime role changed so that it was no longer to provide immediate reinforcement of Singapore. Instead it was to defend trade in Australian waters and act as a deterrent against coastal raids. Further, a naval signal intelligence organisation was being formed to read Japanese communications, and the coast watchers were set up in the islands to the north of Australia. As least someone was considering that the future war might be held in an environment other than Singapore or continental Australia. The Defence program announced in March 1938 provided for the purchase of two more cruisers, HMAS *Hobart* and HMAS *Perth*, the latter being commissioned just before the outbreak of the Second World War.

In the Army much of the additional money was absorbed by coast defences. Initially there was little effect on the field army, which increased

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35 Letter, Shedden to Shepherd, 18 January 1937, NAA: A5954, 886/1.

36 Minutes of Meeting to Discuss Questions, 21 June 1937, in R.G. Neale (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Volume I: 1937-38* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), 106-69. William J. Hemmings, 'Australia and Britain's Far Eastern Defence Policy, 1937-42' (B. Litt thesis, University of Oxford, 1977), 74, 79.

its size only marginally; by July 1936 the Citizen Forces had an authorised strength of 36,000 (it was actually 26,637). It was not until 20 October 1938, following the Munich crisis, that the Minister for Defence announced additional measures. The militia was permitted to expand to a strength of 70,000. The permanent forces were to be ready at two hours' notice to man fixed and anti-aircraft defences, and were also to expand in numbers. The Army budget was increased from £11.6 to £19.7 million and the acquisition of arms, ammunition and war equipment was accelerated.<sup>37</sup>

In early 1938, Shedden, who had become Secretary of the Department of Defence the previous November, persuaded the government that the only solution to resolving the problems concerning the Army was to appoint a British officer as Inspector-General. As a result, in June 1938 Lieutenant General Ernest Squires took up the appointment as Inspector-General, and he submitted his first, and only, report in December 1938. Like Lavarack, Squires recommended that the Army be organised in peacetime so that once it was mobilised it could deal not only with raids but with an invasion as well, although he was less direct in his language than Lavarack had been.<sup>38</sup>

Squires's two main proposals impacted on the Army's strategic planning. The first was a proposal to raise two regular brigades with a peace establishment of some 7500 men. These troops would assist the militia with training, would afford the officers of the Staff Corps much needed command experience, and on the outbreak of war would be available for any tasks necessary such as the protection of vital points. To raise this force would require an amendment to the *Defence Act*, and the only part of the force actually raised was the Darwin Mobile Force of some 245 men, all wearing Gunner badges to meet the requirements of the un-amended *Defence Act*.

Squires's second proposal concerned the overall Army organisation. At that time the six military districts, six militia divisions and various independent brigades were all commanded directly from Army Headquarters in Melbourne. Squires proposed to reorganise the Army into four commands based in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, with an independent garrison in Darwin. The commands, named

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37 'Acceleration of Defence Programme', NAA: A5954, 789/1.

38 Squires report, AWM 54, 243/6/58.

Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western, would be responsible for all units in their areas, with the exception of some training establishments. Southern Command would include South Australia and Tasmania. It was an organisation structured to defend Australia but not to allow for an expeditionary force. This organisation was not implemented until October 1939, one month after the outbreak of war.<sup>39</sup>

As early as the Munich crisis in September 1938, however, Squires had discussed his proposal with Lavarack in the light of the Army's concentration plan. It will be recalled that when threatened by invasion the army planned to deploy a corps to Newcastle and another to Sydney, but there were no corps headquarters in existence. The new command arrangements would mean that the GOC Eastern Command would, in effect, become a corps commander responsible for the defence of New South Wales. On 28 September 1938 Lavarack and Squires jointly recommended to the Government that in the event of mobilisation of the 'first line component', Major General Sir Thomas Blamey, a militia officer on the unattached list, be given command of the New South Wales District. Major General Sir Carl Jess, the Adjutant-General, would command the Victorian District, and Major General Henry Gordon Bennett, the most senior militia officer, also on the unattached list, would command the Newcastle Fortress area. Squires and Lavarack also suggested that either of them could be appointed commander-in-chief of the army to direct the defence of Australia.<sup>40</sup> The Cabinet hesitated to act, the Munich crisis passed, and the proposals were not implemented. Nonetheless, the incident gives some idea of army thinking at the time.

The official policy that the Army had to be prepared to deal with raids rather than an invasion persisted until the outbreak of war. In February 1939 the Committee of Imperial Defence in London admitted that the fleet it might send to oppose the Japanese Navy in the Far East could be inferior to it, raising further questions as to the likelihood of an attack on Australia.

There was one attempt to co-ordinate imperial defence policy in the Pacific. In April 1939 a conference was held in Wellington, New

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39 The idea of using the term 'Commands' came from Lavarack, not Squires. See Lavarack's comments on the report in AWM 54, 243/6/58.

40 Letter, Shedden to Minister for Defence, 28, 29 September 1939, NAA: A5954, 890/3.



Zealand, to discuss the defence of the South-West Pacific. The head of the Australian and also of the British delegation was the Australian CNS, Vice Admiral Sir Ragnar Colvin, RN. During the conference it was proposed that Australia accept responsibility for air reconnaissance between New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides; but matters of wider defence importance were not examined.<sup>41</sup> Colvin reconfirmed the British view that if Singapore remained secure there was little to fear in Australia or New Zealand. It is unlikely that the senior Australian Army delegate at Wellington, Colonel Sturdee, would have agreed with Colvin on the Singapore strategy. Significantly, the New Zealand delegation noted 'that Australia was apparently preparing, at any rate from the point of view of the Army, for an attack on a rate substantially larger than that of raids'.<sup>42</sup>

In the face of the deteriorating strategic situation, in May 1939 the Chiefs of Staff agreed that while preparations to meet an invasion need not be pursued, Australia should prepare to meet a medium scale of attack (major landings) rather than only minor scale of attacks (minor landings). However, the Chiefs could not maintain their unanimous approach at the Council of Defence in July, and the old planning base remained.

The Singapore strategy affected the way the Services trained. Most RAN officers trained in Britain and served for a while on British ships. All the CNSs between the wars were Royal Navy officers on secondment except for Admiral Sir Francis Hyde, who admittedly served for the longest period, from 1931 to 1937. Originally a Royal Navy officer, Hyde transferred to the RAN in 1912, but held several Royal Navy appointments; before becoming CNS he commanded a battle squadron in the British Home Fleet. During the 1930s Australian ships served on exchange with the Royal Navy on the China Station and in the Mediterranean, thus ensuring that they could be integrated smoothly once war began. Australian ships carried out visits to South Pacific and South-east Asia ports, but mainly in the 1920s rather than the 1930s.

The Army also remained conscious of the need to be able to work with the Empire's forces. Australian officers attended the British Staff College, and the Army used British training manuals, equipment, weapons and

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41 'Pacific Defence Conference 1939, Report of Conference, part 1, Observations of Service Boards—Action Taken etc,' NAA: A816, 14/301/4.

42 'Covering Report by Head of Australian Delegation to the Minister of Defence', 1 May 1939, NAA: A816, 14/301/113.

organisations. Officers from the three Services and Defence civilians, such as Shedden, attended the Imperial Defence College. Unlike the case in the RAN, all the professional heads of the Australian Army between the wars were long-serving officers of the Australian Army. Harry Chauvel, who was Inspector-General from 1919 to 1930 and CGS from 1923 to 1930, had been a regular officer since 1896.

It is easy to criticise the Army's strategic planning between the wars, but in many ways it was an insoluble problem. As mentioned earlier, the Army was hamstrung by the *Defence Act*, which restricted the recruitment of permanent forces. With a small population, and a limited economy Australia would have been hard-pressed to build credible defence forces even if times had been good; but economically it was the worst of times. There were severe weaknesses in both the Singapore strategy and also in the alternative strategy of building a large army to resist invasion. Perhaps the Army could have seized on possibilities offered by the Singapore strategy to argue that such a strategy required a smaller, capable, hard-hitting field force; that is, to accept that the most appropriate strategy needed to be 'maritime' in the joint sense. But there was no guarantee that funds would have been found to provide such a field force.

Within the framework of the policy of relying on Singapore and protecting Australia from raids, money was spent on installing guns at the main ports. There was some justification for these installations, but the money would have been better spent on building a balanced field force with modern field and anti-tank guns, armoured vehicles, including tanks, soft-skinned vehicles and communications. Against his wishes, Lavarack was directed by the Government to spend the Army's funds on coastal defence, rather than on the field force.

The most remarkable aspect of the Army's strategic planning between the wars was its consistency. Despite the Government's policy of preparing to deal with raids, from 1920 onwards the Army prepared to counter an invasion. By the late 1920s this strategy was being turned into an operational concept which in turn dominated the development of the Army in the 1930s. The arguments in the Defence Committee and in the Council of Defence about raids versus invasion were extremely important when it came to the allocation of funds. But when it came to planning, the Army still worked on the basis of defeating an invasion.

The Army's experience between the wars also focuses attention on the strategic decision-making process. There was rarely any agreement or cooperation between the Navy and Army, and generally the RAAF was more concerned with ensuring its own survival as a separate force. There was no joint service organisation, and until the mid-1930s little guidance was provided by the civilian staff in the Department of Defence. Faced with conflicting advice, the Australian Government looked to Britain for direction. There were few avenues by which the public could be exposed to the various arguments. Lavarack might have been better off pursuing a co-operative rather than confrontationist approach. But with the forces arrayed against him perhaps he would have achieved no more than he did.

Not all Army officers embraced the invasion theory with the same dedication as Lavarack, and his senior staff. One exception was Major General Sir Thomas Blamey, who as an unallotted militia officer attended meetings of the Council of Defence in the late 1930s. In December 1937 he told the Council that 'the Australian authorities responsible for the preparation of the defence scheme were to be congratulated on the efficacy of their plans'. However, the Minister for External Affairs, W.M. Hughes, the former Prime Minister who had for many years warned against the Japanese threat, 'raised the question of the impregnability of Singapore. He asked whether anyone could show that Singapore was impregnable or could be made so. If it proved to be vulnerable, and we were relying on Singapore to keep the enemy at a distance, we were certainly living in a fool's paradise.' Admiral Colvin assured him that 'the Empire Defence Scheme as prepared by the British Naval Authorities was based on the undoubted impregnability of Singapore, and that the British strategy was based on the fact that Singapore can hold out during the 70 days period, while awaiting the co-operation of the British Fleet'.<sup>43</sup>

At the next Council meeting in February 1938, Blamey said that it was reasonable 'to assume that invasion was unlikely and he felt that our efforts should be directed towards the provision of adequate defence against raids'. Lavarack replied that Japan was ready to take risks to undertake an invasion; but Blamey agreed with Colvin that Japan would have to deal with Singapore first.<sup>44</sup>

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43 'Summary of Proceedings of Council of Defence Meeting, 17th December 1937', NAA: A5954, 762/4.

44 'Summary of Proceedings of Council of Defence Meeting, 24th February 1938', NAA: A5954, 762/5.

It is not known what Shedden thought of Blamey's views, but he certainly would have found them more acceptable than those of Lavarack. At the next meeting in March 1939 Lavarack put aside his reservations about preparing just to defend against raids, and stated that 'even with the present low scale of efficiency of the Militia Forces, it should be sufficient to meet the scale of attack for defence against raids on the minimum scale'. Blamey retorted that in his view the militia 'in its present state of efficiency would be of little use against a raid of any size'. Lavarack quickly explained that 'the raid contemplated consisted of 200 men, and on that scale the force we have should be in sufficient numbers'. While that might have been correct, Blamey still thought that 'the militia Forces as at present constituted were practically useless as an army'.<sup>45</sup>

During these years Blamey delivered a series of broadcasts on international affairs. In a special broadcast on 9 November 1938 Blamey explained that Australia's vital area was in the triangle formed by Newcastle, Wollongong and Canberra, with Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Darwin also being important. The first line of defence lay with the Navy. He said that while there was 'a battle fleet at sea based upon Singapore ... a large scale invasion of Australia' was unlikely. However, it was 'very unwise to assume' that the battle fleet could not be defeated. So no nation could 'take the risk of remaining unprepared to meet invasion ... No Army can be made in a day or even in a year.'<sup>46</sup>

So in his public statements Blamey was careful not to enter too deeply into the argument between the Navy and the Army.

As war approached, Blamey's views about the possibility of invasion were not as dogmatic as Lavarack's, even though he expressed deep concern about the Army's readiness for war. It was not surprising, then, that the influential Shedden did all that he could to side-line Lavarack and to ensure that Blamey rather than Lavarack received command of the Second AIF when it was formed in October 1939.

With the immense advantage of hindsight we know that Japan did strike when Britain was pre-occupied in Europe—it struck in December 1941. Singapore proved to be vulnerable to a land attack and Britain

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45 'Summary of Proceedings of Council of Defence Meeting, 18th March 1938', NAA: A5954, 762/6.

46 The script is in AWM, PR 85/355, 8.

was unable to send its main fleet to its much vaunted Far East base. We also know that the existence of a main fleet did ultimately prevent the Japanese from invading Australia—only it was a United States main fleet, not a British main fleet. At the same time, the existence of a large army in Australia, based on the pre-war militia, made the Japanese think twice about sending any forces to land in Australia.

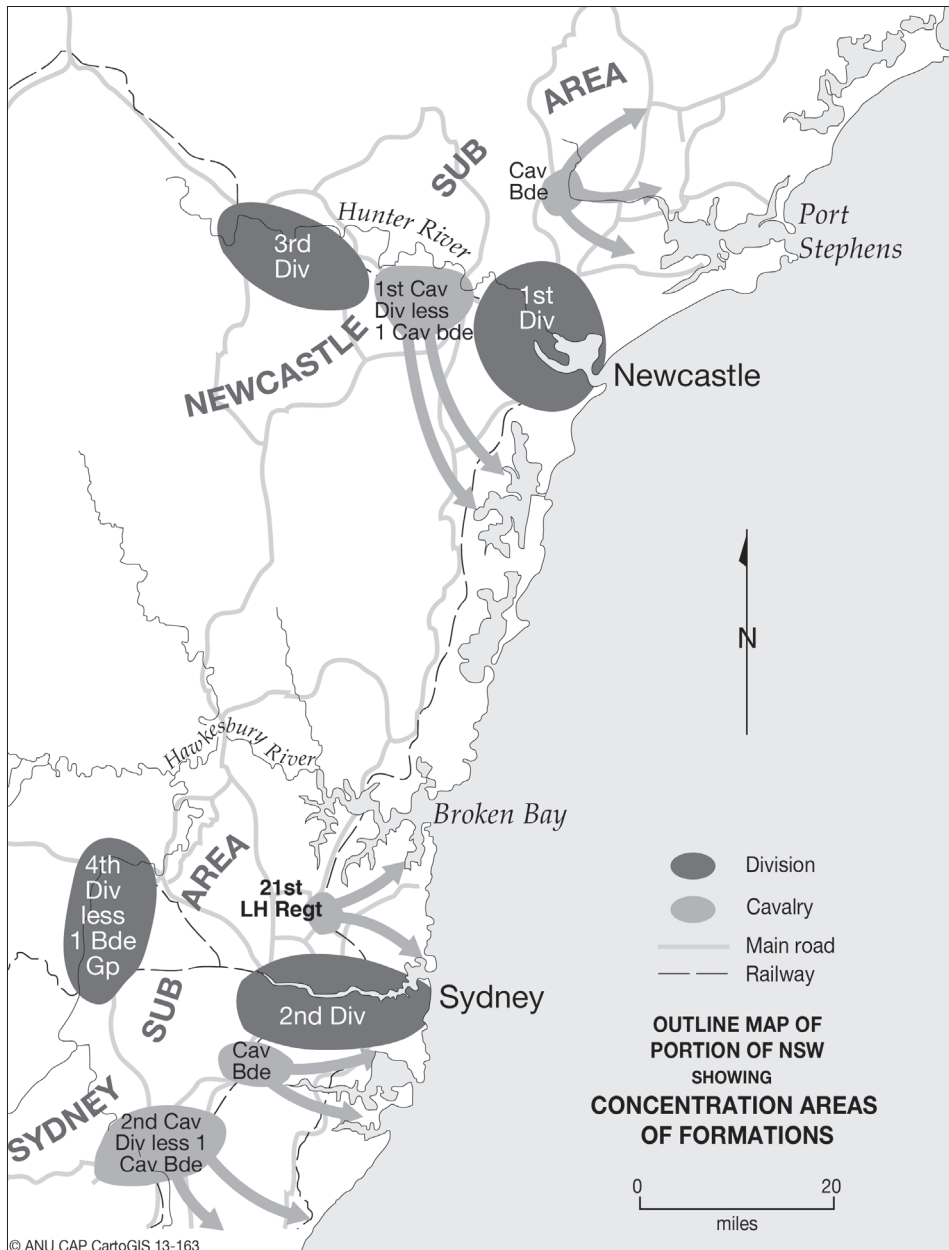
Also with the advantage of hindsight we know that Australia was best defended by deploying air force squadrons to bases in the islands to the north of Australia. These air bases needed to be defended by army units and supported and supplied by the Navy. Between 1941 and 1943 the defence of Australia was conducted in the maritime littoral environment to the north of the continent. There is no evidence that operations such as these were considered by Australian defence planners in the inter-war period. The Australian Army did not begin to install a coast battery at Port Moresby in the Australian territory of Papua until March 1939. The first troops to garrison Rabaul in the mandated territory of New Guinea did not arrive until March 1941. With a minuscule air force and no deployable land force Australian defence planners could not have contemplated such operations in the inter-war period, even if they wished to. But they were forced to conduct operations of just this nature at the end of 1941 and in 1942.

Between the wars, successive Australian governments had demonstrated a chronic lack of self-reliance.<sup>47</sup> There is, however, a strong argument that with a weak and faltering economy the Government had no option but to rely on Britain and the Singapore strategy. To its credit, in the late 1930s the Government started to manufacture munitions.<sup>48</sup> The Navy had followed without question, and to its own disadvantage, the wishes of the Admiralty. The RAAF was more concerned with self-preservation. Its efforts to expand were hampered by Australia's inability to purchase aircraft from Britain and the United States, which had higher priority customers for the delivery of their aircraft, even when money became available.

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47 For a more recent examination of this issue see Augustine Meaher IV, *The Road to Singapore: The Myth of British Betrayal* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010).

48 For an argument that this was a major achievement see A.T. Ross, *Armed & Ready: The Industrial Development & Defence of Australia, 1900-1945* (Sydney: Turton & Armstrong, 1995).



This map was attached to the Army's inter-war concentration plan and shows the divisional and brigade concentration areas in the Sydney and Newcastle areas. It has been slightly re-drawn as the original showed the cavalry formation areas in green and the infantry division areas in red.

The original map is in AWM 54, 243/6/6.

Only the Army put forward a reasoned, independently-developed policy, and this policy had its weaknesses. Had it been more successful with its efforts to develop a smaller, more mobile, better equipped force, the Army might have been better prepared for its early tasks in the Second World War. The Government could at least have changed the *Defence Act* to allow the formation of a proper Regular Army. At the outbreak of the Second World War the Regular Army was pathetically small—fewer than 4000 in number. In 1952 Gavin Long wrote that ‘in 1939 the now-adult nation possessed an army little different in essentials from that of the young Australia of 1914. It was fundamentally a defensive force intended if war broke out to go to its stations or man the coastal forts and await the arrival of an invader. History has proved and was to prove again the futility of such a military policy.’<sup>49</sup> More than sixty years later that still seems a fair conclusion.

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49 Gavin Long, *To Benghazi*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1952. p. 32.

# The IJA, IJN and Japanese Strategy for the South Pacific/SWPA

*Hiroyuki Shindo*

## **Introduction**

For the first several months after the opening of the Pacific War, the Japanese military forces may have seemed like a monolithic juggernaut to its opponents, as it overran Southeast Asia and large areas of the western Pacific Ocean. In reality, however, it was anything but a monolithic entity, since the strategic orientation and focus of the Imperial Japanese Army differed from those of the Navy. The Army viewed the fighting against the Americans in the Pacific Ocean as 'the Navy's responsibility', and did not fully commit itself at the strategic level to the war in the Pacific Ocean area until more than a year after Pearl Harbor.

This essay will not discuss Japan's wartime maritime strategy per se, but rather how the Imperial Japanese Navy's strategy drew the Imperial Japanese Army into a war into a geographical region, the South Pacific, and an opponent, the United States, neither of which the Army had thought about in its war planning, and what problems this caused for the Army.

## **The Initial Strategy: the 'Southern Operations' or 'First Stage Operations'**

Japan had already been at war in China for three years when, for various reasons, it adopted a national policy in July 1940 which called for an expansion into Southeast Asia. To a great extent, this was an opportunistic reaction to developments in Europe, where the Germans had defeated the French and Dutch in their May 1940 offensive, and seemed to be on the verge of defeating the British as well. This situation seemingly created a power vacuum in Southeast Asia, where the French, Dutch and British had extensive colonies. Planners of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy felt that Japan should take advantage of this opportunity to expand its influence into the resource-rich area of Southeast Asia, which would give Japan greater self-sufficiency in its war with China.



This marked an important shift in the strategic focus of the Army, which had not historically been interested in Southeast Asia. Since at least the early 20th Century, the Army's primary hypothetical enemy was Imperial Russia, and, later, the Soviet Union. The Army accordingly focused on operations against the Soviet Army on the Asian mainland, in particular in Manchuria, in its war plans. The Navy's main hypothetical enemy was the United States: it viewed the Pacific as its responsibility and developed plans for a decisive fleet engagement against the American Navy in the central Pacific.

The Army initially felt its primary role in the Pacific War was to defeat the British in Southeast Asia, which it believed would contribute to Chiang Kai-shek's defeat in the ongoing war in China. Decisions concerning operations in the Pacific Ocean area east of the Philippines were essentially left to the Navy. The Navy asked for a minimal amount of assistance from the Army in the Pacific, which was given in the form of the South Seas Detachment. This consisted of the 144th Infantry Brigade of the 55th Division, along with various attached units, and was approximately the size of a brigade. The South Seas Detachment led the assaults on Guam, Rabaul, and Lae, but otherwise the Army initially did not actively participate in operations in the Pacific Ocean.

Japan's initial military strategy for fighting the Pacific War received Imperial approval on 5 November 1941.<sup>1</sup> The strategy called for the quick occupation of the strategic points held by the British, Americans, and Dutch throughout Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean, including Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, Guam, and Wake Island, after which a 'long-term impregnable position' would be established which encompassed the newly occupied areas. The British would be forced to capitulate, with assistance from the Germans in the form of an invasion of the British home islands, and the Americans would be forced to lose their will to keep fighting. The operations which were based upon this strategy were called the 'Southern Operations' by the Army, and the 'First Stage Operations' by the Navy.

Major differences between the Army and Navy concerning strategy did not surface during the planning and execution of these initial operations, because the Army and Navy were largely in agreement regarding the immediate strategy and operational goals of this stage of

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1 Takushirō Hattori, *Dai-tōa Sensō Zenshi* [Complete History of the Great East Asia War] (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1965), 180-1.

the war. In other words, the Army and Navy agreed that the Southern Resources Area had to be swiftly occupied, culminating in the occupation of Java.

With respect to operations in the South Pacific, the Army initially objected when the Navy wished to include Rabaul in its list of objectives. The Navy felt Rabaul needed to be taken in order to protect Truk, its great base in the central Pacific, from air attacks. The Army was concerned that an assault on Rabaul would require the Navy to extend itself beyond its operational capabilities. In the end, however, the Army voiced agreement to the Navy's plans to assault Rabaul.<sup>2</sup>

The Army and Navy also had debated whether to start operations in Southeast Asia with the 'right hook', or a drive through Malaya, which the Army preferred, or the 'left hook', favoured by the Navy, which was a drive through the Philippines and Borneo. The debate was settled by an agreement to conduct both drives simultaneously, because the defenders of both areas would have less time to prepare for the offensives, and because a simultaneous, twin-pronged advance on Java might keep the Allies more off balance.<sup>3</sup> The 'right hook' operations, however, were given relatively more weight. The 25th Army, which was responsible for driving down the Malay Peninsula and assaulting Singapore, was given the best infantry divisions for its task (5th, 18th and 1st Guards Infantry Divisions), while the 14th Army, responsible for capturing the Philippines, was given only two divisions (16th and 48th Infantry Divisions), one of which, the 48th, was scheduled to be reassigned to the 16th Army in early March for the assault on Java.

However, differences between the Army and Navy, and within the Navy itself, did become a problem when Japanese planners tried to formulate their strategy for continuing the war after the conclusion of the 'Southern Operations' or 'First Stage Operations'. The Army argued for a change to the strategic defensive, while the Navy urged a continuation of the strategic offensive.

The Army wanted to follow the strategy of 5 November 1941 and adopt the strategic defensive. It felt that Japan should not expand its operations into areas which would overextend its supply lines, and that

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2 Ibid., 151.

3 Ibid.

the newly occupied areas had to be consolidated quickly in preparation for the inevitable American counteroffensive.<sup>4</sup> Military action related to the Pacific War would be continued only to the extent of continuing a westward advance towards India, which, in conjunction with a German invasion of the British home islands, would force the British to capitulate. The Army continued to give primacy to its war in China and preparations for the war against the Soviet Union. In fact, as of December 1941, the Army had committed only nine of its 51 divisions to the Pacific War, while 21 divisions were still in China and thirteen in Manchuria.<sup>5</sup> The Army intended to reorganise its force deployment after the conclusion of the Southern Operations, by withdrawing a number of its divisions committed to Southeast Asia and either redeploying them to China and Manchuria, or returning them to Japan, where they would be demobilised and the manpower used in industry.<sup>6</sup> The Army thus clearly was not thinking about expanding its commitment to the Pacific War after the completion of the Southern Operations.

On the other hand, the Navy wished to maintain the initiative and continue the strategic offensive, especially against the Americans.<sup>7</sup> Even before the debate regarding what strategy to pursue after the spring of 1942 had intensified, the Navy had been expanding the war into the South Pacific. Rabaul had been one of the objectives given in the 5 November operations plan, and was captured on 23 January. As mentioned above, Rabaul had to be taken in order to secure Truk. Shortly after the Pearl Harbor operation, the Navy determined that Port Moresby needed to be taken as well, in order to ensure Rabaul's security. On 2 February 1942, the Army and Navy Sections of the Imperial General Headquarters issued orders to the Army and Navy, respectively, to prepare for an assault on Port Moresby.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this interest in Port Moresby, the Naval General Staff began to think about an invasion of Australia, to prevent the Americans from using it as a base from which it could launch a counter-offensive

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4 Ibid., 297-8.

5 Ibid., 194-5.

6 Kumao Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi* [Operations Diary of the Great East Asia War] (Tokyo: Fuyō Shobō, 1998), 315-16.

7 Hattori, *Dai-tōa Sensō Zenshi*, 298.

8 Ibid., 299.

against the Southern Resources Area. The Naval General Staff discussed this possibility with the Army in January and February 1942, and the Army refused to agree to such an operation because it would require the commitment of ten to twelve Army divisions.<sup>9</sup> However, the Army did agree with the Naval General Staff's logic regarding the need to neutralise Australia, and an agreement was reached to carry out Operation FS, which entailed the use of a total of approximately three brigades to occupy Fiji, Samoa, and the New Hebrides for the purpose of cutting the lines of communication between America and Australia.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the Combined Fleet had been proposing another axis of operations. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, strongly felt that the Americans must not be given a respite which would enable them to fully mobilise their industrial strength and rebuild their military forces preparatory to launching a massive counter-offensive against Japan. He therefore strongly proposed the adoption of a 'Continuous Decisive Battle Policy', in which Japan would maintain the strategic initiative and continuously carry out major offensives against the Americans, in order to keep them on the defensive. Yamamoto further felt that the remnants of the American Pacific Fleet which had survived Pearl Harbor had to be drawn into a decisive battle and destroyed. He argued that both objectives could be attained by adopting an axis of operations in the direction of Midway and Hawaii.<sup>11</sup>

The outcome of these deliberations was Japan's strategy for the next period of the war, which was approved on 7 March 1942 by the IGHQ-Government Liaison Conference. The objective still was to force the British to capitulate and the Americans to lose their will to fight, and this was to be achieved by 'expanding the military accomplishments already attained, and implementing active measures if the opportunity arises, while a long-term, impregnable political and military position is established'.<sup>12</sup> This was not even a compromise between the Army and the

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9 Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Minami Taiheiyō Rikugun Sakusen (1) Pōto Moresubi Ga-tō Shoki Sakusen* [Army Operations in the South Pacific, vol. 1: Early Operations against Port Moresby and Guadalcanal] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1968), 126-8.

10 Ibid., 137. Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Dai-Honei Rikugunbu (4) Shōwa 17 nen 8 gatsu made* [Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters, vol. 4: Until August 1942] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1968), 55.

11 Hattori, *Dai-tōa Sensō Zenshi*, 298.

12 Ibid., 294.

Navy, but rather the simultaneous listing of two, potentially conflicting strategies. The Army and Navy could not settle their debate over whether to continue the strategic offensive or switch to the strategic defensive, and so both were written into the new strategy. As a result, the Army felt it had the authority to continue with its plans to consolidate its hold on the Southern Resources Area, based on the final clause of the portion quoted above, and shift its focus back to China and the Soviet Union. In turn, the Navy felt the first two clauses of the quoted section gave it permission to maintain pressure on the Americans and expand the area of fighting further into the South Pacific and towards Hawaii.<sup>13</sup>

One of the major structural reasons why the Army and Navy were unable to reconcile, to a greater degree, their differences over military strategy was the absence of a truly effective commander-in-chief of the Japanese armed forces. The Emperor could conceivably have played this role, since, under Japan's Meiji Constitution, he had the prerogative of military command and both service chiefs of staff reported directly to him. However, the Emperor was constrained by custom to playing a more passive role. The 'Imperial General Headquarters' was a temporary wartime organisation, the latest version having been established in 1937, and was nothing like a true combined general staff organisation. The IGHQ Army Section was essentially a renaming of the Army General Staff. The same was true of the IGHQ Navy Section and the Naval General Staff. There was also no separate physical facility which could be called the IGHQ and where the Army and Navy Sections worked in proximity to each other.<sup>14</sup> There was no IGHQ commander-in-chief or chief of staff, nor were there any unified orders, such as an 'IGHQ Order No. 1'. The IGHQ Army and Navy sections each issued their respective orders to the Army and Navy. The Army and Naval General Staffs negotiated with each other whenever there was a need to coordinate operations or decide upon overall strategy. When successful, the negotiations resulted in an 'Army-Navy Central Agreement', or, when negotiated at the operational level, an 'Army-Navy Local Agreement'. These were agreements which, at best, resulted in some degree of combined operations, but never in a joint command or joint operations.

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13 Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi*, 133

14 Takashi Itō and Takashi Momose (eds), *Jiten Shōwa Sen-zen-ki no Nihon: Seido to Jittai* [Encyclopedia of Japan in the Prewar Showa Period: Institutions and the Reality] (Tokyo: Kikkawa Kōbunkan, 1990), 262.

In accordance with the March 1942 strategy, the Army continued with its plans to downsize its forces in the South, and to plan another major offensive in China. Meanwhile, the Navy continued its preparations for Operation FS, and launched Operations MO, the seaborne assault of Port Moresby in May. While the successful occupation of Tulagi on 3 May enabled the Navy to establish a foothold in the lower Solomons, the Japanese defeat in the Battle of the Coral Sea led to the cancellation of MO. One month later, the Navy suffered a much more serious defeat at Midway. The Navy's loss of offensive capability at Midway led first to the postponement and, in July, the cancellation of Operation FS. The Navy thus lost the initiative which it had tried to maintain by adhering to the strategic offensive.

Loss of initiative notwithstanding, the Navy kept thinking in offensive terms, and next attempted to strengthen its position in the Solomons by continuing with its plans to construct an airfield on Guadalcanal, and renewing the assault on Port Moresby. This time, the Army agreed to an overland assault. The Army's commitment remained relatively small, however, since the assault would be made with South Seas Detachment, along with one regiment which became available due to the cancellation of Operation FS. The Japanese began their renewed effort with a landing at Buna on 20 July, and began advancing south along the Kokoda Track.

Shortly afterwards, however, on 7 August, the Americans began a counter-offensive by landing the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal. Thereafter, Japan's strategic situation began to deteriorate steadily. The Navy steadily lost control of the air and sea around Guadalcanal, and two major attempts to retake Henderson Field failed, in late August and September.

The Navy found itself in increasingly dire straits, and began to ask the Army for help, in the air as well as on the ground. While the Army committed increasingly large ground forces to Guadalcanal, it initially resisted the Navy's appeal for Army air forces, which began as early as late August. Following the failure of the 2nd Infantry Division to retake Henderson Field in late October, the Army's operations staff finally fully realised the seriousness of the situation, and the Army General Staff decided in November not only to send additional ground forces to Guadalcanal, but also to commit Army air forces to the South Pacific for the first time in the war.

The Guadalcanal campaign drastically affected the Army's strategy over the next few months and beyond. First, the Army had to steadily increase its commitment of major ground forces to the South Pacific. Until mid-November, the ground units committed to New Guinea and Guadalcanal were already in the Pacific Ocean area (for example, the South Seas Detachment and Ichiki Detachment), were scheduled to be used in Operation FS (the Kawaguchi Detachment, for example), or were on occupation duty in the Southern Resources area (the 2nd and 38th Infantry Divisions). After mid-November 1942, however, the Army drafted plans to draw the 51st, 20th, 41st, 6th and somewhat later, the 17th Infantry Divisions from the Asian mainland and elsewhere and deploy them in New Guinea, the Solomons and New Britain.

In addition, the increasingly serious situation on Guadalcanal affected Army operations elsewhere. In September, after first ordering a halt, the Army ordered the South Seas Detachment to withdraw northwards, from its most forward positions just thirty miles from Port Moresby. In November, the Army cancelled its planned offensive in China.

Next, the Army began deploying Army air forces to the South Pacific for the first time. The only major Army air formation committed to the Pacific War until then was the 3rd Air Army, which had taken part in the Malay and Java operations and was conducting air operations over Burma. The 6th Air Division and other air forces which were sent to the South Pacific, starting in November 1942, were transferred from Manchuria and Korea, which meant a weakening of Army capabilities in what had been considered a strategically more vital area.

Third, the Army strengthened its command and control structure in the South Pacific in November. On 26 November, the Army activated 8th Area Army and 18th Army, both with headquarters in Rabaul. The 17th Army, which had controlled operations on both New Guinea and Guadalcanal, had been the highest Army command in the South Pacific. Along with the commitment of major air forces, the establishment of an area army headquarters indicated that the Army was making a greater commitment at the strategic level to the South Pacific.<sup>15</sup>

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15 It should be noted that the Japanese Army did not have a 'corps' in its hierarchy. A Japanese 'Army' is roughly equivalent in size to an American 'corps,' and an 'area army' is approximately the size of an American 'Army'.

Fourth, to support these efforts, the Army began establishing its own lines of communication from the Southern Resources area to Rabaul from late 1942, by newly establishing or enlarging its bases at Madang, Wewak, Hollandia, and other locations along the northern New Guinea coastline. Previously, the Army had used the Navy's LOC to Rabaul, which ran eastwards from Davao through the Palaus to Truk, then southwards to Rabaul. This largely overwater route had created various difficulties for the Army. For example, Army pilots were not adequately trained to navigate over areas which were bereft of any landmarks, such as large expanses of ocean. On occasion, entire formations of Army planes became disoriented and had to make forced landings at sea, or simply disappeared.

Finally, and possibly most significant from a strategic perspective, the Army finally recognised the Americans as Japan's primary enemy. Until then, the Army had continued to emphasise the primacy of the Soviet Union as the enemy in its planning, although it had also continued to place great importance on the effort against China and, within the context of the Pacific War, Great Britain. For example, it was not until 1943 that the Army stressed that the military forces and operations of the United States rather than the Soviet Union would be the primary focus of research and education in its various schools.<sup>16</sup>

The Army's lateness to recognise the Americans as its primary enemy helps to explain many of the problems the Army subsequently faced in the South and Central Pacific. The Army's organisation, doctrine, equipment, structure, training, and other aspects had been developed over the years with the sole purpose of fighting the Soviet Army in Manchuria, and thus were not suitable in many ways for a war against the Americans, or for the geographical conditions peculiar to the Central and South Pacific. For example, the Army previously had never seriously considered how islands should be defended against amphibious assault.<sup>17</sup> It was not until 1 October 1943 that the IGHQ Army Section produced a draft proposal of a manual on doctrine and tactics for defending coral atolls, which was

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16 Takeshi Hoshikawa (ed.), *Rekishi Gunzō Shiriizu Taiheiyo Sensō 5: Shōmōsen Soromon Nyūginia no Shitō* [Sculpture of History, the Pacific War, vol. 5: War of Attrition: Battles to the Death in the Solomons and New Guinea] (Tokyo: Gakken Publishing, 2009), 19.

17 Edward J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 241.



followed by a draft proposal by the Education Bureau on doctrine and tactics for island garrisons, produced on 15 November.<sup>18</sup>

The Navy for its part was not much better prepared to fight an amphibious war in the Pacific. The Navy was heavily influenced by Mahanian thought and, more directly, by its overwhelming victory at Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War. The Navy's primary mission historically had been to fight a decisive fleet engagement with the main battle fleet of the Americans, and its doctrine, tactics, weapons, organisation, training, and other aspects were all developed toward this purpose. The Navy had not considered the defence of islands against amphibious assault very carefully before the war, or even after the war began.

There was one admiral in the Navy who accurately predicted in the spring of 1941 that a future war with the Americans would be a protracted war involving the taking and defending of island bases. Shigeyoshi Inoue, then chief of the Navy Ministry's Naval Aviation Department, felt that advances in aeronautical and submarine technology had rendered capital ships obsolete, denounced the Navy's escalating efforts to compete with the Americans in constructing battleships, and recommended that the Navy stop further such construction, scrap all of its existing capital ships, including its aircraft carriers, which he felt were too vulnerable, and pour all of its resources into the strengthening of its land-based naval air forces and the establishment of a powerful escort fleet. Inoue felt that a powerful capability in land-based naval air and surface escorts was absolutely necessary and also sufficient to fight an amphibious war, and that the Navy should not squander resources on the building and maintaining of a fleet of battleships, aircraft carriers, and other capital ships.<sup>19</sup>

Inoue submitted his proposal directly to Admiral Koshirō Oikawa, the Navy Minister, who promptly shelved it, and nothing more was heard of it. Inoue himself reflected after the war that his plan may have been effectively ignored because his timing had not been right; after all, he was

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18 'Sango Tōsho no Bōgyo (Dai-ichi An)' [Defence of Coral Islands (First Proposal)], archives of the NIDS Library, National Institute for Defence Studies, Tokyo (hereafter NIDS Archives). *Tōsho Shubi Butai Sentō Kyōrei (An)* [Instruction Manual for Combat by Island Defence Forces (Proposal)], NIDS Archives.

19 Inoue Shigeyoshi Denki Kankō-kai [Association for the Publication of Shigeyoshi Inoue's Biography], *Inoue Shigeyoshi* (Tokyo: Inoue Shigeyoshi Denki Kankō-kai, 1982), Appendix, 126-35.

the chief of the Naval Aviation Department, and he felt the Navy's big-gun faction suspected him of sectionalism by promoting naval aviation.<sup>20</sup> This episode is noteworthy because it was the only example of a proposal by a high-ranking officer in the Navy which showed an understanding at the strategic level of what a war with the Americans would look like, and the refusal within the Navy as a whole to seriously consider such a possibility.<sup>21</sup>

The Army thus came to commit itself at a strategic level to the war in the South Pacific from late 1942, even as it agreed to withdraw from Guadalcanal. The decisive factor which led to Japan's decision to withdraw from Guadalcanal was a lack of shipping to support operations. How to allocate Japan's merchant shipping among the Army and Navy and the civilian sector was a recurring issue which ultimately was not solved. The Army and Navy required a certain amount of shipping to meet its immediate operational needs, while the civilian sector required a certain level of shipping to support Japan's industrial production as it mobilised further in what was becoming an increasingly protracted war. This led to repeated clashes between the Army and Navy general staffs and General Hideki Tojo, who in his position as Prime Minister and concurrently Army Minister was responsible for meeting Japan's long-term industrial needs. The first major clash came in November 1942, and led to the relief of the Operations Department and Section chiefs, and opened the way for the Japanese withdrawal from Guadalcanal.<sup>22</sup> The allocation of available shipping would continue to be a problem for the Japanese to the end of the war.

### **The Search for a Defensive Strategy**

The twin defeats at Guadalcanal and Buna forced the Japanese Army and Navy to rethink their strategy in the South Pacific, and, more broadly, their strategy for the entire war.

As mentioned above, the Army had already begun responding at the strategic level to the changing situation in the South Pacific. As the campaigns at Guadalcanal and Buna drew to a close, the Army

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20 Ibid., 294.

21 David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 486.

22 Hattori, *Dai-tōa Sensō Zenshi*, 354-6.

designated New Guinea the next primary area of operations in the South Pacific. New Guinea was chosen because the Army recognised that the loss of New Guinea would create a strategically dangerous situation, by exposing the southeastern corner of the Southern Resources Area to an American advance.<sup>23</sup> Institutional interest was also a factor, since the greater land mass of New Guinea seemed to offer greater opportunities for ground operations, which would give the Army a greater voice in the formulation of strategy and operations.<sup>24</sup> In comparison, any campaign in the Solomons would mean a larger role, and correspondingly larger voice, for the Navy. In addition, the Army General Staff had to respond to a comment by the Emperor, who informed the Army and Naval Chiefs of Staff that 'the Army Chief of Staff said that he would report to me around the 30th (of December) whether there would be a withdrawal or not (from Guadalcanal), but I cannot be satisfied with only such a report. What I want to know is how the enemy is going to be defeated.'<sup>25</sup> The Army's Operations Division took this to mean that the Emperor would not be satisfied with a mere withdrawal from Guadalcanal, and wanted an offensive somewhere. The Operations staff therefore decided to make their next major effort in New Guinea.<sup>26</sup>

The Army determined that the defence of the Lae -Salamaua area would be vital to their efforts in New Guinea, and decided to send three divisions (the 20th, 41st and 51st Infantry Divisions) to New Guinea. However, since the Japanese were rapidly losing air and naval superiority in the Huon Gulf, the Army decided to deploy only the 51st Division directly to Lae, and to land the 20th and 41st Divisions further to the west, at Madang and Wewak, considered to be out of the reach of allied air power. These two divisions would then move eastward to Lae, either overland, or by small ships and barges, along the northern coast of New Guinea. Thereafter, 8th Area Army and 18th Army struggled with the problem of how to adequately supply and reinforce their positions around Lae.

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23 Ibid., p. 407. Hiromi Tanaka, *Makasah to tatakatta Nihongun: Nyuginia-sen no kiroku* [The Japanese Forces That Fought with MacArthur: A Record of the New Guinea Campaign] (Tokyo: Yumani Shobo, 2009), 130.

24 Hattori, *Dai-tōa Sensō Zenshi*, 407.

25 *Dai-Honei Rikugunbu* (5), 561.

26 Boeichō Bōei Kenshusho Senshishitu (ed.), *Dai-Honei Rikugunbu* (6) *Shōwa 18 nen 6 gatsu made* [Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters, vol. 6: Until June 1943] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1973), 28.

This problem became especially acute after the disastrous Battle of the Bismarck Sea on 3 March 1943, after which the Japanese abandoned the use of large convoys to send reinforcements to Lae, and instead resorted to small ships and barges.

8th Area Army and 18th Army naturally had a better understanding of the increasingly dire situation in New Guinea than the Army General Staff in Tokyo. A renewed assault on Port Moresby was still the final objective in the operational orders issued by the Army General Staff to 8th Area Army, at least on paper.<sup>27</sup> However, as Kumao Imoto, a staff officer with the 8th Area Army, wrote in the spring of 1943, 8th Area Army was fully preoccupied with simply maintaining its current forces in the field, and there were no discussions about planning offensive operations aimed at destroying the enemy, let alone a renewed attack on Port Moresby.<sup>28</sup>

Even before that, Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura, 8th Area Army commander-in-chief, recognised the seriousness of Japan's logistical situation in the South Pacific. Imamura had assumed command of the 8th Area Army and arrived in Rabaul on 22 November 1942. He quickly realised that the steady worsening of Japan's air and naval power relative to that of the Americans could mean that supply ships would not be able to approach Rabaul before long, and that the Japanese forces under his command had to devise a means of procuring items such as food, ammunition, and pharmaceuticals, before it could attempt to carry out its operational orders of 'securing strategically vital areas' of New Guinea. Imamura therefore ordered his forces to prepare to be self-sufficient, and on 1 May 1943, the Army forces around Rabaul began cultivating farming plots in earnest.<sup>29</sup>

Imamura further believed that the Army and Navy forces in the South Pacific had to cooperate not only in the planning and conducting of operations, but also in their farming and other efforts at self-sufficiency. Staff officers of the 8th Fleet still believed in the superiority of the Navy's

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27 Ibid., 33, 260.

28 Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi*, 418-9.

29 Shuhei Dōmon, *Rikugun Taishō Imamura Hitoshi* [Army General Hitoshi Imamura] (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyusho, 2003), 360-2. Fusako Tsunoda, *Sekinin: Rabaul no Shōgun Imamura Hitoshi* [Responsibility: Hitoshi Imamura, Generalissimo of Rabaul] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1989), 321-4.

air and surface forces, however, and rebuffed the efforts by 8th Area Army to discuss the danger of Rabaul's supply lines being cut. 8th Area Army therefore began its efforts to attain self-sufficiency on its own, and it was not until 1 June 1944 that Southeast Area Fleet headquarters issued its guidelines for establishing a system for logistical self-sufficiency and seriously began undertaking efforts to produce their own food and other essential items.<sup>30</sup>

As this example shows, the Navy seemingly had a harder time than the Army in recognising that the balance of military power vis-à-vis the Americans was steadily shifting in favour of the Americans. The Navy thus was reluctant to shift to the strategic defensive, and continued its fixation on the holding of forward areas and to think offensively in terms of strategy and operations.

Following the withdrawal from Guadalcanal, the Navy insisted on holding New Georgia and contesting the Central Solomons, whereas the Army General Staff urged a withdrawal to the Northern Solomons, specifically Bougainville. The Navy wished to hold a line as far away from Rabaul as possible, while the Army General Staff wanted to avoid a repeat of the Guadalcanal campaign, in which the Japanese had to fight an extended campaign on an island at the end of an extended and exposed supply line. Meanwhile, 8th Area Army headquarters recognised that a forward defence in the Central Solomons was more advantageous, given local geographic conditions, and sided with the Navy. In an Army-Navy Central Agreement dated 4 January 1943, the two services compromised by agreeing that the Navy could defend New Georgia with its Naval Landing Forces, while the Army's 6th Infantry Division would garrison Bougainville. The Army would provide minimal support to the defence of New Georgia, in the form of three battalions.<sup>31</sup> Imoto noted after the war that 'it was irrational and impossible for the Army and Navy to tactically defend the same front while being responsible for different areas of defence'.<sup>32</sup>

In its 'Third Stage Operations Plan', approved on 25 March 1943, the Navy stated that its objective still was the destruction of the enemy's

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30 Tsunoda, *Sekinin*, 322.

31 *Dai-Honei Rikugunbu* (6), 32-3.

32 Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi*, 350.

fleet and forward bases.<sup>33</sup> The Naval General Staff recognised that the Navy lacked the capability for further major offensive operations along Japan's defensive perimeter, and decided that only tactical offensives aimed at wearing down the enemy would be conducted if the opportunity presented itself.<sup>34</sup> However, the Navy remained committed to the holding of forward areas because it continued to emphasise the holding of Rabaul and Truk, its major and mutually supporting bases in the Central and South Pacific. If Rabaul and Truk were to continue functioning as major naval bases which could support the 'decisive fleet battle', to be fought somewhere around the Marshalls, the 'front line' or defensive perimeter necessarily had to lie some distance away.<sup>35</sup> Specifically, this meant that the defensive perimeter had to be drawn through the Marshalls, Gilberts, and Central Solomons.

Meanwhile, the Army drew upon the lessons learned through the defeats at Guadalcanal, Buna, and Attu in the Aleutians, and during the first half of 1943 increasingly came to believe that the defensive perimeter should be withdrawn to areas which would be more within Japan's logistical capability. After a series of studies held on 5 and 6 June, however, the Operations Division of the Army General Staff determined that such a withdrawal could not be made at that time, because, among others, Japan lacked the shipping capacity necessary to pull back the units needed to man any new defensive line.<sup>36</sup>

The renewal of the American offensive in the Solomons in late June, and the American landings at Nassau Bay, which reinforced the ongoing Australian pressure on Salamaua, led to an increasingly critical situation in both areas and a renewal of discussions of whether the front line should be withdrawn. By mid-July, the Army General Staff had generally reached a consensus that such a withdrawal was necessary, but still could not

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33 Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Dai-Honei Kaigunbu Rengo Kantai (4) Dai San-dan Sakusen Zenki* [Navy Section, Imperial General Headquarters, and Combined Fleet, vol. 4: Third Stage Operations, Early Period] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1970), 40.

34 *Ibid.*, 47.

35 Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi*, 486.

36 'Sanada Shōshō Nikki Tekiroku Sono 2' [Abridged Record of Major General Sanada's Diary No. 2], NIDS Archives. Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Dai-Honei Rikugunbu (7) Shōwa 18 nen 12 gatsu made* [Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters, vol. 7: Until December 1943] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1968), 139-42. *Dai-Honei Rikugunbu (6)*, 565-8.

decide on the specific location of the new defensive line.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the Navy was still thinking largely in offensive terms, and seeking a decisive battle as late as 15 August, when Admiral Mineichi Koga, who succeeded Yamamoto as commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet upon the latter's death on April 18, finally issued the 'Third Stage Operations Plan of the Combined Fleet', which were based upon the IGHQ Navy Section's 'Third Stage Operations Plan' mentioned above.<sup>38</sup> A decision was finally forced by the Emperor, who pointedly asked General Hajime Sugiyama, Army Chief of Staff, on 5 August, when Sugiyama reported on the operational situation, just where the decisive battle which had been promised to him so many times would actually be fought.<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that the Emperor was voicing his dissatisfaction with the Navy rather than the Army, for the former's seeming indecisiveness and inability to force a decisive battle.

Due in part to this pressure from the Emperor to make a decision, the Army and Navy finally reached an agreement by 24 August to go on the strategic defensive.<sup>40</sup> This strategy became known as the 'Absolute National Defence Zone' concept, because the new defensive perimeter encompassed areas which were deemed to be vital for the defence of the Japanese Empire. The line ran from the Kuriles southwards through the Marianas and Truk, then down the centre of New Guinea, before curving westwards. Western New Guinea was included in the Absolute Zone, while the Marshalls, Gilberts, Rabaul, the Solomons, and Eastern New Guinea were excluded. The Army had initially wanted to exclude Truk as well, but ultimately included it when the Navy insisted on it. The new defensive strategy called for forces outside of this line, primarily meaning the 8th Area Army engaged in fighting in the Solomons and at Salamaua, to carry out holding operations or fight a war of attrition and to buy time for Japan to build up its forces. The emphasis was on a buildup of air power. It was determined that this would require approximately one year,

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37 Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi*, 459.

38 *Dai-Honei Kaigunbu Rengo Kantai* (4), 437-50.

39 Akira Yamada, *Shōwa Tennō no Gunji Shisō to Senryaku* [Military Ideology and Strategy of the Showa Emperor] (Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 2002), 248-9.

40 Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Minami Taiheiyō Rikugun Sakusen* (3) *Munda-Saramoa* [Army Operations in the South Pacific vol. 3: Munda and Salamaua] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1970), 519.

at which point Japan would switch to the offensive and launch a decisive counter-offensive against the Americans at some point along the new defensive perimeter.

The new operations guidance policy under this strategy was formally approved on 24 September 1943, and incorporated into a new 'Guidelines for the Future Conduct of the War', which was formally adopted along with a new 'Estimate of the World Situation' on 30 September 1943.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Fate of the 'Absolute National Defence Zone' concept**

Japan had thus adopted the strategic defensive, and the Army finally agreed with the Navy that the Americans were the main enemy, and the South Pacific the decisive theatre, and that Japan needed to shift to fighting a protracted war, as opposed to a decisive war. However, this strategy collapsed just ten months later, for the following reasons.

First, the Army and Navy were late in adopting the new strategy, by a half year or more.<sup>42</sup> The new strategy called for the forces in the forward line to hold out for at least a year, during which a new defensive perimeter would be established to the rear. By September 1943, the 18th Army was already too weak to hold out in eastern New Guinea until late 1944, and the 'rearward defensive perimeter' became the front line in both New Guinea and the Central Pacific before defensive preparations could be adequately carried out. In New Guinea, the remnants of the 51st Division were withdrawing from Salamaua and Lae even as the new strategy was being approved, and by early 1943, the Japanese had lost control of the Vitiaz and Dampier straits. 18th Army had three divisions deployed at various points along the coastline from Lae to Madang, in various degrees of strength, but was never able to concentrate all three in a decisive area, because Japan had lost control of the seas and the air in the area.

The Navy, too, was unable to take advantage of the opportunity created by the American assaults of the Gilberts and Marshalls to fight its long-cherished 'decisive battle', because it was too weak at those critical times when a decisive battle might have been forced. The carrier air forces, which had been reconstituted after the losses they had suffered

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41 The term 'Absolute National Defence Zone' was never used as a formal title of the new policy. The Army formally referred to the new policy as the 'New Operations Guidance Policy'.

42 Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi*, 486-7.



during Operation I in April 1943, were committed to Operation RO that November, to counter the American assault on Bougainville. A total of 173 aircraft (82 fighters, 45 dive bombers, 40 level [torpedo] bombers and six reconnaissance aircraft) of the 1st Carrier Division were sent to Rabaul, to reinforce the land-based air forces, and in a series of air battles off Bougainville from 2 to 11 November, 50 per cent of its aircrews and fighters, and 85-90 per cent of its dive and torpedo bombers were lost.<sup>43</sup> The losses suffered during that campaign prevented the carrier fleet from playing any meaningful role in the Gilberts and Marshalls campaigns. As for the surface forces, four heavy cruisers were seriously damaged in Rabaul by air attack on 5 November 1943, which amounted to about one-third of the Navy's heavy cruiser force, and this was a factor in keeping the surface forces out of action during the Gilberts and Marshalls campaigns.

The Navy's land-based air forces in the Central Pacific assumed greater importance for the Japanese as the balance of carrier-based air power shifted steadily in favour of the Americans, and by mid-1944 should have numbered approximately 1600 aircraft at full strength. However, these suffered heavy losses in the American air raid on Truk on 17 and 18 February, 1944. Approximately 270 aircraft were lost, with 200 of those destroyed on the ground.<sup>44</sup> More crucially, the Navy's land-based air forces were further whittled down during their commitment and recall from Operation KON, the Japanese counter-attack against the American landings on Biak Island in early June 1944. As of 11 June, the Navy had only 435 land-based aircraft stationed on bases in the Marianas, Truk, the Palaus, Western New Guinea, and Halmahera.<sup>45</sup> By the eve of the Marianas battles, these had been reduced to approximately 300 aircraft (about 150 in the Marianas, and the remainder in the western Carolines), due to combat losses and accidents suffered during Operation KON.<sup>46</sup> Most of the 150

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43 Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Dai-Honei Kaigunbu Rengō Kantai (5) Dai San-dan Sakusen Chūki* [Navy Section, Imperial General Headquarters, and Combined Fleet, vol. 5: Third Stage Operations, Middle Period] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1974), 121.

44 *Ibid.*, 246.

45 Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Dai-Honei Rikugunbu (8) Shōwa 19 nen 7 gatsu made* [Army Section, Imperial General Headquarters, vol. 8: Until July 1944] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1974), 456.

46 Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Chubu Taiheiyō Rikugun Sakusen (1) Mariana Gyokusai made* [Army Operations in the Central Pacific, vol. 1: Until the Honorable Destruction of the Marianas Garrison] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1967), 482.

aircraft in the Marianas were lost on 11 June, when the Americans began their aerial attacks in preparation for the landings on 15 June.

Furthermore, the new strategy was weakened by the continuing differences between the Army and Navy regarding strategy against the Americans. The Marianas and Carolines, which were the vital areas of the Absolute National Defence Zone, were practically undefended and unfortified as late as September 1943. At that time, the Army had only five infantry battalions, three artillery battalions and one tank company deployed in all of the Central Pacific, while air forces in the Central Pacific numbered only 181 aircraft of the Navy's 22nd Air Flotilla and other naval air units.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, while the Japanese had constructed airfields on a number of islands and atolls, extensive defensive fortifications were virtually non-existent in the Central Pacific. The Carolines and Marianas thus had to be reinforced with men and materiel as soon as possible. On 15 September 1943, the 'Army-Navy Central Agreement on Operations in the Central Pacific Ocean Area' was adopted, which called for approximately 40 infantry battalions, accompanied by armour, artillery, anti-tank and engineer units, to be sent to the Central Pacific as soon as possible. Because the Navy insisted on holding the Marshalls and Gilberts, however, substantial portions of these Army reinforcements had to be diverted there from the Marianas and Carolines, even though the latter were more critical within the concept of the Absolute National Defence Zone.<sup>48</sup>

The Army delayed the reinforcement of the Marianas and Carolines with its own operations in China. In the fall of 1943, the Army planned an extensive offensive in China which, if successful, would secure an overland line of communications from the Southern Resources Area through China to the Japanese home islands, and would in addition lead to the capture of American air bases within range of Taiwan or even Japan itself. On 24 January 1944, the Army General Staff issued orders for Operation Ichi-gō, which was launched on 17 April. A total of sixteen divisions, 410,000 men and 12,000 vehicles were committed.<sup>49</sup> The operation itself was within

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47 Boeichō Bōei Kenshūsho Senshishitsu (ed.), *Chubu Taiheiyō Hōmen Kaigun Sakusen (2) Shōwa 17 nen 6 gatsu ikō* [Navy Operations in the Central Pacific Area, vol. 2: After June 1942] (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1968), 382.

48 Hattori, *Dai-tōa Sensō Zenshi*, 501-2.

49 *Ibid.*, 621.

the framework of the Absolute National Defence Zone Concept, since, if successful, the resulting overland route from the Southern Resources Area to Japan would be a more reliable line of communications for Japan to ship home the raw materials necessary for the increased industrial production called for by the new strategy. In other words, Ichi-go could be justified by Japan's long-term strategic needs.

However, the operation hindered Japan's immediate operational needs, because certain units which had been earmarked for redeployment to the Central Pacific, such as the 3rd and 13th Infantry Divisions, were used in Ichi-gō instead. This naturally delayed the reinforcement of the Marianas and Carolines. By May 1944, on the eve of the battle for the Marianas, Prime Minister (and concurrent Army Minister and Chief of Staff) Tojo was able to report to the Emperor that all of the scheduled reinforcements of ground forces to the Marianas had been completed. While true on paper, the delays which had been incurred before their arrival meant that they had insufficient time to familiarise themselves with the terrain, construct more complete fortifications, and train more thoroughly.

Finally, the Absolute National Defence Zone concept was premised on false projections and empty promises by the Army, Navy and Planning Bureau concerning industrial production. For example, the concept called for the production of 50,000 aircraft (Army and Navy combined; later reduced to 40,000) in 1944, even though it was clear that Japan could not obtain the necessary amount of bauxite, a key mineral in the production of aircraft aluminium, to produce such numbers of aircraft.<sup>50</sup> As it turned out, Japan did produce 24,000 aircraft in 1944, which was a record for Japan but still far fewer than called for in the new defensive strategy.

This problem was exacerbated by Japan's continuing problem regarding the allocation of shipping. Shipping losses to American submarines and other factors continued to exceed expectations, and Japan's total tonnage of shipping continued to decline, even as operational and long-term production needs increased. The issue became even more acute after the adoption of the September 1943 strategy, as shipping was needed both to build up forces along the new defensive perimeter, and to increase industrial production to permit the decisive counter-offensive a year or

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50 Imoto, *Dai-tōa Sensō Sakusen Nisshi*, 487.

more in the future. Compromises in the allocation of shipping were made which left both Japan's operational needs and industrial production needs unfulfilled. For example, as the reinforcement of the Marianas became an increasingly pressing issue in the spring of 1944, the General Staff asked for yet another temporary increase in the allocation of ships for the Army and Navy, in order to expedite the sending of reinforcements to the Marianas. The Army and Navy allocations were increased, after much discussion, but not to the extent requested. The necessary shipping thus had to be taken from ships that had originally been slated for use in reinforcing the 2nd Area Army's sector in Western New Guinea, which delayed the reinforcement of Western New Guinea in the crucial period just before the Allied assaults on Hollandia and Biak.

In November 1943, the Navy tried to address the problem of shipping losses by establishing an Escort Fleet Command, which on paper was the equal of the Combined Fleet and reported directly to the Naval General Staff. However, the staff of the Escort Fleet Command was undermanned, and the Command had to negotiate with the Combined Fleet staff for its ships. Naturally, the Combined Fleet gave its own operational needs higher priority and refused to hand over any but a handful of second-line vessels, so the Escort Fleet began operations with a total of 44 ships (18 coastal patrol boats, 15 World War I- vintage destroyers, seven torpedo boats, and four gunboats) to escort an estimated 2700 merchant ships in an area bounded by a line drawn roughly from the northern Kuriles through Truk, the Palaus, Manila and Singapore.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the Escort Fleet Command did not have the authority to force the adoption of a large convoy system. The Navy's operations staff insisted that the formation of large convoys would delay shipments of materiel to the front, and Japan continued to resort to the use of small convoys of five or six ships. The Escort Command therefore could not concentrate the few ships at its disposal, and the effectiveness of its operations was limited accordingly.

Japan's shift to the strategic defensive in September 1943 therefore was ultimately futile. The buildup of forces for a counterattack along the new defensive perimeter failed to materialise, and the Absolute National Defence Zone was breached at the Marianas in the summer of 1944.

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51 Atsushi Ōi, *Kaijo Goei-sen* [The Maritime Escort War] (Tokyo: Asahi Sonorama, 1992), 155.

### **Conclusion**

When the Pacific War began, the Japanese Army had not expected the commitment of major forces to the South Pacific. By the end of 1942, however, the strategy of the Japanese Navy had created a situation in the South Pacific which drew the Army into that theatre of war, and later into the Central Pacific, on a strategic level. Since the Army historically had a strong continental focus, it was unprepared in many ways to fight a major ground war in the South Pacific, or to counter amphibious campaigns in the Central Pacific. An effort to buy time by withdrawing the main defensive perimeter in late 1943 to a logistically more viable area failed. The new defensive perimeter was breached earlier than expected, in the summer of 1944, and the Japanese Army and Navy had to fight increasingly desperate campaigns in the Palaus, Philippines, Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the last year of the war.

# Divergence and Convergence Army vs Navy: Allied conduct of the Pacific War

*Peter J. Dean*

This chapter assesses the Allied approach to operations in the Pacific War.<sup>1</sup> It uses the lens of the two Pacific commands, the US Navy's Pacific Ocean Area (POA) under Admiral Chester Nimitz,<sup>2</sup> and the US Army's Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) under General Douglas MacArthur. It considers how these two commands approached the conflict focusing on their conduct of operations and how, despite the fact that both theatres fought the same enemy and adopted a 'maritime strategy', differences in terrain, command structures, resources, and force structures dictated a different operational approach during the period 1942-44.

This paper will not dwell on the personalities or the debates between the two commanders, MacArthur and Nimitz, nor their respective service chiefs, General George C. Marshall or Admiral Ernest King, as these relationships have been more than adequately covered elsewhere. Rather it will explore the factors that led to a divergence in their approach to operations during 1942-44 and then a convergence in approach as their lines of operations met and joined hands in the Philippines in 1944-45.

In doing so it will consider key points of divergence and convergence through a focus on joint amphibious expeditionary operations at Lae and Tarawa in late 1943 and Morotai and Peleliu in September 1944; it will conclude with an assessment of the final action of the war, the Australian assault on Balikpapan in Borneo. This focus on joint amphibious operations is done with a consideration that these operations were, as Lieutenant

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1 This term is used in the geographical sense to account for the operations against the Japanese by the Pacific Oceans Area and Southwest Pacific Area theatres. This excludes the continental war being fought against Japan in China and the Southeast Asia Command Theatre in Burma and India.

2 The focus for this paper will be on the Central Pacific Area as opposed to the South or North Pacific that were also part of the POA.

General Holland M. ('Howling Mad') Smith, United States Marine Corps (USMC) noted, 'not a ferry boat ride, but a tactical movement, culminating in an assault'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Pre-War Plans: The Singapore Strategy**

Despite a peacetime focus on continental defence Australia has traditionally displayed a preference for an expeditionary approach to warfare.<sup>4</sup> In particular this has seen Australia deploy niche single-service forces overseas that have generally served as part of a broader Allied coalition. During the First World War the 1st Australian Imperial Force (AIF) had been sent to Gallipoli and then the Western Front and Palestine as one component of the British expeditionary forces, while the Royal Australian Navy had been placed under Royal Navy control. The only Australian experience of undertaking joint amphibious operations prior to the Pacific War had been in the capture of German New Guinea by the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) in 1914 that defeated the lightly-armed indigenous troops under German command.<sup>5</sup> However this experience was completely overshadowed by the Army's experience of warfare on the Western Front.

At the end of the war the Paris Peace Conference confirmed Australia's control of Papua and New Guinea while Japan's support for the Allies saw it gain the former German colonies in the Mariana, Caroline and Marshall islands. This outcome made Australia and Japan uncomfortable neighbours in the South Pacific. Despite this development, the experience of the AN&MEF in the South Pacific in 1914 and requirement to protect Australia's new colonial possessions, amphibious operations were almost completely absent from Australian defence planning during the inter-war period. There was in fact only one exercise in amphibious operations undertaken in this period. In 1935 Tasmanian militia forces from the 40th Battalion landed at Blackman's Bay, south of Hobart, from the cruisers HMAS *Canberra* and HMS *Sussex*. Not only was there a paucity of interest

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3 Smith as quoted in M.H.H. Evans, *Amphibious Operations: The Projection of Sea Power Ashore* (London: Brassey's, 1990), 9.

4 See Michael Evans, *The Tyranny of Dissonance: Australia's Strategic Culture and Way of War 1901–2005* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2005).

5 See S.S. Mackenzie, *The Australians at Rabaul*, Vol. X, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1927).

in this role, this sole military exercises was remarkable only for its 'air of unreality'.<sup>6</sup>

During the inter-war period Australia placed its faith in Empire Defence and the Singapore Strategy. At the 1923 British Imperial Conference it was agreed that while each part of the Empire was responsible for its own local defence, in the Pacific a naval base would be built at Singapore to service the British battle fleet, thereby providing a deterrent to Japanese aggression. Australia was responsible for the protection of maritime trade in the Australian region and financial support was pledged for the construction of the Singapore base.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the naval focus of this strategy it was never intended for Australia to maintain a fleet for the defence of the Australian continent or its newly mandated territories in the Southwest Pacific; rather the RAN would augment the Royal Navy based at Singapore. This was despite the fact that it was never adequately revealed how the base in Singapore would provide protection for the eastern seaboard of Australia or the Southwest Pacific against Japanese naval aggression. Compounding these problems were the constant delays in the construction of the naval base. There were also substantial questions as to how the aging and decaying British Empire was going to be able to provide a fleet to Singapore, a problem that became acute after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. Yet despite all these issues the Singapore strategy's position as the basis of Australian defence policy became an 'article of faith that was not to be questioned'.<sup>8</sup> This was despite the fact that the Australian government clearly understood problems with this one-dimensional naval strategy.<sup>9</sup>

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6 *Report on Combined Operations in Hobart to the Secretary of the Naval Board*, 26 April 1935, as quoted in R. Parkin, *A Capability of First Resort: Amphibious Operations and Australian Defence Policy 1901-2001*, (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2001), 14.

7 Malcolm Murfett, 'The Singapore Strategy', in Carl Bridge & Bernard Attard (eds), *Between Empire and Nation: Australia's External Relations from Federation to the Second World War* (Kew: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2000). See also J.J. Dedman, 'Defence Policy Decisions before Pearl Harbour', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 13 (December 1967): 331.

8 Grey, *The Australian Army*, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, Vol. 1 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 82.

9 Augustine Meaher IV, *The Road to Singapore: The Myth of the British Betrayal* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010). See also David Stevens (ed.), *In Search of a Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Element in Australian Defence Planning since 1901*, Working Paper No. 119 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, 1997). It should be noted that the financial cost of reconceiving this strategy was especially limiting on the Australian government's options.



### **Pre-War Plans: War Plan Orange**

In contrast to the Singapore strategy, which rested on highly optimistic assumptions, the United States war gamed and devised a strategy for war in the Pacific which would be enacted with great success. It was, in the judgement one US historian, 'history's most successful war plan'.<sup>10</sup>

The key issues for the US in the post-First World War period was that Japanese possession of the Mariana, Caroline and Marshall islands provided a barrier between the US continent and the Philippines. This was further complicated by the fact that under Article XIX of the Five-Power Naval Treaty (also known as the Washington Treaty) the United States was not able to fortify its bases in Manila or Guam.<sup>11</sup> This meant that US defence planners had to work on the provision that their nearest major fleet base in the Pacific for the defence of the Philippines would be Honolulu.<sup>12</sup>

After the Washington Naval Conference Assistant Secretary for the Navy Theodore Roosevelt Jr had detailed defence planners to work on a grand strategy for war in the Pacific and while the US military did not have much of an insight into how the Japanese would approach the war, abductive reasoning led them to a number of conclusions:<sup>13</sup>

- That US superiority in both population and economic capacity mean that Japan would have to strike quickly against their possessions (especially the Philippines and Guam) in the Pacific.
- This would cut off the possibility of the US Pacific Fleet from operating in the western Pacific in the initial stages of the war [and]
- That the Japanese would then form a defensive barrier to try withstand an attrition phase against the US.

On the basis of these assumptions the US believed that the war would unfold in three distinct phases:

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10 Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), xix.

11 Between 1910 and 1922 Guam had dominated US strategic thought: see Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 250.

12 Russell Parkin & David Lee, *The Great White Fleet to Coral Sea* (Canberra: DFAT, 2008), 82.

13 Stephan Fruehling, 'Managing strategic risk: four ideal defence planning concepts in theory and practice (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2007), 149.

Phase I: the Japanese occupation of US possessions in the Western Pacific, mainly Guam, Wake Island and the Philippines.

Phase II: the return of the US force to the area.

Phase III: the blockade of Japan.<sup>14</sup>

Thus War Plan Orange, the code name for a conflict in the Pacific with Japan, would be based on these assumptions. War Plan Orange was primarily seen as an offensive naval war, to be achieved by a blockade of the Japanese home islands, occupation of their outlying territories and an air war against Japanese territory. War Plan Orange was war-gamed by the USN throughout the inter-war period<sup>15</sup> and went through dozens of versions and iterations. The eventual result of this long-drawn-out debate within the US military was a decision to abandon the Philippines in the first phase of the war to be followed by a deliberate island hopping advance across the Pacific.<sup>16</sup> The role of the elimination of the Japanese possession of the islands in the central Pacific fell to the United States Marine Corps.

The small island atolls of the Central Pacific created specific problems for the USMC's amphibious mission. Furthermore the methodology to conduct a major opposed amphibious expeditionary operation did not exist, nor did the equipment to undertake this task. This mission would also require the transformation of the Corps from a conventional naval infantry force into an expeditionary landing strike force. The first major study of this problem came from USMC Major Pete Ellis, who produced *Advance Base Operations in Micronesia* and 'soon after the Joint Army-Navy Board approved the amphibious assault mission for the Marine Corps'.<sup>17</sup>

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14 Ibid.

15 As well as the Joint Army and Navy Board and Joint Planning Committee. For the USN see Michael Vlahos, *The Blue Sword: The Naval War College and the American Mission, 1919-1941* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1980). War Plan Orange evolved into coalition war planning: see Henry G. Cole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002).

16 David F. Winkler, 'Thrusters, Cautionaries, and War Games', *Sea Power* 45: 10 (October 2002), 31.

17 Earl H. Ellis, *Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia*, Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication (FMFRP) 12-46 (Washington, DC, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1992), <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/ref/AdvBaseOps/index.html>; Merrill L. Bartlett, 'Ben Hubbard Fuller and the Genesis of the Modern United States Marine Corps, 1891-1934', *Journal of Military History* 69: 1 (January 2005), 82.

The Corps' main mission for this problem became the study of how to launch assault landings across the defended beaches of small Pacific atolls separated by hundreds or thousands of miles of ocean.<sup>18</sup> The USMC studies into how they were going to achieve their mission included overcoming the difficulties of landing troops ashore, naval gunfire support, logistics and air support. This would result in the development of *Tentative Landings Operations Manual* in 1934 which was accepted as US Navy doctrine in 1939 under the title *Fleet Training Publication 167*.<sup>19</sup> These ideas were then put to the test in a number of major fleet exercises between 1937-1941.<sup>20</sup>

### **Command arrangements**

The US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) was the command authority for the Pacific War. In order to satisfy the US Army and Navy service chiefs the Pacific was divided into two theatres under their respective service commanders. This would mean that each theatre headquarters (HQ) would be dominated by the Navy in the POA and the Army in the SWPA. The POA under Nimitz was a unified US theatre command, whereas the SWPA was a coalition that included Australian, Dutch and US forces.<sup>21</sup> Despite this coalition MacArthur's position as C-in-C in the SWPA would allow him and his US Army staff to dominate General Headquarters SWPA (GHQ) and heavily influence the direction of strategy and operations in the theatre. This position became overwhelming from late 1943 / early 1944 when MacArthur's US forces came to eclipse the Australian Army as the dominant ground force in the theatre.

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18 This also included counter-amphibious doctrine and base defence for US possessions in the Pacific which led to the creation of the Corps' Defense Battalions.

19 Hough Ludwig Shaw, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal: History of the United States Marine Corps in World War II* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1958), 14.

20 This was not a linear transformation but a different period of evolution in the mission of the USMC. See Donald F. Bittner, 'Taking the right fork in the road: The transition of the US Marine Corps from an "Expeditionary" to an "Amphibious" Corps, 1918-1941', in Peter Dennis & Jeffery Grey (eds), *Battles Near and Far: A Century of Overseas Deployment* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2004), 116-40, and Terry C. Pierce, *Warfighting and disruptive technologies: disguising innovation* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

21 The Dutch contribution to the SWPA was small and as such will not be considered here in any detail.

A major consequence of the lack of a unified command structure for the Pacific War was that it prompted competition for scarce resources. This was further complicated by the 'Germany first' strategy which placed further strain on the Pacific War's resources.<sup>22</sup> As Ronald Spector argues, this competition was based on 'the traditional elements of careerism and doctrinal differences within the [US] armed forces that combined to produce a monstrosity'.<sup>23</sup>

### **Strategy**

Australia and the south Pacific were never part of War Plan Orange.<sup>24</sup> However discussions for a coordinated strategic approach among the Allied powers in the lead-up to the Pacific War, the rapid Japanese advance in the southern Pacific in 1941-42 and the threat to the lines of communication between Australia and the United States radically changed the character of the war in the Pacific. Given the critical role Australia and New Zealand played in Allied plans Admiral King saw it as essential to maintain these lines of communication. This objective led to a concentration of US effort in 1942 in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas and led to the major operations against the Japanese at Guadalcanal and in Papua.<sup>25</sup>

By May 1943 the JCS received approval from the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff to make the Pacific the main theatre of operations for the defeat of the Japanese.<sup>26</sup> This approach rejected the option of developing the main counter-thrust through China, with its major logistical difficulties, vast distances from the US, continental approach to warfare and the difficulties of coalition operations with the Chinese. The decision

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22 Of note here is that with the exception of US heavy bombers, the division of forces between the European and Pacific Theatres of operations by the US military would be roughly equal in 1942-43.

23 Ronald Spector, *Eagle Against the Rising Sun* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 145.

24 Australia did appear in a number of variations of the plan but only ever as a stopover base for US forces either on their way to the Philippines or the Malaya-Singapore area. The port of Rabaul in the Australian mandated territory of New Guinea did appear in a number of iterations of the War Plan Orange but it was always rejected. See Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 256.

25 Walter R. Borneman, *The Admirals* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1968), 106.

26 Robert Ross Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, United States Army, 1984), 1.

also rejected Southeast Asia which was also constrained by geography, and which faced major logistical and health limitations as well as a lack of bases and targets for long-range Allied bombers.<sup>27</sup>

In their decision the JCS resolved their strategic approach in the Pacific by confirmation of the division of the region between the Army and Navy commands, thus forming a two-axis advance. The JCS would retain strategic control over the war and coordinate the efforts of the Navy in the POA and the Army in the SWPA by selecting strategic (and at times operational) objectives, 'allocating resources and generally overseeing the plans and efforts of the two theatres' commanders'.<sup>28</sup>

At the strategic level this two-pronged advance would see the Central Pacific Area (CPA) under Nimitz operate from Hawaii westward through the Gilbert, Marshal and Mariana islands to the Philippines.<sup>29</sup> SWPA and South Pacific Area (SOPAC) which was part of Nimitz's POA, but would come under MacArthur's strategic direction from January 1943, would operate from Australia and Noumea northwestward via the Solomon Islands, Papua, New Guinea, New Britain, and the Dutch East Indies to the Philippines.<sup>30</sup>

The 1942 focus of operations in Papua and Guadalcanal would evolve in 1943 into the Cartwheel series of offensive operations aimed at the reduction of the main Japanese base in the south Pacific at Rabaul. The South Pacific would dominate the Pacific Ocean Area's operations during 1942 and early 1943 while it developed its naval combat power and prepared for its first amphibious assault in the Central Pacific in late 1943.

The decision for a dual drive against Japan in both the Central and Southwest Pacific has been controversial. While the Central Pacific was the major strategic theatre, the Allies' ability to stage concurrent landings between the SWPA and SOPAC during 1942-43 'served to deny the Japanese

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27 Paul Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 294-300.

28 Theodore Gatchel, 'The Shortest Road to Tokyo: Nimitz and the central Pacific War', in Daniel Marston (ed.), *The Pacific War Companion* (Oxford: Osprey, 2005), 162.

29 In terms of operational approach to the defeat of Japan the North Pacific Area was not a viable theatre of operation because of the 'forbidding climate and geography' see H.P. Willmot, *The Great Crusade: A New Complete History of the Second World War* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 317.

30 Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*, 1-12.

the opportunity to counter any of the emerging threats to Rabaul',<sup>31</sup> while the dual drives from the SWPA and CPA in the period 1943-44 kept the Japanese off-balance until they committed to their disastrous counter-offensives in the Mariana Is and at Leyte Gulf in 1944.<sup>32</sup>

The USN had been preparing for its Central Pacific drive against the Japanese from the early 1920s and as such their approach to amphibious operations had been set since the introduction of the USMC's 1934 *Tentative Manual For Landing Operations*.<sup>33</sup> As FTP 167 *Landing Operations Doctrine* this was the 'guide for forces of the Navy and Marine Corps conducting a landing against opposition ... [and outlined] the tactics and technique of the landing operation and the necessary supporting measures therefor'.<sup>34</sup> The guide specifically focused on direct, frontal amphibious assaults on heavily defended Pacific atolls and covered topics such as general operations, task organisation, landing boats, ship-to-shore movement, naval gunfire support, aviation, communications, logistics and the use of tanks, smoke, and field artillery.<sup>35</sup>

It required, among other things, a 'marked superiority on the sea and in the air within the area of, and during the time required for, the operations, unquestionably superior[ity] in infantry, as well as artillery and other supporting arms to the enemy forces'.<sup>36</sup> In the lead-up to the Central Pacific operations in 1943 one of the key concerns was the ability of aircraft carriers to be able to overcome land based airpower. As FTP 167 noted:

Air superiority is essential to the success of a landing operation ... To offset the advantages accruing to the defender by reason of being able to operate from land bases, and to compensate for

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31 Willmot, *The Great Crusade*, 318.

32 David Horner, 'General MacArthur's War', in Marston (ed.), *Pacific War Companion*, 133.

33 Frank O. Hough, Verle E. Ludwig & Henry I. Shaw, Jr, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, Volume I (Washington, DC: Historical Branch G-3 Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1958), 14

34 H.R. Stark, Admiral, U.S. Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, foreword to USN FTP 167 *Landing Operations Doctrine*, <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ref/Amphibious/index.html>

35 Office of Naval Operations, FTP 167 *Landing Operations Doctrine*, (Washington, DC, 1938), 151. <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ref/Amphibious/Amphibious-6.html#I>.

36 Ibid.

the attacker's disadvantages due to [the] distance of floating or land aircraft bases, [a] preponderance of aircraft within the landing area is essential.<sup>37</sup>

The approach in the SWPA was rather different. MacArthur had to deal with a major coalition partner in Australia, a country that had demonstrated little interest in amphibious warfare before the war and thus had no infrastructure or capabilities for amphibious operations in 1942. In addition the Australian doctrinal approach was based on British methods in amphibious warfare. This approach was much more of a traditional, indirect direct (unopposed) approach to landing operations. However, as luck would have it, this suited the geography of the SWPA, which would offer MacArthur the opportunity to 'avoid [the] storm assault landings' that would occur in the central Pacific.<sup>38</sup>

This was because operations in the SWPA during 1942-44 were dominated by a geography not of island atolls, but rather New Guinea, the second largest island in the world, which US naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison described as that 'half bird and half reptile ... prehistoric monster'<sup>39</sup> of an island to Australia's north. This meant that the fighting in the SWPA during 1942-44 was 'characterized by fewer naval engagements but much larger land operations than that in the Solomon's' or in the CPA.<sup>40</sup>

While Australia was neither well organised nor experienced in amphibious warfare, nor was MacArthur's staff or the US Army National Guard formations that were sent to Australia in early 1942. The RAN and USN forces allocated to the SWPA also lacked experience in these operations. Furthermore the priorities set by the Allied leaders and the Combined Chiefs of Staff meant that MacArthur had little hope of large-scale reinforcements from the USN or USMC or large-scale drafts of amphibious ships/craft and equipment.

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37 Ibid.

38 Drea, 'Collision Course: American and Japanese Amphibious/Counter-Amphibious Doctrine, Tactics and Preparation for the Decisive Battle of the Homeland', in Peter Dennis (ed.), *1945 War and Peace in the Pacific: Selected Essays* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1999), 29.

39 Samuel Eliot Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier, 22 July 1942-1 May 1944*, vol. VI, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1957), 27.

40 Horner, 'General MacArthur's War', 128.

Despite these disadvantages in training, infrastructure and personnel in the SWPA the importance of amphibious warfare for offensive operations in the theatre were realised early on. In mid-March 1942 the Deputy Chief of the General Staff in Australia, Major General Sydney Rowell, had recommend the acquisition of specialist equipment and the establishment of a school of combined (joint) operations.<sup>41</sup> Soon after the establishment of the SWPA on 30 March 1942 MacArthur and the Australian Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Thomas Blamey, made the decision to establish a Joint Overseas Operational Training School (JOOTS) to 'training of Land Forces in overseas operations in conjunction and cooperation with Naval Forces and Air Forces, both land- and carrier-based'.<sup>42</sup> JOOTS was soon to be supported by Combined Training Centre (CTC) at Port Stephens, New South Wales, and the First Australian Army Combined Training School (CTS) at Toorbul Point in Queensland.<sup>43</sup>

These schools were coalition establishments with instructors obtained from the United States and Australian Army and Navy, the US Marine Corps and the British Royal Marines (RM) as well as the Royal Australian Air Force. The Australians initially relied heavily on instructors who had attended the British Combined Training Centre at Kabrit in Egypt.<sup>44</sup> The doctrine to be used in these schools was initially to be split, with the US using their own doctrine in training and the Australians using British doctrine.

The Australians relied on British *Combined Operations Doctrine 1942*, *Combined Operations for Unit Commanders 1941* and *Combined Operations*

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41 'Long Range Planning for offensive Action—Landing operations', 13 March 1942, National Archives of Australia (NAA), B6121 289. See also Ross Mallett, 'Together Again for the First time: The Army, The RAN and Amphibious Warfare 1942-1945', in David Stevens and John Reeve (eds), *Sea Power Ashore and in the Air* (Canberra: Sea Power Centre, 2007), 118-32. In the British, and thus Australian military, amphibious landings were referred to as 'combined' operations as opposed to the US terminology of 'joint' operations.

42 Memo, 'Combined Training for Offensive Operations', MacArthur to Blamey, 4 June 1942, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (NARA), RG 496, Box 667.

43 Combined Training School, Toorbul Point: Origin of the School, Australian War Memorial, AWM54 422/7/8; A Summary of Combined operations Training in Australia (Amphibious) 1942-1945, AWM54 943/16/1.

44 A Summary of Combined operations Training in Australia (Amphibious) 1942-1945, AWM, 54 943/16/1.



*Pamphlet No. 1 Provisional—1942. Combined Operations Doctrine 1942* had developed out of the 1931 Combined Operations Manual and the work of the pre-war (1938) British Inter-Services Training and Development Centre at Fort Cumberland, near Portsmouth. The emphasis was on air and sea control, an approach under the cover of darkness and/or night landings, operational and tactical surprise, unopposed assaults, short-duration operations and inter-service cooperation as opposed to unity of command.<sup>45</sup> It was based on the very long British tradition of continental raiding, something that was also prominent in the UK after the fall of France and up until 1942.<sup>46</sup> This meant that the British had a 'different mental disposition from that of the American practice' in amphibious warfare.<sup>47</sup> One of the key principles that the British had identified from their experiences in the First World War, namely Gallipoli, was that an assault on a well-defended beach would lead to failure.<sup>48</sup>

The US forces in the SWPA used their own doctrine when their units were sent to the SWPA training establishments. Their instruction was based on US Army doctrine through FM 31 *Landing Operations on a Hostile Shore 1941* (which was essentially the same as the USN and USMC FPT 167 *Landing Operations*) and FM 31-5 *Landing Operations on a Hostile Shore—Air Operations 1941*. As with its development by the USMC this approach favoured more direct assaults, operational surprise was an objective, but tactical surprise was not a necessity, night landings were rejected, expect for reconnaissance, and there was a heavy dependence on naval gunfire and air support; thus early morning assaults to maximise daylight and utilise this firepower were favoured.

For the SWPA this meant that, at least initially, as each unit rotated through the various training establishments the doctrine and methods were adapted to the unit's nationality. It created tensions and, at times, heated arguments, over the different approaches that led to the transfer of

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45 Kenneth J. Clifford, *Amphibious Warfare Development in Britain and America from 1920-1940* (Laurens, NY: Edgewood), 42.

46 Adrian R. Lewis, *Omaha Beach: A Flawed Victory* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 38-9.

47 *Ibid.*, 48.

48 See Donald F. Bittner, 'Britannia's Sheathed Sword: The Royal Marines and Amphibious Warfare in the Interwar Years—A Passive Response', *Journal of Military History* 55: 3 (July, 1991), 345-64.

some senior personnel and the sacking of the first commanding officer at JOOTS, US Army Colonel B.Q. Jones.<sup>49</sup>

The dominance of the US Army over the command and control of the Allied effort in the SWPA was reflected in its initial control of amphibious warfare training in 1942,<sup>50</sup> but this would change with the creation of the VII Amphibious Force (VII AF) in December of 1942, which was soon placed under the command of Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, USN, on 10 January 1943.<sup>51</sup> He took over amphibious warfare training in the SWPA in February 1943 and as a result all the existing schools and infrastructure were combined into VII AF's Amphibious Training Command (ATC).<sup>52</sup>

One of Barbey's first moves was to standardise equipment and doctrine for all units, Australian and US, on US Navy Fleet Training Publication FTP 167 *Landing Operations Doctrine*. In his view this was actually not too difficult as he saw that there was 'little difference in the two [British and American] techniques'. Barbey was however, insistent that as all troops, Australian or US, would be transported in and landed via VII AF which was overwhelmingly American, the Australian Army and Navy 'must follow the entire American technique'.<sup>53</sup>

Barbey's approach soon hit a large road block. With the SWPA at the back end of a long queue for resources in a global war, the US Navy's Official History noted that in terms of Allied logistical and equipment priorities the SWPA was at the forefront of the 'list of "have nots" and

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49 Berryman to Blamey, 'Amphibian Training', 22 September 1942, AWM, PR84/370 Papers of Lieutenant-General Sir Frank Horton Berryman, item 11; Special Order No. 146, GHQ SWPA, 25 September 1942, NARA, RG496 Records of GHQ SWPA, G-3 General Correspondence, 1942-1954, Box 665; Chamberlin to Sutherland, 1 March 1943, NARA, RG496 Records of GHQ SWPA, G-3 General Correspondence, 1942-1954, Box 665. 50 During 1942 relations between senior US and Australian officers was at an all-time low point, often driven by cultural imperialism on both sides. This relationship was also greatly affected by the divisions and conflicts within MacArthur's headquarters. Relations improved significantly during 1943 and had proven to be close at the tactical and operational level from late 1942. For details see Peter J. Dean, *The Architect of Victory* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter 9, 209-18.

51 Appointment of Commander Amphibious Force, SWPA, NAA, MP742/1 246/1/164, Annexure 2.

52 United States Navy, *Command History: Seventh Amphibious Force, 10 January 1943-23 December 1945*, Section I, p. 4; Combined Operations—RAN Beach Commandos, NAA, B6121, 194B, 2.

53 Notes from Conference, GHQ, 18 January 1943, NARA, RG496, Box 667, 'Amphibious Training Oct 1942-Oct 31 1943'.

“won’t gets””.<sup>54</sup> As such the VII AF did not have the necessary equipment or resources to follow FTP 167. The VII AF and its parent formation, the Seventh Fleet, lacked sufficient numbers of large amphibious assault ships and high-speed destroyer transports, had no aircraft carriers for deep strike or to support landings, no battleships, very limited numbers of heavy cruisers for naval gunfire support and no at-sea fleet logistics service group required by this doctrine.<sup>55</sup>

Instead air support would be provided by the land-based RAAF and US Army Air Corps, and landing troops would be largely supplied by the US and Australian armies as opposed to the USMC.<sup>56</sup> Rather than being provided with large ocean-going amphibious transports and short-range ship-to-shore landing craft connectors, the bulk of VII AF’s initial vessels were the new shallow-draft, small-sized Landing Ship Tank (LST) and Landing Ship Infantry (LSI), and a US Army Engineering Special Brigade (2ESB) equipped with short-range and small-sized landing craft.<sup>57</sup> Essentially from the end of 1942 until mid-1944 the VII AF was supplied with a shore-to-shore capability rather than a large ocean-going, long-range amphibious assault fleet. Thus Barbey realised that he would have to modify FTP 167 and ‘develop [a] new and untried technique’.<sup>58</sup>

Barbey delegated this responsibility to the joint and combined staff at his newly Amphibious Training Command (ATC) who formalised this approach through the publication of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the VII AF.<sup>59</sup> The ATC would go on to publish 24 SOP documents for the VII AF during the war in areas such as; air-amphibious communications, medical services, loading of a Landing Ship Tank (LST), and various documents on operating with new classes of amphibious ships and craft. These documents were based on the most applicable features of USN FPT

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54 Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier*, 32.

55 Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 230-2.

56 The obvious exception being the USMC’s 1st Division’s landing at Cape Gloucester, where the amphibious technique would be very much SWPA rather than CPA. The 1st Marine’s first experience of CPA amphibious doctrine and landings would not occur until Peleliu in late 1944.

57 See William F. Heavey, *Down Ramp! The Story of the Army Amphibian Engineers* (Landisville, PA: Coachwhip, 2010), 68-73.

58 Barbey, *MacArthur’s Amphibious Navy*, 48-9.

59 Memo Commander Seventh Amphibious Force to C-in-C SWPA, 31 August 1943, NARA, Amphibious Training Oct 1942-Oct 31 1943, RG496, Box 667.

167 and 211 and US Army FM 31-5, British doctrine and the experience gained in the SWPA.<sup>60</sup> SWPA amphibious techniques would thus develop in the early years into a hybrid combination of British and American doctrine.

In order to execute his new 'doctrine' MacArthur had to develop a number of capabilities—a fleet to be able to support combat operations including amphibious transportation and assault, an air force capable of gaining air superiority and undertaking, strike, reconnaissance and operations in support of the fleet, and an army that possessed a well-trained amphibious force that was also capable of high intensity jungle warfare once ashore. He had to do this while mending together two countries' military services that possessed different cultures and approaches to operations.

### **Operational Approach: SWPA**

In the Pacific the campaigns ultimately depended on how closely each side and their corresponding theatre/regional commanders could 'coordinate air, land and naval operations since no element of military power by itself could prove decisive'.<sup>61</sup> This involved a maritime-style strategy of warfare; that is 'not a naval strategy ... a naval strategy may be defined as the employment of Navy forces for a specific end ... [but a] Maritime strategy ... the combined use of all arms—Army, Navy and Air Forces—in seaborne operations'.<sup>62</sup>

Air power and naval power would provide access to an operational area, while maritime forces would provide tactical forces that would allow the Army and Marine Corps to get ashore and to maintain the landing force during the course of the operation. While MacArthur had to rely on ground-based airpower Nimitz was developing his fast carrier task forces as long-range strike groups to support his amphibious assaults.

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60 Training Carried Out by Seventh Amphibious Force, NAA, MP742/1, 246/1/164, Annexure 2. For a detailed discussion of these training centres and joint amphibious training in the SWPA, see Peter J. Dean, 'To the Jungle Shore: Australia and Amphibious Warfare in the SWPA 1942-1945', *Global War Studies* 10: 3 (2014).

61 Murray and Millett, *A War to be Won*, 204.

62 Clarke .G. Reynolds, 'Douglas MacArthur as Maritime Strategist', *Naval War College Review* (March-April, 1980), 79-80.

The geography of the Southwest Pacific Area meant that MacArthur had a firm base in Australia, 'the Pacific War's England',<sup>63</sup> from which to mount his expeditionary operations through New Guinea, the Bismarcks and the Malayan barrier all the way to the Philippines. As an Army command MacArthur did not have the same access to naval support as the POA. Furthermore Nimitz and most of his senior naval officers considered the SWPA with its narrow seas, and threats from land-based air power as the 'worst place possible to conduct naval operations', making them very reluctant to provide MacArthur with major fleet units.<sup>64</sup> In addition US Naval officers did not trust MacArthur, an army officer, or his largely Army HQ with the control over the USN's new fast carrier groups. As Ronald Spector has noted, 'the accusation by one service that another service was misusing its peculiar weapon system or its forces was to be a characteristic of the Pacific war'.<sup>65</sup>

MacArthur's pre-eminent weapon therefore was his US Army Air Force and RAAF land-based airpower. He needed to exploit this powerful weapon to the full so that it would enable his amphibious troops to assault key geographical features hopefully bypassing key Japanese bases and forces in the process. His air force operations against Japanese airpower and bases in the region would be the catalyst for his naval power to land his Army to seize advanced bases and airfields. For MacArthur 'command of the air gave command of the sea which gave initiative and control of the ground' providing both a clear logistic edge to the Allied forces as well as 'unrivalled strategic mobility'.<sup>66</sup>

The SWPA would focus on an indirect approach to amphibious landings, in particular landing where there was no enemy opposition. Furthermore GHQ saw 'New Guinea as ... [being] of little value except to provide a very limited number of airdromes from which [to] further operations' towards the Philippines. In order to achieve this MacArthur favoured 'task force[s] of combined arms with naval support'. Of particular importance was that GHQ dictated from as early as March 1942 that:

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63 Williamson Murray and Allan Millet, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 205.

64 Gatchel, 'The Shortest Road to Tokyo: Nimitz and the Central Pacific War', 161.

65 Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 145.

66 Archer Jones, *Elements of Military Strategy: An historical Approach* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 121.

It is not necessary that all terrain along the line of operations be occupied. On the contrary it consists of a series of jumps for the purpose of securing and holding airdromes from which our aviation can operate offensively and defensively in support of the further advance of the line of communications. Successive locations should not, preferably, be over 300 miles apart in order that fighter protection for bombardment operations may always be provided. Sufficient forces and supplies must be left at each successive occupied locality to enable it to be held.<sup>67</sup>

The latter point was a role that MacArthur would find convenient for his Australian coalition partner once the US forces became preponderant in the SWPA and his advance towards the Philippines accelerated from April 1944.<sup>68</sup>

### **Operational Approach: Central Pacific**

Nimitz had the dual role of both theatre and fleet commander in the CPA and in preparing his command he reorganised it into a fleet structure. The Third (Vice Admiral William 'Bull' Halsey) and Fifth (Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance) Fleets were rotating HQ that would alternate in commanding operations drawing on the one pool of forces. These fleets were to be Nimitz's strike weapon in naval operations. He also created an amphibious force under Rear Admiral Richmond Turner who would control the navy's amphibious forces as well as the landing forces from the Army and Marine Corps. This ground strike force would be under the command of Marine Major General Holland M. Smith.<sup>69</sup>

The key weapon in Nimitz's arsenal to facilitate operations was his fast fleet carrier task forces. He would use these forces to drive deep into the Japanese defensive line, to provide operational access to his

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67 Report of Australia for the C-in-C Allied Forces SWPA 1942, 14 March 1942, NARA, RG496 Box 1802. MacArthur's major issue was that he did not have the forces to implement this strategy throughout 1942 and most of 1943.

68 MacArthur would abandon his bypassing approach to operations when he arrived in the Philippines. The combination of massive reinforcements for his command, the continued use of the Australians and his political purpose in liberating the Philippines drove this decision. The liberation of these territories was strategically unnecessary and has been cause for debate ever since.

69 Gatchel, 'The Shortest Road to Tokyo', 163.

amphibious forces and to maintain air and sea control in the area while the landing forces secured the island atolls and built airstrips for land-based aircraft. Nimitz's carriers would also be used as strike weapons to diminish Japanese naval and land-based aviation prior to an assault and to soften up the atolls' defences.<sup>70</sup>

This was also possible due to the balance of naval power altering radically in the CPA during the course of 1943. While in January the USN could only to put sea one aircraft carrier, by the end of 1943 the USN had a '10:4 advantage over the Imperial Navy in heavy fleet carriers, a 9:5 advantage in light carriers and a 35:3 advantage in small fleet carriers'.<sup>71</sup> During 1943 the USN commissioned into service, in tonnage terms, 'almost the equivalent of the Imperial [Japanese] Navy at its peak'.<sup>72</sup> By the time USN was ready for the assault on the Gilbert Islands in November 1943 they would have six fleet and five light carriers to support the amphibious assault and put into effect this new 'concept of war'.<sup>73</sup>

The fast carrier groups would provide operational access and seal off the area to interference from the Japanese naval and air forces. This was a major factor in facilitating the ability of the landing forces in getting ashore on these small Pacific atolls. Once the landing force could establish itself ashore it was almost guaranteed of success as long as the US Navy continued to isolate these garrisons from resupply and reinforcements.<sup>74</sup> However getting ashore in the face of the Japanese defences was no easy feat for the ground strike force. The Marines faced a number of problems, including a lack of accurate hydrographical information, especially on tides and reefs which protected these atolls, limited beaches and thus landing zones, a lack of depth for the build-up of forces ashore, limited land-based air support, landings directly into enemy defences, and restricted sea room for providing naval gun fire support.<sup>75</sup> Thus critical to this endeavour of direct assault was the supply of armoured landing craft (LVTs), overwhelming firepower through naval gunfire and close

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70 Joseph H. Alexander, 'Across the Reef: Amphibious Warfare in the Pacific', in Marston (ed.), *Pacific War Companion*, 203.

71 Murray and Millett, *A War to be Won*, 337.

72 Willmott, *The Great Crusade*, 321-2.

73 Ibid.

74 Extracts taken from report issued by C-in-C US Fleet—Amphibious Operations for the capture of the Gilbert Islands (Operation Galvanic), AWM 54 546/3/1

75 Ibid.

air support; highly trained assault troops and at sea logistical support to keep the operation supplied.

### **Divergence**

These contrasting operational approaches based on doctrine, terrain, service-specific command arrangements, force structures, and resources were clearly demonstrated in the first major offensive operations that each theatre conducted in 1943, specifically MacArthur's assault on Lae in September 1943 and Nimitz's assault on the Gilbert Islands (Tarawa) in November 1943.

In the lead-up to the advance across the CPA there had been reservations about the size of the available force. In particular this was complicated by Nimitz being either unwilling or unable (due to JCS direction) to withdraw air, sea or ground forces from the drive on Rabaul in the South and Southwest Pacific areas that would impede their operations. This meant that Nimitz chose to assault the Gilbert Islands rather than going directly for the more heavily defended Marshall Islands. The Gilberts would provide the CPA with an advanced base and airfield that would allow Nimitz's long range Army Air Corps bombers the opportunity to pound the Marshalls before conducting an amphibious assault. This also accorded with the concerns of FTP 167 over the ability of carrier aviation to operate in the face of ground-based air power and the untried fast carrier strike groups in support of a direct assault on a CPA atoll.

The landing at Tarawa on 20 November 1943 represented the first attempt to seize a highly defended coral atoll in daylight. USMC/USN amphibious doctrine at Tarawa was in reality 'part old and part new'.<sup>76</sup> It was based on the inter-war period ideas but was yet to fully accord the lessons, or the harsh reality, of what atoll warfare would require. As such Tarawa received inadequate air and naval gun fire preparation. The preliminary bombardment was to last for only four hours and while this helped to create operational surprise it seriously hindered the tactical efforts of the ground forces. The limited bombardment left most of the Japanese defences intact and while it had the effect of neutralising them, in atoll warfare this was not good enough.<sup>77</sup>

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76 Drea, 'Amphibious/Counter-Amphibious doctrine', 24.

77 Joseph H. Alexander, *Across the Reef: The Marine Assault on Tarawa* (Washington, DC, USMC Historical Center, 1993), 11-12. See also James R. Stockman, *The Battle for Tarawa* (Washington, DC: USMC Historical Section, 1947), 12-13.



Furthermore the bombardment stopped short as the landing craft assaulted the shore allowing the Japanese to man their defences as the final run into the beach by the assault force was made. The after-action report noted that 'at least ten times the usual text-book requirements for neutralisation [by naval gunfire support] will be necessary where the landing is to be made against a well-defended and heavily fortified beaches [sic]'.<sup>78</sup>

Another report noted that naval and air bombardment should be 'several days prior to D-day and should be designed for destruction and for [an] unrelenting harassing effect'.<sup>79</sup> Further provision was also needed to be made to ensure 'adequate' close support after the landing was made.<sup>80</sup> In part these failures emphasised the need, where possible, for the prior bombardment to be 'augmented by a secondary landing on adjacent islands either on or prior to D-day, for the purpose of placing artillery in position'.<sup>81</sup>

There were also a number of other problems that arose at Tarawa. Carrier-based air support was poor and there was a lack of communications between the headquarters of the forces afloat and those onshore. Communications problems plagued all levels of command; for instance infantry-tank cooperation was particularly hampered as the tanks had been provided with radio sets that could not operate on the infantry or artillery communications net.<sup>82</sup>

There had also simply not been enough of the armoured LVTs for the assault. This was exacerbated by the coral reef that protected the Tarawa lagoon that restricted the use of flat-bottomed Land Craft Vehicle—Personnel (LCVP). This meant hundreds of Marines had to wade ashore in waist- or neck-deep water under fire. In this regard a complete disaster had only just been avoided. The original USN plan had called for only

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78 Report on Operation 'Galvanic'—lessons learned in recent landing operations, AWM 54 645/3/2

79 Extracts taken from report issued by C-in-C US Fleet—Amphibious Operations for the capture of the Gilbert Islands (Operation Galvanic), AWM 54 546/3/1.

80 Report on Operation 'Galvanic'—lessons learned in recent landing operations, AWM 54 645/3/2

81 Extracts taken from report issued by C-in-C US Fleet—Amphibious Operations for the capture of the Gilbert Islands (Operation Galvanic), AWM 54 546/3/1.

82 Report on Operation 'Galvanic'—lessons learned in recent landing operations, AWM 54 645/3/2

100 LVTs be used but the Marines refused to proceed without at least 200 and even this proved woefully insufficient. The debate over the number of LVTs became exceptionally heated between the amphibious force command Vice Admiral Kelly Turner and the ground force commander Major General 'Howlin Mad' Smith. It was only resolved when Smith declared, 'no amtracks—no operation'.<sup>83</sup> Turner agreed to the increase but told Smith in the lead-up to the assault that he was overreacting!

These problems in executing the assault on Tarawa led to a blood bath for the 2nd Marine Division who took some 3301 casualties.<sup>84</sup> These losses had been exacerbated by the Japanese adopting a policy of fighting to the death. This was an exceptionally heavy casualty rate for only three days of fighting and the capture of one atoll that was only 4.8 km (3 miles) long and some 548 metres (600 yards) across at its widest point.<sup>85</sup> As Ed Drea has noted, while 'the pre-war amphibious doctrine was judged sound ... the war-time patient ... almost died' executing it.<sup>86</sup>

There were, however, some major successes. At a key moment of the battle, when the Japanese could well have counter-attacked and driven the Marines into the sea, they were leaderless. In one of those quirks of history a forward observer with a link directly back to two destroyers saw a group of Japanese officers moving locations and called down 5-inch naval gun fire on to them, killing them all. The result was the destruction of the Japanese command group, who had been moving location after giving up their command bunker so that it could be taken over as a hospital to treat the wounded.<sup>87</sup> More significant was the fact that the naval forces had secured the Marines' operational access to the island and 'no enemy planes were seen at any time' during the landings and combat ashore.<sup>88</sup>

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83 William B. Hopkins, *The Pacific War* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith, 2008), 187.

84 Stockman, *The Battle for Tarawa*, Appendix B, 72.

85 Shaw, Nalty, Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive*, Vol. III, History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1966), 30.

86 Drea, 'Amphibious/Counter-Amphibious doctrine', 24.

87 Hopkins, *The Pacific War*, 191.

88 Report on Operation 'Galvanic'—lessons learned in recent landing operations, AWM 54 645/3/2.

However, as noted, there were plenty of shortcomings and after-action reports noted that there needed to be improvements in reconnaissance, especially in regards to reefs, beaches, wind and tides; better coordination of naval gun fire support, communications, air-ground liaison, training and coordination with the infantry and planning; improved logistics and beach control and organisation; as well as enough LVTs, tanks and six-wheel-drive amphibious trucks (DUKWS).<sup>89</sup>

### **Operation Postern: The landing at Lae**

While the Marines were struggling ashore at Tarawa in November 1943 the Australians in the SWPA were fighting through the jungle of the Huon Peninsula in New Guinea after staging an exceptionally successful landing at Lae on 4 September, followed up by another at Finschhafen on 22 September. The assault at Lae reveals the major differences between the SWPA and CPA amphibious assaults. It illustrates, as the US Navy recognised, that 'there are many points of difference between [atoll warfare] and amphibious assaults against an enemy occupying large [land] masses.' Whereas atoll warfare was akin to a direct 'assault of a fort or a fortified locality with ... the added complication of having to initiate the assault with a ship-to-shore movement'<sup>90</sup> the SWPA was able to concentrate on a more traditional form of amphibious operations—landing where the enemy was not.

Utilising the large land mass of New Guinea the Australians had directed their 3rd Division to conduct an overland assault from Wau towards Salamaua. This was to be a diversionary operation used to draw off the Japanese from Lae and was supported by a tactical amphibious landing by a regiment of the US 41st Infantry Division by the 2ESB that served both to open up a seaborne supply route to the 3rd Australian Division and to provide a forward logistical staging base for the Lae operation.<sup>91</sup>

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89 Report on Operation 'Galvanic'—lessons learned in recent landing operations, AWM 54 645/3/2.

90 Extracts taken from report issued by C-in-C US Fleet—Amphibious Operations for the capture of the Gilbert Islands (Operation Galvanic), AWM 54 546/3/1, 1, 9.

91 For details of the planning for Operation Postern see Peter J. Dean, *The Architect of Victory: The Military Career of Lieutenant-General Sir Frank Horton Berryman* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chapter 9, 208-36. Berryman was the senior Australian staff officer responsible for the operations planning.

With the Japanese occupied in defending Salamaua the 9th Australian Division conducted a shore-to-shore amphibious landing from Milne Bay to Lae, landing troops outside of effective Japanese artillery range from the town. The day after the assault, using the depth of New Guinea's landmass, the US 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment landed on an abandoned Japanese airbase at Nadzab, some 27 kilometres inland from Lae, and was soon supported by the air-landing (direct from Port Moresby and forward bases in Papua) of two brigades from the 7th Australian Division. Lae was thus caught in a pincer movement.<sup>92</sup>

For the amphibious assault the 9th Division landing at Lae was preceded by only a short bombardment by four US destroyers. Such a light approach could be undertaken as it was only designed to 'sweep the edge of the jungle [to] ... force any enemy ... patrols or small machine-gun posts ... to withdraw and take cover while the landing waves approached'.<sup>93</sup> The first echelon of 560 troops landed from fast destroyer transports (APD), the second from eighteen Landing Craft Infantry (LCI), carrying some 3780 troops, and the third from the US Army's 2ESB to organise the beachhead. The VII AF commander, Admiral Barbey, considered the plan more like a 'commando raid, expect that it would be daylight and the troops that would go ashore would stay there'.<sup>94</sup>

The major problem encountered in this operation was not enemy resistance ashore, but rather a lack of organisation of the land force once it was ashore, the maintenance of supplies, the speed of unloading of craft on the beaches and the lack of reserves of amphibious craft. However by the time the operation was complete some 17,000 troops and 12,000 tons of supplies, carried in some 156 ships, had been landed. The major opposition to the landing had come from Japanese aircraft that put out of action two LCIs and two LSTs.<sup>95</sup>

The lead-up assault, against the undefended Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands, as well as the landings at Lae and Finschhafen, were all part of the

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92 For details of this operations see Peter J. Dean (ed.), *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 186-232.

93 General Notes on Woodlark Island, Lae and Finschhafen Landings, by Australian Liaison Officer, Seventh Amphibious Force, AWM 54 591/7/7.

94 Daniel E. Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy* (Annapolis: MD: Naval Institute Press, 1969), 74.

95 Report on the Naval Aspects of the Lae Operation, AWM54 589/7/27.

first stage of MacArthur's Cartwheel plan. 'None of the operations [were] large. [Rather] each was necessarily related to the condition of the area and of the Japanese dispositions.'<sup>96</sup> As Barbey noted, while these landings were 'not likely to make much of a dent on history ... in the Southwest Pacific ... [they were] a matter of great importance ... [as] failure or success would determine the [operational] pattern of MacArthur's forces.'<sup>97</sup>

Once ashore the 9th Australian Division faced the reality of an orthodox advance on an objective through some 17 miles of dense jungle, including a river crossing in the face of enemy fire. The Japanese commander at Lae, caught between the advances of three divisions, decided to withdraw across the Finisterre Ranges. Soon after the town had fallen the Australian C-in-C, General Sir Thomas Blamey, directed the 7th Division to advance up the Markham and Ramu valleys to construct airfields for the Fifth Air Force and to eliminate the Japanese in the area while the 9th Division launched another amphibious assault on Finschhafen. The 9th Division was to secure the area so that it could be developed as a major airfield and port for the landings on New Britain by the US 1st Marine Division in December. Once this area was secured the 9th Division undertook a coastal advance against the retreating Japanese to secure the western side of Vitiaz straight and eventually linked up with the US 32nd Division that was landed at Saidor in January 1944. The 7th and 9th Division would then, in early 1944, be replaced with two Australian militia divisions that would eventually join hands at Madang, thus securing the entire Huon Peninsula. The campaign took some seven months, from 4 September 1943 until 22 April 1944.<sup>98</sup>

Like in the CPA the SWPA amphibious landings in this campaign suffered from poor beach reconnaissance, bad charts and a lack of knowledge of local sea conditions. Unlike the CPA the SWPA had major problems with exits from the beaches, especially on coastal plain areas which were 'wet with dense jungle, mangrove and sago swamps and major water courses', as well as the problems of moving supplies through the jungle.<sup>99</sup> Japanese airpower in the SWPA was still considerable enough

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96 General Notes on Woodlark Island, Lae and Finschhafen Landings, by Australian Liaison Officer, Seventh Amphibious Force, AWM 54 591/7/7.

97 Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 74.

98 Dean (ed.), *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea*, 210-86.

99 General Notes on Woodlark Island, Lae and Finschhafen Landings, by Australian Liaison Officer, Seventh Amphibious Force, AWM 54 591/7/7.

in late 1943 to restrict the use of large amphibious assault transports (APA) due to their slow unloading time, while the LSTs' loads were reduced to speed disembarkation of supplies, thus decreasing their exposure to Japanese airpower. This was a direct result of the fact that even small losses in amphibious craft and vessels in the SWPA at this time would have crippled future operations due to their limited numbers.<sup>100</sup>

### **Advances in the Central and Southwest Pacific 1944**

After the Gilberts the next set of US landing operations in the Central Pacific in the Marshall Islands would see some vast improvements. The US forces were able to operate two new HQ ships in the Marshalls that dramatically improved communications, especially naval support for the forces ashore. The preparation of the Japanese defences before the landing was increased to two days of air and naval bombardment of increased quantity and accuracy. This included US battleships closing to within 1600 metres offshore to direct their fire. Enough LVTs were provided to land multiple battalions of Marines simultaneously and, unlike Tarawa, the rocket-firing landing craft used to support the landings were a success.<sup>101</sup>

Once ashore the Marines' development of tank-infantry teams improved dramatically and they concentrated on fighting through the defences, bypassing and isolating strong points for follow on teams armed with demolitions and flame-throwers to destroy Japanese emplacements. It was, as Drea has noted, the application of 'First World War German sturmtruppen tactics to atoll warfare'.<sup>102</sup>

Nimitz's forces followed up these actions with an assault on the Mariana Islands in June 1944, namely at Saipan and Tinian and Guam (July 1944). The operational procedures were improved in these assault landings through the development of a doctrine of 'more'.<sup>103</sup> More preparation, this time a seven-day bombardment, more LVTs, this time

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100 Ibid.

101 At Tarawa these craft had their firing mechanism short circuit due to a lack of waterproofing and the rough surf, see Report on Operation 'Galvanic'—lessons learned in recent landing operations, AWM 54 645/3/2.

102 Drea, 'Amphibious/Counter-Amphibious doctrine', 25.

103 Ibid., 28.

700 that could put ashore more troops (some 8000 Marines in only 20 minutes), more support troops and more firepower afloat and onshore. Here 'subtlety yielded to raw power'.<sup>104</sup>

This was also supplemented by the arrival of increased numbers of Landing Ship Tanks in the Central Pacific. With their shallow draft, these vessels could be beached to put some 2000 tons of supplies, tanks, trucks, 17 LVTs or 500 troops all the way to shore. Backed up by a new logistics system this meant that 20,000 US troops were put ashore at Saipan by the evening of the first day. What followed was three days of murderous combat to clear the island.<sup>105</sup>

At Saipan, like Tarawa, the Japanese counter-amphibious doctrine had been to defend against the US assault at the water's edge. At Guam the Japanese opted instead for more of a defence in depth, layered into the interior; however, their insistence on suicidal Banzai charges to counter-attack US forces ashore played into the hands of the US who possessed superior fire-support both on and off shore.<sup>106</sup>

These landings were also significant in that they induced the Imperial Japanese Navy into a counter-strike. In the battle of the Philippines Sea, or the 'Mariana's turkey shoot' as the US carrier pilots were soon to dub it, the vastly superior US carrierborne aircraft, plus radar and numerical superiority would see a totally one-sided naval clash. For the loss of only 123 aircraft and damage to one battleship, US naval forces were to sink three Japanese fleet carriers, two oilers, damage a further six ships and destroy between 550–645 aircraft.<sup>107</sup> Just as significant, US forces were soon able to establish an airbase on the island of Tinian for their long-range B-29 Superfortress aircraft to launch attacks on the Japanese home islands.<sup>108</sup> This move, along with the US submarine campaign, would strangle Japan and cut it off from the resources of its Co-Prosperty Sphere that it desperately needed to continue the war.

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104 Alexander, 'Across the Reef: Amphibious Warfare in the Pacific', 196.

105 Hopkins, *The Pacific War*, 225-32.

106 Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 319-20.

107 Murray and Millett, *A War to be Won*, 358-9.

108 Wesley Frank Craven & James Lea Cate (eds), *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944*, Vol. 4, *The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 693.

While Nimitz's forces were leapfrogging across the CPA MacArthur's SWPA forces were making rapid progress along the northern shore of New Guinea and into Dutch New Guinea. In both the CPA and SWPA these moves had been supported by ULTRA and operational intelligence. For instance on Tarawa the USMC had uncovered a Japanese document detailing their order of battle in the Marshall Islands. But of particular significance was the discovery in January 1944 by an Australian unit of a buried trunk at Sio, New Guinea, left by retreating Japanese Army troops which included the entire code library of the 20th Japanese Division. The code library was sent to MacArthur's Central Bureau who used it to break into the Imperial Japanese Army codes that produced an 'embarrassment of riches'. Using the Sio documents they decrypted 'more than 36,000 Japanese Army signals in March 1944 alone'.<sup>109</sup>

Now able to read the Japanese order of battle and knowing where the Japanese had concentrated their troops, MacArthur could plan and undertake bold advances deep behind Japanese lines, far in excess of his land-based fighter cover. In the three months from the conclusion of the Australian capture of Madang in New Guinea in April 1944 MacArthur's forces advanced 1400 kilometres.<sup>110</sup> The SWPA would continue to plan these advances to land where the enemy was not, get established ashore, and build air and naval bases, isolating large numbers of Japanese troops along the way. The Japanese were forced to cede this territory to MacArthur or to slowly concentrate their land forces for a counter-strike which would then have to face local Allied air superiority and heavily dug-in troops supported by massive firepower.<sup>111</sup>

MacArthur's advance was also achieved at very a low combat casualty rate. Between the landings at Hollandia to Morotai (between April and September 1944) US casualties were only 9694 (US Army 1570 killed and 7945 wounded, the SWPA USN forces 58 killed and 121 wounded),<sup>112</sup> less than those suffered by the CPA in the capture of Saipan

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109 Edward J. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Code breaking and the War against Japan, 1942-45* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 88. See also Jean Bou, *MacArthur's Secret Bureau: The Story of Central Bureau, General MacArthur's Signals Intelligence Bureau* (Loftus, NSW: AMHP, 2012).

110 Horner, 'General MacArthur's War', 133.

111 See Stephen R. Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War: The 1944 New Guinea Campaign* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

112 Robert Ross Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*, 577.



in June 1944. However, the CPA forces were not susceptible in the same manner to the tropical diseases that came with operating in the SWPA. For instance at Biak in May-June 1944 MacArthur's forces took 2914 combat casualties but lost another 7000 troops through disease and accidents. In addition MacArthur's combat power was also diminished by the fact that the SWPA 'had the worst return to duty rates in the U.S. Army ... [and] the highest rate (44 per 1000) of neuropsychological breakdowns in the American Armed forces'.<sup>113</sup>

### **Convergence**

The two drives in the Pacific started to converge in terms of both their axes of advance and in their style of operations as they drew nearer to the Philippines. A key marker point was 15 September 1944. On this day SWPA forces invaded Morotai and those of the CPA Peleliu. These were the 'final barriers before the Philippines could be eliminated ... [and] brought the Philippines within range of land-based aircraft'.<sup>114</sup> Thus the capture and refurbishment of the Japanese airfields on both islands would be the major objective.<sup>115</sup>

### **Morotai and Peleliu**

The island of Morotai had no fixed defences and included a garrison of only an estimated 100-200 Japanese out of a force of some 31,700 troops who were positioned in the surrounding islands. MacArthur's assault was supported by the CPA's Third Fleet including three fast carrier groups that conducted strategic strikes from D-6 on the Philippines, Palau, Celebes, Ceram and Halmahera, while MacArthur's Fifth Air Force would attack these targets from D-16. MacArthur's own Seventh Fleet, which had expanded rapidly in recent months and now included six escort carriers, would cover the assault convoy and provide close air support to the troops as they landed. In order to achieve surprise there would be no preliminary air or naval bombardment in the lead-up to the assaults until D-Day.<sup>116</sup>

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113 Murray and Millett, *A War to be Won*, 209.

114 C-in-C US Pacific Fleet [Nimitz] to C-in-C US Fleet [King], Operation in the Pacific Ocean Area September 1944, Annex A Western Caroline Islands [Peleliu] Operations, 7 March 1945, ORMF 80 527-530, AWM. This document provides details from the SWPA on the landing at Morotai as well as Peleliu.

115 The JCS approved the assault on Leyte in the Philippines on the same day (15 September) that Morotai and Peleliu operations kicked off.

116 Operations against Morotai Island: A Report by British Combined Operations Observers, October 1944, ORMF 80 527-530, AWM.

At Morotai the SWPA would put ashore the land force, known as the Tradewind Task Force, under the command of Major General Charles P. Hall. It consisted of the XI Corps HQ, the 31st Infantry Division and one Regimental Combat Team from the 32nd Division. The amphibious assault put ashore some 16,900 troops on D-Day and 56,740 troops by D+16. The landing was carried out by troops coming ashore in LVTs and LCIs against 'negligible opposition'; there were no mines or obstacles to impede the landing, which went 'entirely to plan'. The only major obstacle to the landing was difficulties experienced with the terrain, conditions and congestion on the beaches.<sup>117</sup> The cost of the assault to the allies was nine killed in action, 33 wounded and two missing.<sup>118</sup>

The landing at Morotai had used both fleet and escort carriers and assault waves in LVTs in a manner very similar to the technique for the landings in the CPA. While these traits were now to be common to most of the amphibious assaults across the Pacific by late 1944, the landing force at Peleliu did, however, have an altogether different experience in getting ashore and clearing out the Japanese defences. These landings would demonstrate how far these two operational approaches had come together but also the differences in Japanese resistance between the two theatres and how the Japanese were adapting their tactics in response to the US approach.

Peleliu was preceded by a nine-day bombardment of sporadic nature that was capped off by two days of intense bombardment. The Japanese defenders had set themselves up both at water's edge, which cost the USMC 1000 casualties getting ashore, but significantly Peleliu was the first manifestation of the revised Japanese counter-amphibious tactics where the main defensive positions were concentrated 'in underground positions inland, seeking to delay and bleed the attacking allies'.<sup>119</sup> The result was that while the Marines had predicted a four-day battle to clear the island it would take them some two-and-a-half months to destroy the

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117 Operations against Morotai Island: A Report by British Combined Operations Observers, October 1944, ORMF 80 527-530, AWM; Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*, 476-477 & 481-482.

118 C-in-C US Pacific Fleet [Nimitz] to C-in-C US Fleet [King], Operation in the Pacific Ocean Area-September 1944, Annex A Western Caroline Islands [Peleliu] Operations, 7 March 1945.

119 Alexander, 'Across the Reef: Amphibious Warfare in the Pacific', 208.

Japanese defenders.<sup>120</sup> The landing operation was seen as a 'complete vindication of the essential amphibious doctrines developed by the Marine Corps through two decades of peacetime study', while the bloody battle ashore was regarded as a

Repeat performance of Tarawa and the Marshalls, with overtones of Saipan and Guam; and it presaged the pattern of things to come on under-tunnelled Iwo Jima and, perhaps more particularly, in the high ground of Okinawa.<sup>121</sup>

Despite the vast gulf in difference regarding casualties sustained in these two battles Peleliu and Morotai showed how, on a number of levels, the two theatres' approaches had converged. One of the key features of this convergence was the availability of carrier aviation to support both of these landings. This was a critical move for SWPA amphibious doctrine and landings. As the Australian Advanced LHQ noted in September 1944:

operations of carrier borne aircraft are now a major factor in amphibious operations in the SWPA ... although Australian [and US] troops have been trained in and have taken part in amphibious operations they have not previously taken part in or trained in operations which chiefly rely on carrier borne aircraft for support.<sup>122</sup>

While this report noted that this coordination is 'based on standing operating procedures' experience from the Marshall Islands and Guam landings in the CPA detailed that 'early study and training down to battalion level [is desired] so that maximum value can be obtained'.<sup>123</sup>

In October 1944 the CPA and SWPA forces would combine for the assault on the Philippines. This saw the merging not only of axes of the

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120 C-in-C US Pacific Fleet [Nimitz] to C-in-C US Fleet [King], Operation in the Pacific Ocean Area- September 1944, Annex A Western Caroline Islands [Peleliu] Operations, 7 March 1945.

121 F. O. Hough, *The Seizure of Peleli*, United States Marine Corps Historical Monograph (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1950), 179-80.

122 'Naval Air Support: Review of Application to Australian Forces', September 1944, in Report on a visit to Sixth U.S. Army—Extracts and Paraphrases from Reports on Air Support Operations in the Marshalls and Guam, Lessons from Amphibious Operations, Air Application to Australian forces 1944, AWM 54 645/4/6.

123 Ibid.

Allied assaults in the Pacific but also of their approach to amphibious operations. MacArthur's SWPA would now have access to fleet carrier support; his naval forces in the Seventh Fleet would be massively expanded as were his US Army ground units and his amphibious capabilities. The landing at Leyte on 20 October 1944 would include both MacArthur's US Seventh Fleet and Halsey's Third Fleet (with its 16 aircraft carriers). They would support the landing of four infantry divisions from the SWPA's US Sixth Army. The total force was some 700 ships and 160,000 men mounted from bases over 1000 kilometres distance.<sup>124</sup>

Here the combined forces of the CPA and SWPA were also to see changes to Japanese defensive posture. This would occur in terms of the Japanese attempts to restrict US access to operational areas via the intervention of major Imperial Navy fleet units which led to their defeat at the battle of Leyte Gulf and also the introduction of kamikaze suicide attacks. Incidentally the RAN's official history claims that the heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia* 'was ... the first Allied ship to be hit by a suicide aircraft' on 21 October 1944 that killed the commanding officer, Captain Emile Dechaineux, and 29 other crew.<sup>125</sup>

On 6 January 1945 the SWPA's Sixth Army would land at Lingayen Gulf on the main Philippine Island of Luzon. Twenty-five Allied ships would be lost to suicide attacks while the US would put ashore over 175,000 men. The main Japanese defences would be fought in the interior of the island which would lead to the second largest land campaign that the US fought in the war after northwest Europe.<sup>126</sup>

The final assaults on Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the CPA were the epitome of the USMC approach to amphibious operations; these assaults were supported by overwhelming sea and air superiority. The geography of Iwo Jima dictated Japanese resistance would be both in-depth but also on the shore line given the small size of the island. Okinawa, however, with its larger land mass, would see the Japanese withdraw away from the beaches to conduct a long drawn-out campaign of attrition. At Okinawa

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124 Horner, 'General MacArthur's War', 134.

125 G Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1942-1945*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 2, Navy, Vol. II (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1968), 511. This account is disputed by the US Navy's official history which claims that this was not an organised Kamikaze attack

126 Horner, 'General MacArthur's War', 136-7.

'on the beaches [there was] no enemy and [only] a few land mines had been encountered ... the absence of any but the most trivial opposition, so contrary to expectation, stuck the men as ominous'.<sup>127</sup> Heavy Japanese resistance inland meant the US fleet had to maintain station offshore for an extended period and by the end of the campaign the US Navy had lost 36 ships sunk, another 368 damaged and 4907 lives lost at sea, while the Army and Marine Corps suffered 7374 killed in action ashore.<sup>128</sup>

The adoption of the CPA's amphibious tactics and techniques in the SWPA would also become complete by 1945. This was evident in the very last amphibious assault of the Second World War, the Australian landing at Balikpapan in Borneo. The amphibious assault at Balikpapan was vastly different from the Australian operation at Lae in the SWPA just under two years earlier and it is evidence of the convergence of amphibious doctrine between the two theatres. This was brought about by overwhelming Allied superiority at sea and in the air as well as the preponderance of amphibious craft and ships available to the Allies in all theatres of the war by 1945.

With total control of the air and sea around Borneo along with an extensive logistical and combat capability the I Australian Corps and the 7th Australian Division were not hamstrung by any of the restrictions that the 9th Australian Division faced at Lae in 1943. This freedom gave the planning staff at both corps and division HQ a wide range of options for how to approach the landing.

As a result, rather than landing away from the objective and marching overland through the jungle, as at Lae, the Australians were instead able to adopt a CPA-style frontal assault into the heart of the Japanese defences. It was argued that to make an unopposed landing and an overland march to secure the airfield and port at Balikpapan would in fact play into the hands of the Japanese defenders. Rather as GHQ had requested that an 'advance inland be made without delay', and given the Allies' advantages in firepower and the availability of armoured LVTs, the 7th Division HQ decided that a frontal beach assault was the more viable

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127 Roy E. Appleman, James M Burns, Russell A. Gugeler & John Stevens, *Okinawa the Last Battle*, United States Army in World War II (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1993), 73-4.

128 *Ibid.*, 489.

option.<sup>129</sup> While this greatly increased mine sweeping and naval gun fire support problems, it was concluded that:

a successful assault against the strongest positions would considerably reduce the duration of the campaign and it was thereby hoped that casualties, which reach their highest in a long drawn out war of attrition, would be substantially reduced.<sup>130</sup>

Thus by 1945 it was deemed that conducting a direct opposed amphibious assault against the 'strongest positions' of the enemy in the SWPA would actually reduce casualties. As the Division commander, Major General 'Teddy' Milford noted, 'why land up the coast and to fight miles through the jungle, which suits the enemy, when you can go straight in under heavy supporting fire, which the enemy can't stand.'<sup>131</sup>

In order to facilitate this approach the 7th Division would have under command some 33,446 troops for the assault which included three full infantry brigades plus a commando regiment, a pioneer battalion, an armoured regiment, a machine gun battalion and a US amphibious tractor (LVT) battalion. This order of battle also included one of the I Australian Corps' two Beach Groups which included two RAN Beach Commandos, a pioneer battalion, and supporting units.<sup>132</sup>

The 7th Division's landing on 1 July 1945 was preceded by a twenty-day air bombardment that included the 1st Australian Tactical Air Force RAAF (including four B-24 heavy squadrons) and the US Thirteenth Air Force as well as a sixteen-day naval bombardment from five cruisers and eleven destroyers. In total some 3000 tons of bombs, 7361 rockets, 38,052 shells from three 8-inch guns and 114,000 rounds of automatic fire hit the 3900 Japanese defenders prior to the landing.<sup>133</sup> Once ashore the landing

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129 Staff Study, Operation Oboe-Two, GHQ, 21 March 1945, RG-3 Records of Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), 1942-1945, Box 158, G-3 operations, Oboe II, MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk, VA.

130 7th Australian Division, Report on Operations, Oboe II, September 1945, AWM52, 1/5/14/84

131 Milford as quoted in Gavin Long, *The Final Campaigns*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 1, Army, Vol. VII, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963), 507.

132 War Diary 7th Australian Division, June 1945, Operation Orders, Oboe Two AWM52, 1/5/14/74

133 Japanese defences included 1500 combat troops, 1500 AA troops and 900 lines of communications troops. 7th Australian Division, Report on Operations, Oboe II, September 1945, AWM52, 1/5/14/84.

forces would receive 41, 800 rounds of 25-pounder artillery fire in support during the first ten days of operations.<sup>134</sup> On the day of the operations the naval task force would also have large numbers of carrier-borne aircraft in support.

The first two waves of the assault force landed in LVT's from the US 672nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion at 8.55 am and although they were put ashore on the wrong spot, and the frontage was more restricted than planned for, these errors were quickly rectified.<sup>135</sup> The fire support was so effective that the 17 assault waves landed without a casualty although the Dutch were to later claim that it was 'carried out with excessive vigour and damage far greater than necessary'.<sup>136</sup> Japanese resistance was weak and by the end of the first day the Australians had advanced 2000 yards for 24 killed and 74 wounded.<sup>137</sup> Operations ashore were to continue through until 14 August with 777 Australians, 21 Americans, and six Dutch killed or wounded. The Japanese were to suffer 2023 killed and another 63 taken prisoner.<sup>138</sup>

The 7th Division report on operations noted that the significant features of the landing were the frontal assault being made 'possible by the mainly substantial fire-power', the 'devastating effect on strong-points of heavy naval and aerial bombardment' and the 'small number of troops required to capture even heavily defended positions when sufficient coordinated support is given by supporting arms and naval and aerial bombardment'.<sup>139</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Australian landing at Balikpapan demonstrated how convergence of amphibious doctrine and techniques between the SWPA and the CPA was complete in the Pacific by mid-1945. This was a product of the vast numbers of amphibious ships and craft, especially LVTs, which were available for all Allied operations and the overwhelming sea and air

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134 Long, *The Final Campaigns*, 511.

135 7th Australian Division, Report on Operations, Oboe II, September 1945, AWM52, 1/5/14/84.

136 George Odgers, *Air War Against Japan 1943-45*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 3, Air, Volume II (Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1957), 484.

137 Long, *The Final Campaigns*, 517-20.

138 7th Australian Division, Report on Operations, Oboe II, September 1945, AWM52, 1/5/14/84.

supremacy that the Allies were able to achieve in Borneo. The operations of 1945 were long way from those of 1942 when the SWPA could not muster any amphibious forces to support their campaign in Papua, while the POA were only able to conduct an unopposed amphibious landing at Guadalcanal utilising strategic and operational surprise.

It took the SWPA over a year to develop the capabilities and train the troops to conduct amphibious landings and when they did so the limited resources on hand only allowed for a shore-to-shore capability that dictated that they maximise the geography of the SWPA to land forces away from enemy-held positions. For the CPA it took until the end of 1943 before the necessary naval power had been acquired and the Essex-class fleet carriers were in service. The development of these fast carrier strike groups was essential to support long range amphibious assaults against the small central Pacific atolls. From this period the UMSC and USN refined their assault landing techniques, principally by the addition of more firepower, improved assault procedures and better coordination between naval, air and land forces.

As the massive output of US shipyards got under way, by 1944 the Southwest Pacific Area would also receive greater support in terms of a long-range ocean-going amphibious capability and additional naval capabilities. This allowed a convergence in technique in amphibious operations with the CPA that was cemented with the convergence of the two axes of advance at the Philippines and the support to MacArthur's forces by the Third and Fifth Fleets.

It was a long road from Tarawa and Lae, but by the time it came to planning for the amphibious assaults on the Japanese homeland in November 1945 the forces in both Pacific commands were working off the same amphibious doctrine and techniques. Here the Allied assumption was that the Japanese would revert to their 'long favored doctrine of "annihilation of the enemy at the water's edge"',<sup>140</sup> which meant that surprise would, again, be sacrificed for fire-power. In the end this plan would never be tested in combat as the fire-power of Allied amphibious assaults would give way to the fire-power of atomic weaponry to end the war.

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139 'Operations' in 7th Australian Division, Report on Operations, Oboe II, September 1945, AWM52, 1/5/14/84.

140 G-2 estimate of the enemy Situation Olympic Operations, 1 August 1945 as quoted in Drea, 'Amphibious/Counter-Amphibious doctrine', 31.



# Grenada: Army Forces under Naval Command

*Edgar F. Raines, Jr*

On 25 October 1983, US forces, including elements from all four services operating under naval command, invaded the small island-nation of Grenada, located in the Lesser Antilles island chain in the eastern Caribbean. Given the disparity in military power between the contestants, the ultimate result was hardly in doubt. The operation did expose, however, major problems in command relations that contributed to the subsequent passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment of 1987 to the act that created US Special Operations Command. This paper will examine command relations at the level of the National Command Authority; the major unified command, that is, US Atlantic Command; the joint task force headquarters off Grenada; and at subordinate task force headquarters. It will focus on four factors: command organization, service cultures, personalities, and timing—of both the sequence of events and the compression of the decision cycle.<sup>1</sup>

Grenada was small but densely populated; in 1983 it had a population of approximately 91,000 living on 344 square kilometres of land. The inhabitants, largely descended from African slaves, were primarily rural. St George's, both the capital and the largest city, had only 7500 residents. The economy was largely based on agricultural exports—mace and bananas were the principal crops—and had suffered under the blows of the 'oil shocks of the 1970s. Given the economic hard times, the unemployment rate in 1979 stood at 26 per cent; most skilled workers

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1 The author would like to thank Ms Rebecca C. Raines, Mr Robert Goldich, Mr Thomas Glakas, the late Hon Ike Skelton, Ms Beth Mackenzie, and Mr Bryan Hockensmith for their assistance while I prepared this paper.

emigrated, leaving behind a resident population skewing young and increasingly in despair.<sup>2</sup>

Although a leftist revolution in 1979 brought a Marxist-oriented government to power, the island-nation remained in the British Commonwealth. Continuing economic difficulties brought a split in the Grenadian leadership in October 1983. A faction led by Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard first deposed Prime Minister Maurice Bishop on 12 October and then assassinated him and a number of his cabinet officers seven days later. Deeply unpopular in the wake of the killings, Coard gave way to a military junta headed by the Minister of Defence, General Hudson Austin, who proclaimed a twenty-four hour, shoot-on-sight curfew. Included in this order were some 1000 Americans, 700 of them students at an off-shore medical school, the St George's University School of Medicine.<sup>3</sup>

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- 2 Sandra W. Meditz and Dennis M. Hanratty, *Islands of the Commonwealth Caribbean: A Regional Study*, DA Pam 550-33 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1989), 349-52; Morley Ayearist, *The British West Indies: The Search for Self Government* (New York: New York University Press, 1960), 350-3; Beverly Steele, *Grenada: A History of Its People* (New York: Macmillan Caribbean, 2003), 325-414; Tony Thorndike, *Grenada: Politics, Economics, and Society* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1985), xvii-xx; and Plan, Jiri Cerhonek, Ministry of Planning, June 1982, sub: A Project for Grenada's Economic Development in the Period 1983-85, in US, Department of State (hereafter DOS) and Department of Defense (hereafter DOD), Individual Documents Released (hereafter cited as IDR), No. U, Historians' files, US Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC (hereafter CMH).
- 3 Edward Cody, 'Prime Minister of Grenada Dies in a Military Coup', *Washington Post* (20 October 1983): A1, A35; Transcript, Tape Recording by Alister Hughes, Market Square, St George's, Grenada, 19 October 1983, in US, Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 27 March 1984, S 3278-S 3279. The regime claimed that the problem was caused by Bishop and his supporters, a view that most students of the Grenadian Revolution reject, see: Bulletin, Main Political Department, New JEWEL, 20 October 1983, sub: Their Heroism is an Example for Us, in IDR, 4 November 1983, No. 000091. Mark Adkin provides the most detailed reconstruction of the events leading to Bishop's death in *URGENT FURY: The Battle for Grenada* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 70-6. See also Minutes, Central Committee (hereafter CC), New JEWEL Movement Party (hereafter NJM), 14-16 September 1983, sub: Extraordinary Meeting of the CC of NJM, in Michael Ledeen and Herbert Romerstein (eds), *Grenada Documents: An Overview and Selection* (Washington, DC: Department of State and Department of Defense, 1984), document 112. See also 'The Alienation of Leninist Group Therapy: Extraordinary General Meeting of Full Members of the NJM', *Caribbean Review* 12 (Fall 1983): 14-15, 48-58; Notes, no date, sub: CC Meetings; Resolution, People's Revolutionary Army Branch, NJM Party, 12 October 1983; Ltr, Nazim Burke to Maurice Bishop, 11 October 1983; all in IDR, Nos. 000136, 100103, 100270. Linda Wolfe, 'Young Doctors at Sea: Learning Medicine at Those New Caribbean Schools', *New York Magazine* (25 April 1983): 34-9.

The crisis brought both political dangers and strategic opportunities for the administration of President Ronald W. Reagan. The Americans on the island were potential hostages. Reagan had won election by exploiting his predecessor's handling of the Iranian hostage crisis, and a new presidential election was only a year away. So much for the danger. The opportunity lay in countering a perceived Soviet-Cuban attempt to extend influence into the eastern Caribbean. Some 500 Cuban volunteers' were constructing an international airport at Point Salines on the south-western tip of the island. The Cubans, all reservists, were armed and conducted periodic military exercises. When finished, the airport would be capable of hosting both the most modern jet passenger aircraft and jet fighter-bombers. Dominating sea lanes that carried 40 per cent of US oil imports, its completion promised only additional anxieties for the US government.<sup>4</sup>

In Washington, late on the night of 13 October, a low-level member on the National Security Council Staff queried the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to what military resources would be available for a peaceful evacuation of Americans from Grenada. The Joint Chiefs activated a crisis response cell to monitor the Grenada situation. It began work at 0800 on 14 October, and the Joint Staff assigned the potential operation the code name URGENT FURY.<sup>5</sup>

That same day someone in the crisis response cell made a 'what if' telephone call to US Atlantic Command in Norfolk, Virginia, the major unified command with responsibility for the Caribbean. In response, officers in the operations directorate in Norfolk began reviewing contingency plans for non-combatant evacuations and shows of force. Staffers assumed that a show of force might be necessary to ensure

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- 4 On the 1980 presidential campaign, see: Lou Cannon, *Reagan* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 227–303. On the strategic importance of Grenada, see: Issues Paper, [Interagency Core Group], [18 May 1983], sub: Grenada, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (hereafter CJCS) Files (Vessey), 502B (NSC Memos), National Archives and Records Administration—Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (hereafter NARA—RRPL); Ronald W. Reagan, *The Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1983*, 2 vols (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), 2: 240; Timothy Ashby, 'Grenada—Threat to America's Caribbean Oil Routes', *National Defense* 65 (May–June 1981): 52–4, 205.
  - 5 Chronology (hereafter Chrono), 140000Z and 141200Z [October 1983], Joint Chiefs of Staff (hereafter JCS), Washington, DC, URGENT FURY (hereafter UF) Miscellaneous Scenario Events List, Planning/Execution Systems, 84, Historians' files, CMH; Ronald H. Cole, *Operation URGENT FURY: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada, 12 October–2 November 1983* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 12.

a peaceful evacuation of noncombatants. They worked under three assumptions that guided all subsequent planning: first, all the units listed in Concept Plan 2360 (the plan, if it can be called that, for Caribbean contingencies) would be available for the commander-in-chief, Atlantic Command, to draw upon to execute the mission; second, neither Cuba nor the Soviet Union would intervene militarily; and, third, the bulk of the students were resident at the medical school's True Blue Campus, just off the eastern end of the runway under construction at Point Salines. The last of these assumptions, based on spotty intelligence, proved mistaken. (For some reason, never explained, the J-2 at US Atlantic Command apparently did not query his counterpart at US Caribbean Command, a subordinate unified command of Atlantic Command with responsibility for the region. Officers at US Caribbean Command knew that the school had two campuses.) From then on, the planners at Atlantic Command and their counterparts at the Pentagon regularly exchanged information about the crisis. Both groups accepted the fact that the great danger in any peaceful evacuation was that until the evacuees actually departed they could suddenly become hostages.<sup>6</sup>

As the crisis lengthened, US Atlantic Command at Norfolk, Virginia, activated its own crisis response centre on 18 October to handle the increased volume of work. Planners there focused on the temporary availability of the 22d Marine Amphibious Unit, commanded by Col. James P. Faulkner. Marine amphibious units were the smallest of Marine air-ground task forces and were built around a battalion landing team, in this case the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, with an attached Marine helicopter squadron and a support group consisting of maintenance, supply, and support units. It was in the process of boarding the ships of the Amphibious Squadron Four en route to Lebanon where the battalion would take over the peacekeeping duties from the 24th Marine

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6 Concept Plan 2360-83, US Atlantic Command (hereafter LANTCOM), Norfolk, VA, 30 March 1983, Grenada files, Command History Office, US Army Forces Command (hereafter FORSCOM), Fort McPherson, GA; Chrono, LANTCOM, sub: Operation (hereafter Op.) UF, enclosed (hereafter encl) in Ltr, Adm Wesley L. McDonald, Commander-in-Chief, LANTCOM (hereafter CINCLANT), Norfolk, VA, to Gen John W. Vessey, Jr, CJCS, Washington, DC, 6 February 1984, sub: Op. UF Report; Interv, Maj Bruce R. Pirnie with Tony Nelson, Defense Intelligence Agency (hereafter DIA), 9 December 1985; both in Historians' files, CMH; Msg, Adm Wesley L. McDonald to JCS, 200616Z October 1983, sub: Commander's Estimate of the Situation, Grenada Evacuation, encl in Memo, Lt Gen Jack N. Merritt, Director, Joint Staff, for Directors and Heads of Agencies, Office of JCS, 30 January 1984, Joint History Office (hereafter JHO) Archives.

Amphibious Unit for the next six months. Captain Carl R. Erie, a naval aviator with considerable experience with attack aircraft, commanded the squadron from the assault helicopter carrier USS *Guam*. By 19 October the Amphibious Squadron Four was at sea. The covering force for the movement, the *Independence* battle group consisting of the carrier USS *Independence* and five destroyers, was already underway.<sup>7</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff held their first meeting concerning Grenada on 19 October, the same day that Bishop died. They decided to send a warning order to Atlantic Command for a possible evacuation of non-combatants from Grenada. They wanted the commander, Admiral Wesley L. McDonald, to prepare an estimate of the situation by dawn on 20 October. He was to examine all the options, everything from a show of force to armed intervention leading both to the rescue of the Americans and to the imposition of a democratic government. The chiefs had received no guidance as yet on a mission. They simply wanted to be prepared for all eventualities. The order did not activate either the Army or Air Force component commands of US Atlantic Command, possibly because the Joint Chiefs wanted to keep preparations as low key as possible at this stage. Admiral McDonald had the authority to activate these headquarters on his own, but chose not to do so either then or later. The next morning, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army General John W. Vessey, flew to Norfolk to receive McDonald's briefing on the Grenada planning.<sup>8</sup>

Vessey, the last World War II veteran to serve as chairman, combined a well-deserved reputation for physical and moral courage with a high intelligence, which he hid well behind personal reserve and a dry wit. He held a position of minimal authority in which much depended on the holder's ability to develop consensus and establish an atmosphere of collegiality. By law and regulation the Joint Chiefs—the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the professional heads of the four services—

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7 Ronald H. Spector, *U.S. Marines in Grenada, 1983* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1984), 1; Cole, *URGENT FURY*, 18. For the Lebanon intervention see Eric Hammel, *The Root: The Marines in Beirut, August 1982–February 1984* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Javonovich, 1985).

8 Msg, Gen John W. Vessey, CJCS to CINCLANT, US Commander-in-Chief, Military Airlift Command (hereafter CINCMAC), Scott AFB, IL, and US Commander-in-Chief, Readiness Command (hereafter CINCREAD), MacDill AFB, FL, 200347Z October 1983, sub: Warning Order—Grenada NEO [Noncombatant Evacuation Operation], attached to Grenada Timeline, JHO Archives; Chrono, JCS, UF Miscellaneous Scenario Events List, Command and Control—Task Organization, 1; Chrono, LANTCOM, sub: Op. UF, Historians' files, CMH; Cole, *URGENT FURY*, 13–14.

constituted a corporate entity charged with providing military advice to the president and the secretary of defense and transmitting the orders of those officials to the major unified commands. The current statutory basis for the Joint Chiefs, the 1958 Amendments to the National Defense Act of 1947, had removed the services, and hence the service chiefs, from the chain of command. For the chiefs to have any influence, they had to achieve unanimity, and that often resulted in agreements on the lowest common denominator. The chiefs normally protected the vested interests of their services in every recommendation they made, a tendency often referred to as 'log rolling'. Although he was arguably the most effective chairman to operate under the constraints of the 1958 legislation, Vessey could influence but not direct these recommendations.<sup>9</sup>

The headquarters to which General Vessey flew on 20 October was a *unified command*, meaning that it consisted of all four services, but in peacetime it had only one component assigned to it, the US Atlantic Fleet. The Atlantic Command staff consisted solely of Navy and Marine Corps officers; the Army and the Air Force normally assigned only liaison officers to the headquarters. In an emergency, US Army Atlantic and US Air Force Atlantic, the service component commands of US Atlantic Command (in peacetime US Army Forces Command and US Air Force Tactical Air Command) would supply extra officers to round out the headquarters so that the commander of Atlantic Command could draw upon the expertise of all the services. In fact, the commander of US Atlantic Command and his staff doubled as the commander and staff of US Atlantic Fleet. Moreover, since 1952 the commander of US Atlantic Command had also functioned as Supreme Allied Commander, Allied Command, Atlantic—that is, the commander of NATO naval forces deployed in the Atlantic. In this case, at least, as commander of Allied Command, Atlantic, he had

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9 On Vessey, see: George C. Wilson, 'A "Mud Soldier" for Joint Chiefs', *Washington Post* (5 March 1982): A1, A12; Clay Blair, 'Vessey: A Soldier's Soldier', *Washington Times* (17 May 1982): B1–B2; Richard Halloran, 'A Commanding Voice for the Military', *New York Times Magazine* 16 (15 July 1984): 18–25, 52; Memo, [Department of the Army (hereafter DA), Office of the Chief of Public Affairs (hereafter OCPA)], 30 September 1985, sub: John William Vessey, Jr, Gen. On the Joint Chiefs of Staff, see: Steven L. Rearden, *Council of War: A History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1942–1991* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2012), 183–90, 422–38; DOD Directive (hereafter Dir.) 5100.1, 31 December 1958, sub: Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components, in Alice C. Cole et al., *The Department of Defense: Documents on Establishment and Organization, 1944–1978* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, 1978), 316–24; US, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, JCS Pub 2, October 1974, change 1, 16–19.

a separate combined staff composed of officers from the NATO navies. Several commanders of US Atlantic Command had complained that this triple hatting had given them too wide a span of control plus insufficient staff to support the missions of the various commands, but as of 1983 no president, secretary of defense, or chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had attempted to rectify the situation.<sup>10</sup>

Simply listing the variety of wartime missions that Atlantic Command was responsible for in 1983 suggests the degree of command overstretch. These included: the safe convoy of men and materiel to reinforce NATO's Central Front, which meant protecting shipping from Soviet attack submarines; the defense of the continental United States both by the neutralisation of all Soviet ballistic missile submarines in the Atlantic and Caribbean and by managing the Atlantic extension of the continental aircraft warning system; and operational control over all strategic nuclear retaliatory forces on ballistic missile submarines deployed in the Atlantic. This last responsibility made the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic, a major player in the US single, integrated, targeting plan for thermonuclear war. In addition, the rise of the Soviet surface fleet in the 1970s led the Navy to re-evaluate its plans for a general war with the Soviet Union. In the event of war, Atlantic Command would assume the offensive north of the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap, attacking the Soviet fleet and its base facilities. Finally, ever since the rise of Fidel Castro in the late 1950s, planning for Caribbean contingencies had become a particularly heavy burden.<sup>11</sup>

Admiral McDonald was a 59-year-old Naval Academy graduate, class of 1946, who had spent most of his career in naval aviation, specialising in fighter and attack aircraft. As commander of an attack squadron, VA-56, he had led the first air strike against North Vietnam following the passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August 1964. Subsequent assignments brought greater responsibilities including command of the aircraft carrier USS *Coral Sea* in operations off North Vietnam during 1970-71 and command of the US Second Fleet in the Atlantic from 1977

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10 Ronald H. Cole et al., *The History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-1993* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 1995), 37-91; Leo P. Hirrel and William R. McClintock, *United States Atlantic Command, Fiftieth Anniversary, 1947-1997* (Norfolk, VA: Office of the Command Historian, Headquarters, Commander-in-Chief, US Atlantic Command, 1998), 3.

11 Hirrel and McClintock, *Atlantic Command*, ix-xi, 3, 25-32.

to 1979. These appointments gave him little exposure, however, to his contemporaries in the Air Force and the Army. Perhaps for this reason, he was, as one former aide described him, the most service parochial senior officer he had ever met. McDonald also had a reputation as a 'big picture' type of officer with little interest in details, an approach non-aviators often attributed to aviators. In October 1983 it remained to be seen whether he also conformed to the stereotype about fighter pilots as individuals who were ready to fly and fight with minimal preparation.<sup>12</sup>

Admiral McDonald and his staff briefed General Vessey on the full range of options from peaceful evacuation of US and foreign nationals to combat operations to rescue them. For this latter category, he proposed three possible scenarios based on the available forces. The first involved using the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit supported by the USS *Independence* battlegroup. It could arrive on station by 25 October. The second option involved a different Marine amphibious unit, one that would not arrive off Grenada until 29 October. The third involved one Army airborne battalion task force supplied by US Readiness Command, a unified command with joint doctrine and joint training as its main responsibilities. Depending on the unit chosen, the airborne battalion could be ready for insertion before 25 October.<sup>13</sup>

General Vessey quickly discarded McDonald's second option—the delay was too great. McDonald favoured option one using the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit, but Vessey was concerned that a three- to five-day delay, the time the Joint Staff estimated it would take to secure Grenada, was not wise given the importance of its mission in the eastern Mediterranean. This, however, remained a possibility. Vessey focused most of his attention on option three—the Army airborne battalion. He suggested to McDonald that he request an Army ranger battalion. Ranger battalions had specialised training in how to seize airfields. The airfield

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12 Memo, Navy Office of Information, 3 May 1974, sub: R Adm Wesley L. McDonald, Naval Historical Center Archives, Washington, DC; 'Navy Pilots Tell of Raids', *New York Times* (11 August 1964): 15; 'NATO Reports Appointment of Its Top Naval Commander', *New York Times* (14 August 1982); List, Commanders, Second Fleet; E-Mail, James A. Knechtmann to author, 20 February 2008; MFR, author, 9 April 2010, sub: Conversation with Dr Lawrence A. Yates; all in Historians' files, CMH.

13 Chrono, encl 2 to Ltr, McDonald to Vessey, 6 February 1984, sub: Op. UF After Action Report (hereafter AAR); Msg, McDonald to JCS, 200616Z October 1983, sub: Commander's Estimate of Situation, Grenada Evacuation, encl to Memo, Merritt for Agency Directors and Heads, JCS, 30 January 1984; both in JHO Archives.



construction site at Point Salines, next to the True Blue Campus of the St George's University School of Medicine, was an obvious target for a unit with such expertise. Then he returned to Washington.<sup>14</sup>

That same day the Special Situation Group of the National Security Council, that is, the National Security Council presided over by the vice president rather than the president, learned of General Austin's shoot-on-sight order and of an appeal from the prime minister of Barbados for US intervention. The group directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare detailed plans to invade Grenada and recommended to the president that he divert the *Independence* battle group and Amphibious Squadron Four. Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger did not wait for the president's authorisation, which came the next day, but immediately ordered the ships to sail to Grenadian waters. General Vessey contacted Major General Richard A. Scholtes, the commander of US Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to tell him that a landing in Grenada was a possibility. Vessey wanted Scholtes to develop a plan. Specifically he wanted him to designate the targets he considered important, and come to Washington and brief him the next day. As Scholtes hung up, he assumed that he would be working directly for the chairman as he had in the past.<sup>15</sup>

Created in 1980, Joint Special Operations Command was an independent subordinate unified command designed to conduct covert anti-terrorist missions. It represented an attempt to mend one of the

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14 Msg, McDonald to JCS, 200616Z October 1983; Cover Sheet, Lt Col Daniel E. Staber, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (hereafter DCSOPS), FORSCOM to DA for DCSOPS, 21 October 1983, sub: Grenada Evacuation (UF); Ltr, Gen John W. Vessey, US Army, Retired (hereafter Ret), to Brig Gen David A. Armstrong, n.d., Director, JHO; Interv, Ronald H. Cole with Gen John W. Vessey, 25 March 1987; all in JHO Archives.

15 Agenda, 20 October 1983, sub: CPPG Meeting, NSC Crisis Management Center (hereafter CMC) Records, Grenada I (9), Box 90,931, NARA—RRPL; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 326–7; Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 109; Msg, Amb Milan D. Bish, Bridgetown, Barbados, to Sec State, 201945Z October 1983, sub: Barbadian PM Tom Adams Pleas for US Intervention in Grenada: Believes Leadership of the Region Would Strongly Support and Fully Associate with US, 83 Bridgetown 06430, DOS; Stephen E. Flynn, 'Grenada as a "Reactive" and a "Proactive" Crisis: Models of Crisis Decision-Making' (PhD thesis, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1991), 111, has the fullest account of the vice president's role in this meeting. On Vessey's call, see Interv, Lawrence A. Yates with Maj Gen Richard A. Scholtes, 4 March 1999, Historians' files, CMH.

weaknesses in US special operating forces identified in the wake of the abortive attempt in 1980 to rescue the American hostages in Tehran. The special operating forces from the different services needed a permanent headquarters so that they could train and work together on a continuous basis. As a subunified command, Joint Special Operations Command could work directly for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or be attached to a unified command to support it. Over the past three years the command had with only one exception worked directly for the chairman. The exception occurred in 1982 when it reported to US European Command while supporting the Italian police during the successful effort to rescue Brigadier General James L. Dozier, kidnapped by the Italian Red Brigade. The command was so new and its capabilities so exotic that only a few individuals in the military were aware of its existence, let alone the general public. Units under its control included the Army's Delta Force, a company-sized counter-terrorist unit modeled on the British Special Air Services Regiment, two Army Ranger battalions, one on each coast, the Navy's SEAL Team 6, and the Army's 160th Aviation Battalion. Scholtes, an officer with a primarily mechanised infantry background, had three years' experience directing counter-terrorist operations. A string of unbroken successes had made him a believer in the counter-terrorist mission and the men who performed it. He exuded confidence in them and himself.<sup>16</sup>

The next day, 21 October, Secretary of Defense Weinberger in consultation with General Vessey formally designated Atlantic Command as the headquarters to direct the operation—if one occurred. As a consequence of this decision, General Scholtes and his staff flew to Norfolk to brief Admiral McDonald rather than to Washington to brief General Vessey. When McDonald entered the room, he may have heard the name Joint Special Operations Command, but he had no idea of what capabilities it possessed. Shortly after Scholtes had assumed command, he had begun a program of briefing all the commanders of unified commands as to the new organisation's missions and the unique skills of its members. Atlantic Command, in his judgment the unified command least likely to need the support of Joint Special Operations Command, had

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16 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999. Jeff Gerth and Philip Taubman, 'U.S. Military Creates Secret Units for Use in Sensitive Tasks Abroad', *New York Times* (8 June 1984) first revealed the headquarters' existence. Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, *Delta Force* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983), 260–5; Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 60–90; Memo, [DA, OCPA], 15 July 1982, sub: Resumé of Service Career of Richard Adrian Scholtes, Maj Gen.

never received the briefing. MacDonald was incredulous when Scholtes proposed making his assault at 0230, the darkest part of the night. The admiral was completely unfamiliar with night vision goggles—although they had been standard issue for Marine sniper teams for some time. It took Scholtes considerable effort to convince McDonald that his concept of operations was feasible, but he did.<sup>17</sup>

Back at his Fort Bragg headquarters, Scholtes and his staff began detailed planning. Late in the afternoon of 21 October, Atlantic Command requested that both Joint Special Operations Command and the 82nd Airborne Division send representatives to a planning meeting at Atlantic Command on 22 October. Two days earlier, Atlantic Command had notified the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 82nd's parent unit, that the division might become involved in Grenada. At the time, corps and division planners could only pull the existing plans—hardly more than lists of available units and possible objectives—from safes and examine them.<sup>18</sup>

Since 1958, the XVIII Airborne Corps had served as the Army's strategic army corps with the mission of deploying world-wide to extinguish brush-fire wars. Unlike its configuration during World War II and for many years thereafter, the 1983 edition of the corps was not simply a tactical headquarters. As part of the redesign of the Army coming out of the Vietnam war, the Army Staff assigned corps substantial logistical units, heretofore grouped at either division or field army level. In 1983 XVIII Airborne Corps also controlled five maneuver elements: the 82nd Airborne Division, a unit with three maneuver brigades and a field artillery brigade equipped and trained to make forcible entry by parachute assault; the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), a unit sized and equipped to defend against and attack armour-heavy units; the 101st Airborne Division, a helicopter-heavy air assault division; and two demonstration units assigned to Army schools—the 197th Infantry Brigade at the

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17 National Security Decision Directive (hereafter NSDD) 110, Ronald Reagan, President, 21 October 1983, sub: Grenada: Contingency Planning, in NSDD, 1–250, NARA—RRPL, Box 1; Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

18 Memo, Maj Lynn, Special Duty Officer, XVIII Airborne (hereafter Abn.) Corps, [19 October 1983], in 'Initial Implementation File', XVIII Abn. Corps, Emergency Operations (hereafter Ops.) Center Records, Op. UF, Record Group (hereafter RG) 338, Entry 228, UD-06W, NARA—College Park, MD (hereafter NARA—CP). Info paper, Lt Col Tillman, Office of the DCSOPS/Curr. Ops. Division (hereafter Div.), FORSCOM, 19 November 1983, sub: Grenada Lessons Learned (hereafter LL); Interv, Col Louis D. F. Frasché with Lt Col Frank H. Akers, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div., 22 November 1983; both in Historians' files, CMH.

Infantry School and the 194th Armor Brigade at the Armor School. When a division deployed, the corps directed the deployment, including the timing and sequencing of units into the area of operations, and provided both the logistical, communications, and administrative units needed to sustain the operation. Unless an operation involved more than one corps, the XVIII Airborne Corps provided direction at what was becoming to be called the *operational level of war*. As such it was indispensable.<sup>19</sup>

Lt. Colonel Frank H. Akers, the division G-3, led the 82nd Airborne Division planning team, which included a representative from the XVIII Airborne Corps, to Norfolk on Saturday, 22 October. Akers fortuitously met Lt. Colonel Richard A. Pack, the Joint Special Operations Command J-3, before they entered the meeting. Although the division and the command were both at Fort Bragg, the staffs had worked in isolation from one another. Pack brought Akers up to date on the state of planning at Atlantic Command. Together they worked out an 'Army position'. They agreed to recommend that Atlantic Command use special operations forces and rangers as the initial assault force and the 82nd as a follow-on force. Derivative from this division of labour, they further recommended that the Air Force supply C-130s for the rangers and special operating forces and C-141s for the airborne. The C-130s were smaller, faster, and more manoeuvrable than the C-141s and consequently better adapted for an assault landing against opposition.<sup>20</sup>

Akers found the planning meeting that followed strange—a testament to how little contact Army staff officers at Fort Bragg had with the Navy and Marine Corps staff officers at Norfolk on a day-to-day basis. It took him a while to realise that the older, distinguished looking officer in a jogging suit who called the meeting to order was in fact Admiral McDonald. There was no agenda, no formal briefings, no summary of

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19 Col Vernon R. Rawie, 'STRAC', *Armor* 48 (May–June 1959): 43–7; Gen Bruce Palmer, Jr, *Intervention in the Caribbean: The Dominican Crisis of 1965* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), 1–11; William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 187–8; Robert L. Burke, 'Corps Logistics Planning in Vietnam', *Military Review* 49 (August 1969): 3–11. Intervs, author with Maj Frederick C. Perkins, Div. Transportation Officer, 82nd Abn. Div., 14 July 1986, 4 August 1986; Lt Col Charles Hicks with Lt Col William F. Kelly, executive officer (hereafter XO), 82nd Div. Support Command (hereafter DISCOM), [November 1983]; both in Historians' files, CMH.

20 Intervs, Frasc  with Akers, 22 November 1983; Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999; Maj Bruce R. Pirnie with Maj Thomas D. Smith, G-3 Ops., 82nd Abn. Div., 3 April 1985, Historians' files, CMH.

decisions reached. Instead there was a meandering discussion, at its best like a graduate seminar and at its worst resembling an after-hours 'bull' session among graduate students. This lack of structure and focus was jarring to all the Army officers involved. In the course of the conversation, McDonald concluded that with the Marines requiring three or four more days to arrive on station and with the Joint Special Operations Command needing additional time to rehearse its units, the 82nd Airborne Division had to be at his disposal because it had the capacity to sortie a battalion task force within eighteen hours of notification. Regarding timing, the conferees agreed that the assault should take place at 0230 to take full advantage of the night-fighting capabilities possessed by the rangers and the special forces. McDonald further decided that because US Forces Caribbean was preoccupied with training exercises, he would cut it out of the operation. As the meeting broke up, McDonald shepherded the Army planning team into a small side room filled with senior officers. Then McDonald called General Vessey on a secure phone.<sup>21</sup>

Vessey reported that the president had approved the current plans and preparations. CBS News, however, had broken the story about the diversion of the Marines to the Caribbean. The president was concerned about leaks. He had told Vessey that he was to put 'nothing down on paper'. While this was an impossibility, Vessey admonished McDonald that security had to be more than ordinary. When he hung up, McDonald passed the news on to the officers in the room.<sup>22</sup>

Akers and his team left Norfolk before Admiral McDonald decided to scrap Concept Plan 2360 in its entirety except for the force list. This meant that he also removed XVIII Airborne Corps from the chain of command, a detail that the Army officers would have been most anxious to learn. What actually happened is problematic, because none of the principals were closely questioned on the issue. Apparently someone in Washington,

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21 Intervs, Frasché with Akers, 22 November 1983; Pirnie with T. Smith, 3 April 1985; AAR [Lt Col Jack D. Crabtree II, G-4, 82nd Abn. Div.], sub: UF AAR, Historians' files, CMH.

22 Edward Cody, 'Cuba Condemns Grenada Coup, Will Review Tie', *Washington Post* (22 October 1983): A1, A12; Fred Hiatt, 'U.S. Says Situation Still Unclear as Naval Force Nears Grenada', *Washington Post* (23 October 1983): A24; B. Drummond Ayres, Jr, 'U.S. Marines Diverted to Grenada in Event Americans Face Danger', *New York Times* (22 October 1983): Sect. I, 1, 12. Statement, Langhorne A. Motley, Assistant (hereafter Asst.) Sec. State for International Affairs, before the House Armed Services Committee, 24 January 1984, sub: 'The Decision To Assist Grenada', in US, DOS, *Current Policy* No. 541 (24 January 1984): 2. Intervs, Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987; Frasché with Akers, 22 November 1983; Pirnie with T. Smith, 3 April 1985.

probably Vessey, communicated the concern of the president that there be no long-term occupation. A high level officer, 'a three star', might have conveyed this idea to the media unintentionally. McDonald then removed the corps. It was his decision made in the context of Washington concerns. Through the vagaries of the Army personnel system, neither General Vessey nor the other two senior Army officers on the Joint Staff who might have questioned this decision had any personal experience with the post-Vietnam corps. Under the pressures of preparing the Grenada intervention, they apparently reverted to thinking about the corps as the World War II headquarters with only tactical responsibilities. Because of the president's concerns about secrecy, Vessey did not include any of the logisticians on the Joint Staff in the planning. What takes the breath away, no matter what anyone's understanding was of the corps' functions or their grasp of the concept of *operational level of war*, admittedly a new term, was the willingness of senior officers at the last moment to discard organisational arrangements frequently exercised in peacetime for a totally *ad hoc* arrangement. Perhaps at this point McDonald and Vessey were only thinking of the division as an occupation force—but even that is not certain.<sup>23</sup> Even absent this critical information, there was much for the division commander and acting corps commander, Major General Edward L. Trobaugh, to digest once the team arrived at Fort Bragg. Given the president's restrictions on sharing information, General Trobaugh decided that he could only activate a limited planning team from the division staff (he also excluded his logisticians) and notify only those commanders whose troops would be immediately affected. He was struck at once by the fact that if the crisis peaked before the Marines arrived on station, the division would have to secure the entire island. He made this scenario the focus for the division's planning. One of the participants also called the corps commander, Lieutenant General Jack V. Mackmull, who immediately headed back for Bragg from the beach, where he had taken a brief weekend break from a hectic schedule.<sup>24</sup>

23 Intervs, Frasché with Akers, 22 November 1983; Pirnie and author with Akers, [1985]; Col Malcomb A. Danner and Maj Scott R. McMichael with Lt Col Duane E. Williams, Commander (hereafter Cdr.), 1st Battalion (hereafter Bn.), 320th Field Artillery (hereafter FA), and Maj Paul V. Passaro, S-3, 1st Bn., 320th FA, [November 1983]; Maj Charles R. Bishop with Lt Gen Jack V. Mackmull, 29 November 1983; all in Historians' files, CMH.

24 Intervs, Frasché with Akers, 22 November 1983; Bishop with Maj Gen Edward L. Trobaugh, Cdr. 82nd Abn. Div., 30 November 1983; with Lt Col William R. Chewning, G-3, Ops., XVIII Abn. Corps, 9 November 1983; with Col James H. Johnson, Jr, G-3, XVIII Abn. Corps, 15 November 1983; with Maj Gen Jack B. Farris, Deputy (hereafter Dep.) Cdr., XVIII Abn. Corps, 18 November 1983; all in Historians' files, CMH.

At Joint Special Operations Command, the two ranger battalion commanders—Lt. Colonel Wesley B. Taylor, Jr, of the 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry, and Lt. Colonel Ralph L. Hagler, Jr, of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Infantry, and key staff officers prepared detailed plans. Taylor prepared to seize the Point Salines airfield, although at this point no one knew whether the field in its partially completed form could actually support aircraft landings and take-offs. Hagler focused on Pearls Airport, the one truly operational field, although its runway was too short to receive large jet transports. While they worked, an officer on Scholtes's staff contacted Military Airlift Command and in line with the Pack-Akers agreement requested C-130s, rather than stating the mission and size of the Ranger force and leaving the composition of the air transport component to Air Force planners. A shortage of C-130 aircrews in night operations thereafter drove the size of the ranger force. Instead of providing enough aircraft to lift two entire battalions, Military Airlift Command could deliver only 250 rangers from each battalion to their objectives.<sup>25</sup>

Told of this restriction and believing that seizing an airfield was a complex operation requiring as many manoeuvre elements as possible, both Taylor and Hagler elected to take all three of their rifle companies at half strength. For Taylor the reduced size of this force precluded a continuous defence line across the Point Salines peninsula as his planners originally intended. He decided to establish a firm defensive position on the east end of the airfield and leave the west end undefended. Hagler's main concern was link-up with the Marines, scheduled to land at 0700, four-and-a-half hours after Hagler's battalion dropped onto the field. At this point, Admiral McDonald had not yet appointed an over-all ground force commander. This meant that Joint Special Operations Command could not inform Hagler who would be the controlling headquarters for the linkup. Nor could Joint Special Operations Command, absent some action by Atlantic Command, provide Hagler with compatible communications with the Marines—that is, communications-electronics operating instructions (for secure radios),

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25 AARs, Lt Col Wesley B. Taylor, Jr, Cdr., 1st Bn., 75th Infantry (hereafter Inf.), to Maj Gen Richard A. Scholtes, Cdr., Joint Special Operations Command, et al., 14 November 1983, sub: 1st Bn., 75th Inf. AAR, UF; Lt Col Ralph Hagler, Cdr., 2nd Bn., 75th Inf., to Scholtes, 14 November 1983, sub: Preliminary AAR—UF; Intervs, Bishop with Taylor, 2 November 1983; with Hagler, 30 October 1983; with Maj Robert M. Hensler, XO, 2nd Bn., 75th Inf., 1 November 1983; author with Taylor, 4 December 1986; all in Historians' files, CMH.

and far- and near-recognition signals. These essential questions were left hanging at the end of the day.<sup>26</sup>

General Mackmull, the XVIII Airborne Corps commander, returned to Fort Bragg late on Saturday evening just in time to learn that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had given Atlantic Command operational control of the 82nd Airborne Division, cutting the corps headquarters out of the chain of command. Given the corps staff's logistical responsibilities and the division staff's relative unfamiliarity with them, he was concerned about the consequences of this decision. Mackmull decided that he was not going to let his ego get between him and doing the right thing—which was to do everything in his power to make the operation a success while necessarily operating behind the scenes. As a first step, that night he gathered his senior staff together to discuss the impending operation—what would need to be done, and what they could do.<sup>27</sup>

In the middle of the night Washington time and at 0620 on Sunday, 23 October Beirut time, a suicide bomber exploded the equivalent of 12,000 pounds of TNT inside the Marine battalion landing team headquarters at Beirut International Airport. The four-story building collapsed. Although it took days to record the toll, 241 Americans died, most of them marines. Official Washington went into shock, but the president remained adamant that he would do 'the right thing' in Grenada, and planning and preparations continued without pause. Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger, both World War II veterans of fighting in the Pacific, separately warned President Reagan that the Joint Chiefs were not allocating strong enough forces to the Grenada operation. Weinberger said the same thing to General Vessey. Weinberger thought that the United States had failed in Vietnam and later in Iran because it used insufficient forces. When he had the option, he always preferred to bring a gun to a knife fight.<sup>28</sup>

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26 AARs, Taylor to Scholtes, 14 November 1983, sub: 1st Bn., 75th Inf. AAR, UF; Hagler to Scholtes, 14 November 1983, sub: Preliminary AAR—UF.

27 Intervs, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; Danner, Frasc , and Bishop with Maj Gen Jack B. Farris, 18 November 1983, Historians' files, CMH.

28 Benis M. Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1982–1984* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1987), 1–3; Robert J. Beck, 'The "McNeil Mission" and the Decision to Invade Grenada', *Naval War College Review* 44 (Spring 1991): 93–112; Interv, Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987. Intervs, Alfred Goldberg, Maurice Matloff, and Stuart Rochester with Weinberger, 12 January 1988; Goldberg and Matloff with Weinberger, 21 June 1988; both in Office of the Secretary of Defense (hereafter OSD) History Office, Washington, DC; Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, 108–12; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 329.



Admiral McDonald and General Scholtes also flew to Washington that morning—in their case to brief the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Atlantic Command’s final plan for Operation URGENT FURY. Once in ‘The Tank’—the Joint Chiefs of Staff conference room—McDonald laid out the plan in detail. He envisioned a joint operation using a joint special operations task force as the ground force component. Scholtes would act as both the overall joint task force commander and the ground force commander. McDonald had just completed his presentation when the Marine Corps Commandant, General Paul X. Kelley, with tears in his eyes, burst out to General Vessey: ‘The Marines must land on the island of Grenada or you will have destroyed the Marine Corps.’<sup>29</sup>

General Kelley’s intervention at this point was so important that his assertion requires some analysis. All military services are in some sense tribes. The smaller they are the more tribal they are. Of the four US services the Marines were the smallest. They were also, at least theoretically, the most disposable because they lacked a unique operating environment. Given political realities in the United States, however, it is impossible to conceive how the Marine Corps could ever be abolished. Still even the theoretical possibility was enough to add a whiff of paranoia to Marine tribalism. In the Marine Corps view, all Marines were part of an elite organisation: America’s ‘911 force’, which was an astute advertising slogan but hardly the basis for sizing a military operation. Of course, McDonald’s plan called for the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, to land, but only as a follow-on force. The Army, Navy, and Air Force elements of Joint Special Operations Command would be carrying the fight to the enemy. The Marine Corps had refused to contribute forces to the command because all Marines were elite. Now the Corps was on the outside looking in. Tears aside—probably a reaction to the Beirut tragedy—Kelley’s intervention in the briefing represented a mixture of service culture and service politics.<sup>30</sup>

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29 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999; Memo, Chris Mellon, Committee on Armed Services, US Senate, for Senator [William S.] Cohen, 4 September 1986, sub: Meeting with Maj Gen Richard A. Scholtes, Historians’ files, CMH.

30 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999; Memo, Mellon for Cohen, 4 September 1986, sub: Meeting with Maj Gen Richard A. Scholtes. Cole, *URGENT FURY*, 26, 72. For a discussion of service cultures, see: Michael J. Meese and Isaiah Wilson III, ‘The Military: Forging a Joint Warrior Culture’, in Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof (eds), *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Landscape* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 117–38; Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 31–43; and Peter H. Wilson, ‘Defining Military Culture’, *Journal of Military History* 72 (January 2008): 11–41.

Vessey's reaction now became all important. Vessey had no legal authority over the service chiefs. He could lead only by example. Kelley's dramatic interruption suggested something of the importance the Marine Corps placed on this issue. Leaving the Marines as a stand-by reserve and follow-on force put at risk the commandant's cooperation in the future. The Joint Chiefs of Staff's influence in the Reagan administration rested on their unanimity, on Vessey's ability to prevent splits. Moreover, the chairman already knew that Secretary Weinberger thought that the chiefs needed to double the size of the forces committed to the operation. The latest intelligence suggested that the invaders might face as many as 4100 defenders, Grenadians (one regular and five reserve battalions) and Cubans (one battalion). At the time, it must have seemed a very small concession. Vessey agreed to using the Marines as an assault force—much to Scholtes's surprise but possibly not to anyone else's in the room.<sup>31</sup>

Forced to improvise a new plan on his feet, McDonald envisioned a Marine landing at Grand Anse Beach, the yet unknown location of the main campus of the St George's University School of Medicine, with other missions remaining the same. Vessey objected. The forces had never operated together and would have no time to exercise the plan and identify coordination problems. He wanted to keep the new plan 'simple'. To illustrate what he meant, he drew a line across the island north of the capital of St George's. The Marines would operate north of the line; the Joint Special Operating Forces would operate south. The 82nd Airborne Division would now constitute the sole follow-on force and would assume the occupation mission. McDonald thought all the fighting would be over in less than twenty-four hours.<sup>32</sup>

The Joint Chiefs next considered the question of timing. McDonald wanted to mass his forces in order to maximise shock. Because the Marines had very few night vision devices, his concept required that all the forces attack at 0500, just before first light. Someone asked Scholtes, who was attending only as an observer, his opinion. He made a passionate defence of the original 0230 time because of the overwhelming tactical advantage his forces possessed when operating at night. After some discussion, the Chiefs compromised, weighting their decision slightly toward McDonald. The Joint Special Operations Command would attack at 0400; Marines would go in at 0500.<sup>33</sup>

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31 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999; Cole, *URGENT FURY*, 26, 72.

32 Intervs, Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987; Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

33 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

The last adjustment concerned command. Vessey asked McDonald how he envisioned command relationships with the Marines involved. McDonald said that, while he had intended to assign Scholtes as the joint task force commander, he now planned to follow joint doctrine and make the amphibious force commander the joint task force commander. Vessey retorted that directing an Army major general to report to a Marine colonel was not an acceptable solution. McDonald needed to assign 'a three star' to the overall command. McDonald said he wanted to think about whom to appoint. The meeting broke up with that ambiguous conclusion.<sup>34</sup>

At Joint Special Operations Command headquarters, Colonel Hagler learned that his battalion would no longer assault Pearls Airport. His men would airland at Point Salines after the 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry, seized the airfield and advance overland to attack the Cuban military compound on the Calivigny Peninsula. Early the next morning, Monday, 24 October, late-breaking intelligence suggested that the rangers might face more opposition than originally expected. General Scholtes directed Hagler to prepare an airdrop option as well as an airland one. If circumstances warranted, Hagler could simply reinforce Colonel Taylor's left flank and help secure the airfield at Point Salines. Taylor, meanwhile, learned that Scholtes wanted to assign one of his companies to a special classified mission to the support special operations forces. That left Taylor with two rifle companies for manoeuvre. He also learned that Military Airlift Command would supply him with seven C-141s to move his battalion. Scholtes removed the cap on the size of his unit. Taylor planned to take two almost full-sized companies with him to Grenada.<sup>35</sup>

At Fort Bragg, Sunday opened with a joint briefing by the corps and division staffs on the latest intelligence (the corps had received none) and the state of planning. Mackmull dominated the process, pointing out probable problem areas and suggesting solutions. His performance

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34 Ibid.

35 Intervs, Bishop with Hagler, 30 October 1983; with Taylor, 2 November 1983; with Maj Jack P. Nix, XO, 1st Bn., 75th Inf., 2 November 1983; with Maj John J. Maher III, S-3, 1st Bn., 75th Inf., 3 November 1983. US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Combined Arms Center, Grenada Work Group (hereafter GWG), *Operation URGENT FURY Assessment* (Ft Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Center, [1985]), III-17 to III-18; AARs, Taylor to Scholtes, 14 November 1983, sub: 1st Bn., 75th Inf. AAR, UF; Hagler to Scholtes, 14 November 1983, sub: Preliminary AAR—UF, Historians' files, CMH.

reflected both his own rich airborne background and General Trobaugh's lack of such a background. Trobaugh had commanded an infantry battalion in Vietnam where he became a protégé of then Major General William E. DePuy. Later, when DePuy was a central figure in the Army's post-Vietnam reforms as commanding general of US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Trobaugh was his executive officer. Trobaugh's airborne experience—his speciality was mechanised infantry—was less than four months, the time since he had assumed command of the division. He was more than happy to adopt most of Mackmull's suggestions. One with which he did not agree was sending a sizeable liaison element to Atlantic Command to assist in the planning there. Mackmull believed that the Norfolk staff had failed so far to show any grasp of airborne operations. Trobaugh decided that with the division facing two entirely different scenarios—first, to intervene without assistance from either the Joint Special Operations Command or the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit or, second, to serve as a follow-on force—he needed all his planners to remain at Bragg. Later that afternoon, he began pulling other officers into the planning. To this point, the officers involved came almost exclusively from operations and intelligence functional areas.<sup>36</sup>

Admiral McDonald, once back in Norfolk, wasted little time in selecting his joint task force commander, Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf III, the commander of the Second Fleet from which the *Independence* battle group was drawn. Metcalf was a short, wiry, intense officer with tremendous reserves of energy. A surface warfare specialist, known for his blunt, no-nonsense language and his straight-forward manner, he had commanded the naval portion of the evacuation of Saigon in 1975. Metcalf had kept abreast of the planning by sending members of his staff to assist the Atlantic Command Staff but had avoided personal involvement. He

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36 Inters, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; author with Brig Gen Daniel R. Schroeder, Corps Engineer (Engr.), XVIII Abn. Corps, 2 June 1986. For Trobaugh's background, see: Memo, [DA, OCPA], 28 February 1987, sub: Resumé of Service Career of Edward Lee Trobaugh, Maj Gen; Memo, Office of Public Affairs (hereafter OPA), 82nd Abn. Div., [1983], sub: Maj Gen Edward L. Trobaugh; Memo, [CMH], 7 February 1989, sub: Maj Gen Edward L. Trobaugh, US Army, Ret.; Interv, author with Trobaugh, 6 February 1989; all in Historians' files, CMH. For a discussion of General DePuy's impact upon the Army, see: Paul H. Herbert, *Deciding What Has To Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations*, Leavenworth Papers, No. 16 (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1988) and Henry G. Gole, *General William E. Depuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

remained readily available if needed but was not obtrusive about it. When McDonald's call came, Metcalf became commander of Joint Task Force 120.<sup>37</sup>

After the morning briefing at Fort Bragg, General Mackmull became increasingly concerned that the planners in Joint Special Operations Command and the 82nd Airborne Division were not communicating with one another. Their plans, instead of complementary, appeared to be going on separate tangents. This was not the way the Army did planning. Mackmull decided that the only way to get things back on track was to reinsert the corps into the chain of command. He called Admiral McDonald, but McDonald treated Mackmull's argument as nothing more than a power grab and dismissed his recommendation out of hand. Thrown back once more on his own resources, Mackmull telephoned his superior, the commander of US Army Forces Command, General Richard E. Cavazos, to discuss the situation. In the course of their conversation, he suggested that Admiral Metcalf might find a high-level Army adviser very useful; Cavazos suggested Major General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the commander of the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) for the role. Mackmull agreed and Cavazos secured the assent of the Department of the Army. Consequently, the next day Schwarzkopf began a hurried immersion into the planning documents, such as they were, during a plane ride from Fort Stewart, Georgia, to Norfolk.<sup>38</sup>

Continuing to be concerned about the lack of coordination between Joint Special Operations Command and the 82nd Airborne Division, Mackmull decided to try to get Trobaugh and Scholtes together to at least talk. It took him a day to achieve success because Scholtes was constantly

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37 Interv, Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987; Matt Schudel, 'Joseph Metcalf: Led Grenada Invasion', *Washington Post* (11 March 2007): C7. Chrono, 16 April 1984, sub: Chrono. [Op. UF] in Department of the Navy, *Operation URGENT FURY Lessons Learned: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1984), III-3, gives the time of Metcalf's selection. On keeping abreast of the planning at Atlantic Command, see: Interv, Col Bruce Hinckley with Metcalf, 13 February 1984, US Army Military History Institute (hereafter MHI), Carlisle, PA, and Joseph Metcalf III, 'Decision Making and the Grenada Rescue Operation', in James G. March and Roger Weissinger-Baylon (eds), *Ambiguity and Command: Organizational Perspectives on Military Decision Making* (Boston, MA: Pitman, 1986), 282.

38 Intervs, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; with Maj Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Dep. Cdr., Joint Task Force (hereafter JTF) 120, 21 November 1983, Historians' files, CMH.

on the move. Trobaugh and Scholtes did obtain a clear understanding of each other's concepts of operations, but by this point detailed coordination of the planning was no longer possible. The three generals did agree on one issue: Planning at Atlantic Command seemed premised on best case rather than worst case assumptions.<sup>39</sup>

Headquarters, Military Airlift Command, had started raising 'what if' questions about Grenada with the Twenty-first Air Force on Wednesday, 19 October, and then gave a verbal warning order just prior to midnight. The next day the Twenty-first Air Force set up a planning cell for Grenada. The Air Force planners received a list of Atlantic Command's initial options and worked out the number of aircraft and crew that were needed to support each one. The Twenty-first Air Force vice commander, Brigadier General Robert B. Patterson, worked closely with the planners. On his recommendation, the Twenty-first Air Force immediately kept nine special operations C-130s and crews and seven special operations C-141s and crews on a hold status in case the operation went forward. He also dispatched several members of the cell to Norfolk to participate in the Saturday meeting at Atlantic Command. He had hoped to attend in person but could never secure permission to do so. At the time, the Twenty-first Air Force had only one secure telephone line; this was totally inadequate for him to keep abreast of what the planners were doing. They remained in Norfolk after the meeting. On Sunday, the commander of the Twenty-first Air Force, Major General Duane H. Cassidy, appointed Patterson to command airlift forces during the operation. He immediately flew to Norfolk, but delayed by bad weather only arrived at 2230 local time. He sat up most of the night trying to familiarise himself with the planning to date.<sup>40</sup>

Admiral Metcalf called a commanders' conference for early Monday morning, 24 October, at Norfolk. It provided a venue for him to meet his senior subordinates, many for the first time, and connect any loose ends they might identify in the planning. Rather than a meeting in which Metcalf set the agenda and made meaningful decisions, however, Admiral McDonald sat in and dominated the gathering throughout. He had no compunction

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39 Interv, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983.

40 Interv, Col Bruce Hinckley with Brig Gen Robert Patterson, Cdr., Airlift Forces, Op. UF, 29 February 1984, MHI; Dean C. Kallander and James K. Matthews, *URGENT FURY: The United States Air Force and the Grenada Operation* (Scott Air Force Base, IL: Military Airlift Command, 1988), 21-2, 30-1.

about overriding his subordinates' recommendations, including those by Metcalf. This performance may suggest one of the reasons why Metcalf was reluctant to become personally involved in the operation.<sup>41</sup>

The gathering got off to a bad start even before it officially convened. Metcalf, still upset that he had this assignment, encountered Scholtes, still upset at what had happened to the original plan. Metcalf had attempted to contact Scholtes during the evening of the 23rd without success and wondered whether Scholtes was deliberately avoiding him. Scholtes immediately suspected that Atlantic Command's antiquated communication gear was the problem and explained the situation to Metcalf. Unfortunately, he could not forebear adding that under joint doctrine it was the responsibility of the senior headquarters to contact the junior headquarters, not vice versa, a piece of one-upmanship that left the admiral seething.<sup>42</sup>

Before the main meeting began, Metcalf huddled with the senior Army officers attending—Trobaugh, Scholtes, and Schwarzkopf—and said that he planned to appoint Schwarzkopf as the ground force commander. Trobaugh immediately objected. Besides being senior to Schwarzkopf, he had been promised that he would be in charge of the troops going in. However, citing the 1964 intervention in the Dominican Republic as precedent, he argued that the person who should be appointed ground force commander was General Mackmull, a proposition that both Scholtes and Schwarzkopf supported. Trobaugh and Schwarzkopf then left to telephone Mackmull and tell him what they had proposed.<sup>43</sup>

In the general meeting Metcalf proposed naming Mackmull the overall ground force commander. McDonald never commented. He simply allowed the unstructured nature of the meeting to carry the discussion of other topics, one of which was the capture of Richmond Hill Prison, where the Grenadians had placed their political prisoners and now held them under threat of death. A State Department team, led by L. Craig Johnstone, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American

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41 Intervs, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999; Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983; Hinckley with Patterson, 29 February 1984; AAR, Vice Adm Joseph Metcalf III, Cdr., JTF 120, sub: Op. UF, Historians' files, CMH.

42 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

43 Intervs, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983.

Affairs, wanted the prison added to the target list. Scholtes tried to explain that it was far too late. Some of the troops were already boarding aircraft to depart for the area of operations. Johnstone insisted that it would not be difficult. He had a plan for the operation in his briefcase. Scholtes wondered who in the State Department was competent to draw up a plan for a military operation. When he asked to see it, Johnstone declined to show it to him. (Much later Scholtes discovered that Johnstone thought it was 'too highly classified' to show to Scholtes—an officer with such a high security clearance that the US government had no secrets from him.) They argued until McDonald intervened and told Scholtes to do it.<sup>44</sup>

At some point in the discussion, Metcalf and Schwarzkopf had to leave to fly to the Caribbean to join the naval forces gathering there. The meeting continued without them. Another major point of concern was the status of the airfield. Trobaugh did not know whether in fact aircraft could land there or not: Were there enough layers of asphalt on the runway to support C-130s and C-141s? An attempt by Joint Special Operations Command on the night of the 23rd to insert a reconnaissance team resulted in four SEALs drowning in high seas. General Scholtes planned to attempt another insertion on the night of the 24th. The uncertainty over the state of the runway and the many other loose ends their discussion had revealed led Metcalf, Trobaugh, and Scholtes to unite in recommending that the operation be postponed an additional day so that they could rectify the deficiencies. McDonald, who had no high opinion of the military capabilities of the Grenadians, refused. He did not expect more than a little scattered resistance. What he did do was postpone the Joint Special Operations Command's insertion until 0500—which gave Scholtes's men exactly twelve minutes of darkness in which to operate.<sup>45</sup>

In making this tweak in the timing, McDonald had fundamentally altered the character of the operation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved an operation that used special operations forces to conduct the decisive manoeuvre, timed to maximise their capabilities, with conventional forces in support. Admiral McDonald's revised plan, similar to the plan the Joint Chiefs of Staff had rejected, maximised the capabilities of conventional forces and used the special operations forces to support them. At the same time, McDonald expected them to take on the same high value, well-

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44 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

45 Intervs, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999; with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983.



defended, strategic targets that were their responsibility in the earlier iteration. General Scholtes left the meeting wondering where the truck had come from that had just flattened him. He now had to do his best to execute a plan with which he was fundamentally in disagreement.<sup>46</sup>

General Patterson had entered the commanders' conference concerned like his Army counterparts that Admiral McDonald and his staff were altogether too sanguine about the prospects of the operation and seemed assured that Joint Task Force 120 would in all instances achieve the best possible results. Specifically, Patterson knew that if there were any difficulties the C-130s would not have enough fuel to return to the United States. He was convinced that he had to have an intermediate staging base in the region. Barbados was the most likely site, but the Atlantic Command staff insisted that he could not use Barbados, and, in fact forbade him to acquire any information about the layout of Grantley Adams International Airport on the island. As a consequence Patterson put his staff—he had exactly six officers—to work planning to use the Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station, Puerto Rico, as an intermediate staging base. It was not ideal but certainly an improvement over flying back to the continental United States. This work was in progress during the commanders' conference. Just as the meeting was breaking up, Admiral McDonald casually mentioned to Patterson that he could use Barbados as an intermediate staging base. Given the fact that forces were already preparing to deploy, Patterson could only get messages out to all the units involved as to the change in location. (During the operation at least one AC-130 Spectre gunship flew to Roosevelt Roads for refueling because Patterson's message did not reach the pilot in time.) For operational security reasons, Patterson was not permitted to call the airport to find out about parking arrangements, the availability of jet fuel, maintenance facilities, or ground support. Lacking any information about the layout of Grantley Adams, Patterson and his staff could not plan the staging base. Once they arrived, all Patterson's decisions would have to be ad hoc, made in response to the needs of the moment.<sup>47</sup>

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46 Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

47 Interv, Hinckley with Patterson, 29 February 1984; Kallender and Matthews, *URGENT FURY*, 30, 41; Michael J. Couvillon, *Grenada Grinder: The Complete Story of AC-130H Spectre Gunships in Operation URGENT FURY* (Marietta, GA: Deeds Publishing, 2011), 36–43, 82–4.

There were at least two other major issues requiring some resolution when the conferees departed for their stations. The first concerned communications planning. Atlantic Command did not call a meeting of communications planners prior to the start of the operation. This meant that it could not issue communications-electronics instructions to the participating forces, including call signs, frequencies, code words, etc. The commander of the 82d Signal Battalion and division signal officer, Lt. Colonel Frank G. Stump III, later observed: 'a 30-minute conference prior to the assault would have eliminated almost all the coordination problems'. Instead, McDonald chose what was technically called 'a no plan communication plan' for the operation. For long-distance communication, all components depended upon digital radios and access to a communications satellite overhead. Strength of signal, in the absence of communications planning, determined access to the satellite. This favoured components with large, fixed, high-powered radios—the Navy and the Air Force. The Army went into Grenada with a few man-portable digital radios. Its messages were either denied access or broken into and superseded in mid-sentence by the higher priority messages of the other services.<sup>48</sup>

The second problem concerned the medical chain of evacuation. The Atlantic Command order laid out a concept, but no specific details identifying participating units, their locations, or the destinations to which the wounded might be sent. Atlantic Command made no effort to notify at least some of the military hospitals involved to expect a large influx of trauma cases. This problem arose in part, at least, because Atlantic Command apparently kept its medical staff ignorant of the preparations for Operation URGENT FURY until very late in the planning process. The Beirut bombing intervened and the Atlantic Command medical director, Rear Admiral James A. Zimbel, took a team to Lebanon. Either Atlantic Command should have kept Zimbel in Norfolk or it should have ensured that a skilled medical planner replaced him temporarily. Instead, Admiral McDonald did nothing. Medical elements of the services deployed to

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48 LL, Lt Col Frank G. Stump III, Cdr., 82nd Signal Bn., sub: There were a number of communications shortfalls in the joint arena, encl in AAR/LL, Johnson to Mackmull, 6 February 1984; U.S., Department of the Army, *Lessons Learned Grenada: U.S. Army Lessons Learned from Operation URGENT FURY* (Washington, DC: [Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans], 1985); LL, US Joint Chiefs of Staff, sub: Communications Systems; Memo, Murray W. Gibson, 5 March 1984, sub: Grenada LL, 28 February 1984, Visit to Ft. Bragg, NC.

the area of operations without any certainty as to what assets the other services provided. In the case of Army and Navy detachments, questions remained as to whether their patients would be evacuated, and, if they were, who would evacuate them. The result was unnecessary confusion, suffering, and death.<sup>49</sup>

At 1200 on 24 October with the commanders' conference at Atlantic Command in full swing, President Reagan met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He asked each member in turn if he was satisfied with the plan. Did he agreed with the concept of operations? Was something more needed? General Vessey and his colleagues indicated that they preferred a diplomatic solution but, failing that, they were satisfied with the plan that they had approved and the forces committed to its execution. The president was consequently reassured about the plan. Secretary Weinberger, watching this exchange from the sidelines, became certain in his own mind that Reagan was committed to intervention barring a last minute diplomatic breakthrough. The president, however, continued to keep his own counsel, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff departed without any indication of what he intended to do. All his options remained open and stayed open until the evening of the 24th. Then, following a briefing to a joint congressional delegation, he told Vessey to 'Go'. The general set the operation in motion.<sup>50</sup>

The Joint Chiefs planned to establish an aerial quarantine line between Grenada and Cuba. Part of that force would be provided by fighters aboard the *Independence*, but they were also on-call to provide close air support once US ground forces landed on the island. The Air Force's Tactical Air Command deployed a task force to Puerto Rico—Task Force 126 commanded by Brigadier General Richard L. Meyer—to beef up the quarantine line. The Cubans had anticipated such a move and did not attempt to reinforce Grenada when they had the opportunity. Instead, they sent Colonel Pedro Cosmas Tortoló to organise the defences, but he arrived less than twenty-four hours before the Americans.<sup>51</sup>

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49 Intervs, Dwight D. Oland with Brig Gen James H. Rumbaugh, Corps Surgeon, XVIII Abn. Corps, 18 November 1987; with Lt Col Edward B. Wilson, Cdr., 307th Medical Bn., 6 November 1987; Maj Gary Wade with Lt Col Barry S. Sidenberg, Div. Surgeon, 82nd Abn. Div., 14 December 1983; all in Historians' files, CMH.

50 Interv, Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987.

51 Ibid.

Late in the preparations, analysts at the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington learned by chance of the second medical school campus. On 24 October they dispatched a courier with a packet of information including photographs of the Grand Anse campus to the Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg. This new information never reached the units. Quite possibly, staff officers were too much in crisis mode and too afflicted with the tunnel vision that accompanies such a psychological state to appreciate what they had received. It may simply have arrived too late, given the dislocations produced by Admiral McDonald's last minute assignment of the Richmond Hill Prison mission to the command.<sup>52</sup>

Admiral Metcalf deployed to the Caribbean with a bare-bones staff, only a fraction of the 88 officers allowed by regulation to joint task force commanders. He took with him his chief of staff and 15 members of his Second Fleet and augmentees from the Army, Air Force, State Department, and Central Intelligence Agency. The command plot on the *Guam* was very small. There was hardly room for the staff Metcalf had brought with him, but he was more than satisfied with his size. He had called the commanders' conference in Norfolk because he wanted to size-up his principal subordinates face-to-face. He concluded that they were all professionals, but each of the services they represented had different operating styles. He wanted to make certain that the missions were appropriate for the forces assigned. (He expressed the greatest skepticism about the rangers' proposed night parachute assault, but Scholtes ultimately convinced him that it was feasible.) He believed in mission-type orders. He intended to tell his senior subordinates what to do but not how to do it.<sup>53</sup>

One of Metcalf's major concerns was to ensure that higher authority gave him enough independence to actually conduct operations. From his experience off Saigon in 1975 he was familiar with the impulse of higher headquarters, far removed from the scene and ignorant of local conditions, to try to micromanage friendly forces, or as Metcalf colorfully characterised the situation, 'the 6,000-mile screwdriver'. He dedicated half of his staff to keeping his higher headquarters informed as to what was going on. They were to produce a situation report (SITREP) every two

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52 Interv, Pirnie with Nelson, 9 December 1985; MFR, author, 28 October 2008, sub: DIA Conference on Op. UF, Historians' files, CMH.

53 Metcalf, 'Decision Making and the Grenada Rescue Operation', 280, 283-4, 293; Interv, Bishop with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983.

hours. 'I don't care if we are talking about hangnails, we will put out two SITREPs an hour.' He wanted not only to keep his superiors informed but also to keep their staffs busy analysing his messages rather than dreaming up things for him to do. And then, knowing the most likely micromanager, Metcalf assigned his operations officer, a Navy captain, to be the 'Voice of URGENT FURY'. In any voice communications with Atlantic Command during all periods of active operations, his voice was the one that Admiral McDonald and his staff would hear. 'The commander in chief and his staff always heard the same voice, a voice they knew and could relate to. The object was to create the impression that, in fact, we were in control and knew what was going on.' These stratagems largely worked.<sup>54</sup>

Metcalf only became gradually aware of the problem that made coordination of the forces difficult—lack of a standard map with common grid coordinates. Grenada and the rest of the eastern Caribbean was not high on the priorities of the Defense Mapping Agency. It had no maps of Grenada available when the operation began—it had given all it had to the Joint Special Operations Command. Apparently, the J-2 at Atlantic Command had believed that because of security concerns he could not contact the Defense Mapping Agency in advance. Everyone other than the Joint Special Operations Command improvised. The Navy and Marine Corps used a tourist map with an arbitrary grid system as did some elements of the Air Force. The XVIII Airborne Corps had an Esso road map of the island. Black-and-white reproductions of this four-colour map with infinite shadings of gray went to the troops. The map created much ambiguity where less would have been appreciated. The Army used this map with a different arbitrary grid system than the one used by the Navy and Marines. Still later, reinforcements arrived with the same map but a still-different grid system. With two different maps and three different grid systems in play, the potential for unanticipated results when calling for supporting fires and close air support was very great. Metcalf, when he realised what had happened, decreed that the tourist map would be the standard map and grid system, but it is unclear if all units adhered to this decision given difficulties of reproducing maps in the area of operations.<sup>55</sup>

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54 Metcalf, 'Decision Making and the Grenada Rescue Operation', 284 (1st quotation), 285 (2nd quotation).

55 *Ibid.*, 293; Intervs, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999; author with Schroeder, 2 June 1986; with Maj Daniel J. Cleary, Coordinator, Forward Area Support Team II, 2nd Brigade (hereafter Bde), 82nd Abn. Div., 19 November 1983, Historians' files, CMH.

Early on 25 October the commander of the airlift element, Brigadier General Robert B. Patterson, arrived on Barbados and began establishing an intermediate staging base at Grantley Adams International Airport. The SEALs, Delta Force, and aviation portion of General Scholtes's Joint Task Force 123 began arriving simultaneously. Army helicopter crew chiefs began at once to rebuild helicopters, partially disassembled before loading onto C-130s for the flight to Grenada. The semi-chaotic nature of the rapid buildup and a failure to plan (in coordination with the Air Force) an airport layout that designated a space exclusively for these preparations, meant that helicopter crews often had to shift location as additional C-130s landed and required parking space. Preparations to launch the special operations raiding force fell seriously behind schedule as a consequence. Managing and operating an intermediate staging base was the sort of thing that XVIII Airborne Corps did routinely.<sup>56</sup>

The other prong of the Task Force 123 attack, the Ranger parachute drop at Point Salines, was also delayed because the inertial navigation and on-board radar of the first C-130 failed. These systems were necessary for night airdrops. The first two aircraft, carrying the airfield clearing company some thirty minutes ahead of the rest of Taylor's battalion, circled to rejoin the rear of the airstream. Aircraft three, with Taylor, his tactical operations center, and a few riflemen, reached the drop zone well after first light. The men jumped despite heavy anti-aircraft fire. Scholtes, directing operations from the air, then halted the drop until one of the three Air Force AC-130 Spectre gunships he had circling overhead eliminated the Grenadian guns. Once on the ground, Taylor's men started clearing the airfield and then seized the hills just east of the runway. In the process they secured the True Blue campus and learned for the first time of the second campus at Grand Anse. Hagler's battalion cleared the terminal and then captured the nearby camp of the Cuban workers as well as most of the workers. At this point, General Scholtes told Hagler to concentrate on defending the airhead rather than striking out for the Calivigny Peninsula. The morning was not one of unalloyed success for the rangers. A gun jeep from the 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry, pushed too aggressively forward on the road to St George's and ran into a Grenadian army ambush. Three of the four rangers in the jeep died in the firefight

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56 Interv, Hinckley with Patterson, 29 February 1984.

that followed. The lone survivor, too injured to walk, required several hours to crawl back to friendly lines.<sup>57</sup>

At virtually the same time as the first rangers dropped at Point Salines, a Marine rifle company, part of Task Group 124.1, made a helicopter assault south of Pearls Airport. Marine Cobra helicopters silenced a Grenadian anti-aircraft gun. The defenders fired a few rounds and then fled. Within a short time the Marines secured the airport. Almost simultaneously with the capture of the airport, a second company landed unopposed at the nearby town of Grenville. The population surged out of doors determined to give the marines the most friendly reception received by American troops since the liberation of Paris in 1944.<sup>58</sup>

By chance, the marines had landed in the centre of opposition to the Austin junta. The rangers, by way of contrast, had landed where the regime enjoyed its strongest support. The Point Salines area was where the government had redistributed land to poor peasants, where unemployment was lowest because of jobs associated with the airport, and where the People's Liberation Army had located its logistics support system and the jobs that went with it. Even there the opponents of the regime outnumbered the supporters, but the latter constituted a substantial minority. Sniping continued at Point Salines for the next several weeks, and the Army was never able to kill or apprehend the sniper or snipers. These two different types of reception coloured how members of the two services viewed the local population for the remainder of the operation.<sup>59</sup>

The helicopter insertion of the special operations forces took place in broad daylight, long after the rangers and the marines landed. A section from SEAL Team 6, commanded by Lt. Donald K. Erskine, seized the

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57 Inters, Bishop with Maher, 3 November 1983; with Taylor, 2 November 1983; with Nix, 2 November 1983; George A. MacGarrigle with Capt John P. Abizaid, Cdr., Company (hereafter Co.) A, 1st Bn, 75th Inf., 15 December 1983; Hinckley with Patterson, 27 February 1984; LL, [Capt John P. Abizaid], 7 November 1983, sub: External Portion Alpha Co. AAR; Draft AAR, GWG, c. 1984, sub: Grenada Lessons Learned: Command and Control, IV-B-3 to-4; AARs, Hagler, to Scholtes, et al., 14 November 1983; Chrono, 1st Bn., 75th Inf., sub: Sequence of Events; Maj James E. Roper, senior air liaison officer, 1st Bn., 75th Inf., to Cdr., 507th Tactical Air Control Wing, 17 November 1983, sub: Grenada Report w/encl, 'Major Roper's Narrative'; all in Historians' files, CMH. For an excellent, detailed discussion of the action from the pilots' perspective, see: Kallander and Matthews, *URGENT FURY*, 37-46.

58 Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 7.

59 *Ibid.*; Interv, author with Cleary, 14 July 1986.

studios of Radio Free Grenada. Because the Austin regime had a second studio unknown to American intelligence, the capture failed to take the radio off the air. Then the Grenadians and their Cuban advisers brought up armoured personnel carriers from a motorised (in the Soviet sense) company of the regular battalion. The SEAL team had no anti-armour weapons, and Erskine discovered that he could not raise anyone on his radio and thus could not call for air support. Someone at Joint Special Operations Command headquarters had changed all the call signs and frequencies just before the operation launched, but somehow that information had not reached the detachment. The team had to withdraw under heavy fire with many wounded. The men hid in the jungle during most of the day, then they swam out to sea where they were picked up by an American destroyer early the next morning.<sup>60</sup>

A second SEAL section led by Lt. Commander Duke Leonard landed at the governor general's residence. Governor General Sir Paul Scoon had secretly appealed for his neighbours in the eastern Caribbean to intervene and overthrow the Austin junta. Leonard and his men planned to escort the governor general, his family, and his immediate staff aboard a helicopter. Once some of the SEALs reached the ground, however, intense Grenadian antiaircraft fire forced the helicopters to withdraw. An intense fire fight with the Grenadian army ensued. When the Grenadians brought up armoured personnel carriers, Leonard discovered that his radio did not work. He found, however, that the governor general's telephone did. He used his credit card to call his wife and told her whom to contact to ensure that the detachment received air support. It arrived just in time, but at a cost of two Marine Cobras shot down and three of four crewmen killed. With the situation at the governor general's residence a stand-off, Admiral Metcalf decided that the SEALs would hold in place until the Army relieved them.<sup>61</sup>

The third special operations force mission, mounted by the Army's Delta Force, commanded by Colonel Sherman H. Williford, proved even

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60 This and succeeding paragraphs are based on Bruce R. Pirnie, *Operation URGENT FURY: The United States Army in Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1986), 114–18, 120; Chrono, [JTF 120], undated, sub: Grenada Scenario, and MFR, author, 28 Oct 2008, sub: DIA Conference on Op. UF, unless otherwise noted.

61 Intervs, Hinckley with Metcalf, 13 February 1984, and Bishop with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983. Metcalf, 'Decision Making and the Grenada Rescue Operation', 287–8; Couvillon, *Grenada Grinder*, 79–81.



more a shambles. Assigned to capture Richmond Hill Prison and liberate the political prisoners, they flew through a cross-fire of Grenadian anti-aircraft guns only to discover that the so-called landing zone was not a landing zone at all. The 160th Aviation Battalion's troop carrying UH-60 helicopters withdrew under heavy fire, covered by AH-6 Little Bird helicopter gunships. Amazingly none of the passengers of the UH-60s were killed, although many were wounded. Two helicopters crashed and one pilot was killed. Only two of the surviving UH-60s remained capable of extended flight; the rest required extensive repairs.<sup>62</sup>

With the special operations force attacks in trouble, Admiral Metcalf decided to launch an air strike by Navy fighter-bombers against Fort Frederick, one of the eighteenth-century ring forts the British had built to protect St George's. American intelligence had tentatively identified it as the Grenadian command centre. The ensuing attack badly damaged the fort and a nearby mental hospital where the Grenadians had emplaced an anti-aircraft gun. Metcalf and Schwarzkopf considered this attack the turning point of the battle because it disrupted Grenadian command-and-control, ending efforts to coordinate the defence. Perhaps so, but General Austin, former Deputy Prime Minister Coard, and other members of the Revolutionary Military Council had fled their posts at the first sign of the invasion and scurried off into hiding. Given this wholesale desertion by the leadership, it is questionable whether anyone was directing the defence at the time of the attack. Nevertheless, the bombing was a hard blow both physically and psychologically and did nothing to encourage the belief that the defenders could succeed.<sup>63</sup>

The 82nd Airborne Division began loading its brigade task force, two battalions of the 2nd Brigade commanded by Colonel Stephen Silvasy, Jr, and the division assault command post, the whole designated as Task Force 121, at 2100 hours on 24 October in response to an Atlantic Command order calling for the loading to begin at 2300. The decision

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62 Intervs, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Frasché with Akers, 22 November 1983, [December 1983]; with Brig Gen Peter J. Boylan, Chief of Staff and later Assistant Div. Cdr., 82nd Abn. Div., 21 November 1983; Pirnie and author with Akers, [1985]; William G. Boykin, *Never Surrender: A Soldier's Journey to the Crossroads of Faith and Freedom* (New York: Faith Words, 2008), 160, 162–6.

63 Metcalf, 'Decision Making and the Grenada Rescue Operation', 487–8; Interv, Bishop with Schwarzkopf, 21 Nov 1983; Adkin, *URGENT FURY*, 166, 245, 293. Adkin, who interviewed the defenders, is the source of the information about the conduct of the Grenadian leadership.

to begin early came largely because Atlantic Command had insisted that the division deploy within ten hours of notification, whereas normal procedure would have been to deploy within eighteen hours. General Trobaugh thought he could accept this assignment, and he did so only after first unsuccessfully trying to convince Atlantic Command to change the requirement. Most of the first eight hours involved planning, which had already been done in this case. What this overlooked—Trobaugh only consulted his G-3—was that the logisticians needed all that time to move and distribute supplies and equipment. Thus, for example, some companies received a full complement of hand grenades, others some, and one company virtually none.<sup>64</sup>

Not only was the loading process out of kilter, but control of the airflow to the island was slipping out of the division's grasp even before it began. At the point at which the division loaded, Green Ramp at Pope Air Force Base, the 1st Support Command, a corps unit, maintained a control element that recorded what was loaded on which aircraft identified by tail number. The 82nd Division Support Command, commanded by Colonel William F. Daly, kept track of aircraft loads (called 'chalks') but not aircraft tail numbers at the corps marshaling area just outside Green Ramp. Because the support command was consumed by the need to load the task force in ten hours, it dropped recording chalks from the beginning, depending on the 1st Support Command element to keep the records. However, General Mackmull felt constrained to pull the corps element out because he had been removed from the chain of command. Only some hours into the loading process did Lt. Colonel Bobby R. Hurst, commander of the infantry battalion assisting in loading the task force (the manoeuvre unit in the division with the lowest level of readiness), notice that the corps element was missing. Hurst stepped in and attempted to ensure that each load of men and supplies reached the correct aircraft.<sup>65</sup>

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64 Inters, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Frasché with Akers, 22 November 1983; Pirnie with T. Smith, 3 April 1985. For this and subsequent paragraphs see: Briefing, Capt Thomas Cole, 15 July 1986, sub: The N-Sequence in the 82nd Abn. Div. This was an unclassified briefing that was given to the press on how the division operated.

65 Inters, Maj Gary H. Wade with Maj David L. Boggs, Cdr., 330th Transportation Center, 15 November 1983; Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; Hicks with Col William R. Richardson, Cdr., 1st Support Command, [November 1983]; with Lt Col Ronald F. Kelly, XO, 82nd DISCOM, 18 November 1983; with Capt Raymond V. Mason, Plans and Ops. Officer, 82nd DISCOM, [November 1983]; author with Col William F. Daly, Cdr., 82nd DISCOM, 30 July 1986; all in Historians' files, CMH.

The Atlantic Command order stipulated that the division would airland, a restriction that concerned General Trobaugh. Normal procedure in the 82nd Airborne Division was that the lead battalion would always be prepared to airdrop even if no opposition was expected. He had one of his staff officers, Major Thomas D. Smith, call Atlantic Command headquarters to try to get the order changed, but the Navy captain Smith talked to did not understand the distinction between airland and airdrop. The order remained unmodified. Trobaugh decided to order the two battalions to prepare for airdrop but to allow their follow-on supplies and equipment to airland. He coordinated this change with the Air Force. The real problem lay in the logistical implications of the change. Members of the 82nd Division Support Command scrambled to move parachutes and static lines to the distribution centre. Given the point in the loading sequence at which Trobaugh made his decision, the support command lacked the time to also retrieve and distribute flotation devices, normal procedure when troops had to drop near large bodies of water.<sup>66</sup>

Generals Mackmull and Trobaugh monitored radio traffic coming out of Grenada and realised that the Grenadian resistance was much heavier than anyone had expected. Trobaugh planned to have his men rig for airdrop while in flight if necessary. Then, without explanation, Atlantic Command delayed the task force's departure by four hours, time that the troops spent sitting in aircraft on the ground. General Scholtes had wanted the airborne troops to land within two hours of the rangers so as to mass ground combat power. Mackmull, who assumed that the division had all its standard equipment, urged Trobaugh to consider airdropping the troops, no matter what the tactical situation, in order to speed the arrival of the division and achieve the mass Scholtes wanted.<sup>67</sup>

En route to the island, Trobaugh considered Mackmull's suggestion, but because there was no tactical emergency, decided to airland. Given the wide range of parachute skills in the division, it was inevitable that some troopers would land in the water, and, weighted down by equipment and supplies, drown. When his C-141 reached Grenada, however, Trobaugh

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66 Intervs, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Pirnie and author with Akers, [1985].

67 Intervs, Frasc  with Col James T. Scott, Cdr., 3rd Bde., 82nd Abn. Div., 18 November 1983; Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; with Hamilton, 10 November 1983; with Maj William E. Baine, S-3, 2d Bn., 325th Inf., 10 November 1983.

discovered that landing was no cut-and-dried matter. Because no one had cleared any of the ramps at Point Salines, General Patterson in Barbados would permit only one aircraft on the ground at a time. All the plans had assumed that five aircraft could be on the ground at once, and this assumption drove the frequency with which Grenada-bound aircraft took off from Pope Air Force Base. Apparently, no one at Pope knew of the new restriction on the number of aircraft on the ground, and aircraft kept departing at the planned rate. Aircraft were stacked up over Point Salines in a gently descending cone stretching all the way to the ionosphere according to one commentator with perhaps a touch of hyperbole. Trobaugh in the lead aircraft did not touch down until 1400.<sup>68</sup>

The situation he found did not ease his frame of mind. The rangers had not occupied the entire peninsula as planned. They held only the first line of hills east of the airfield and then their lines curved back paralleling the length of the runway. In the west the rangers had halted on hills overlooking a compound occupied by the Cuban army trainers sent to assist the Grenadian army. General Scholtes was willing to turn over the airhead to Trobaugh, but he wanted to remain until he had safely extracted the two SEAL detachments. Trobaugh was opposed to what he saw as an unnecessary complication to the command structure. Admiral Metcalf supported Trobaugh, and Scholtes withdrew that evening, leaving behind the rangers temporarily until the 82nd Airborne Division gathered its forces, but taking with him a complete hospital unit. The division could not bring in comparable facilities for days.<sup>69</sup>

About 1530, just as Trobaugh's meeting with Scholtes concluded, the Grenadian army counterattacked. Three armoured personnel carriers accompanied by dismounted infantry charged toward the rangers' lines. Supported by a Spectre gunship, the rangers eliminated all three. The dismounted infantry remained in contact all afternoon, unsuccessfully attempting to manoeuvre around the rangers' flank. On at least one

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68 Inters, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Hinckley with Patterson, 29 February 1984; Frasc  with Boylan, 21 November 1983; with Akers, 22 November 1983. Michael Duffey, 'Grenada: Rampant Confusion', *Military Logistics Forum* 2 (July–August 1985): 20–3, 26–8.

69 Inters, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Frasc  with Akers, 22 November 1983, [December 1983]; with Boylan, 21 November 1983; Pirnie and author with Akers [1985]; Pirnie with T. Smith, 3 April 1985; Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

occasion, a fire fight caused the Air Force to shut down landings. Trobaugh's reaction was to request reinforcements: 'Send me battalions until I tell you to stop.' Brigadier General James D. Smith, commanding the division rear at Fort Bragg, interpreted this to mean that he should immediately put infantry battalions into the airflow, cutting out the round-out support units of the 2nd Brigade Task Force. This effectively decreased the combat power of the units already deployed. At the same time, forced by the shallow airhead to establish task force headquarters in the concrete shell of a terminal building littered with construction debris, Trobaugh's main concern was security. His chief of staff, Colonel Peter J. Boylan, had concrete barriers erected on the ramp area in front of the terminal to deter any Grenadian army attempt to take out the assault command post. (The truck bomb in Lebanon cast a long shadow.) In doing so, Trobaugh ensured that the Air Force would continue to allow only one aircraft on the ground at a time. His own buildup would limp along in a haphazard fashion as a result.<sup>70</sup>

Trobaugh made these decisions without any input from senior logisticians because he had none with him. He had flown to the island with his assault command post, but it was heavily weighted toward operations and intelligence officers. His only logistician was a young captain intended to serve as a liaison officer for his seniors back at Bragg. Eventually, Trobaugh realised he needed senior-level advice and called these officers forward, but his early decisions set the parameters of what the division could and could not accomplish during the operation. He assigned Colonel Boylan to manage the airflow (the duty normally performed by the commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps), while he concentrated on the battle in front of him.<sup>71</sup>

No one, especially no one on Grenada but also no one on Barbados either, could actually manage the airflow with any precision, both because there were no senior logisticians present to provide advice but also because

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70 Intervs, Bishop with Abizaid, 1 November 1983; with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; with Maj Robert M. Hensler, XO, 2nd Bn., 75th Inf., 1 November 1983; Frasc  with Akers, 22 November 1983, [December 1983]; with Boylan, 21 November 1983; Pirnie and author with Akers, [1985]; Chrono, 1st Bn., 75th Inf., sub: Sequence of Events; Journal (hereafter Jnl), G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault Command Post (hereafter CP), 25 October 1983, 1530; all in Historians' files, CMH.

71 AAR, Lt Col Jack D. Crabtree, G-4, 82nd Abn. Div., sub: UF AAR; Interv, Crabtree by author, February 1989.

communications between Fort Bragg and Point Salines were episodic. There was even difficulty in communicating with Admiral Metcalf aboard the *Guam*. Metcalf assumed that General Trobaugh could send and receive teletype messages; the 82nd Airborne Division had always been able to do so during exercises. The unit with that capacity, however, was a corps unit, and the division had planned for it to deploy the second day. Given the state of the airflow it could not reach Grenada. General Mackmull, monitoring the message traffic and knowing that Trobaugh could not receive these messages, had them printed and sent copies via courier aboard the next outbound aircraft for Grenada. When they would arrive was problematic, depending on the state of the airflow over Point Salines at the moment. At the beginning of the operation, Army and Navy short-range radios would not mesh. (This was another problem that could have been alleviated by a conference of senior communications officers before the beginning of the operation.) Once Trobaugh realised there was a problem—again this was not until the third day—he sent a radio man and radio to Admiral Metcalf’s flagship, but this was a difficulty that need never to have arisen.<sup>72</sup>

On Barbados, General Patterson knew which aircraft were entering the landing pattern over Point Salines, but because XVIII Airborne Corps was not recording chalks, he had no idea what was aboard any particular aircraft. Moreover, because of low fuel, many aircraft circling Point Salines were ultimately forced to divert to multiple locations. The Air Force, in order to maximise the efficiency with which it used C-141s, substituted C-130s for C-141s that flew to Caribbean locations. (Some C-141s flew all the way back to the United States.) Because the C-130s had smaller cargo capacity than C-141s, ground crew had to divide the original chalks between two or more C-130s. These might or might not make it into Point Salines on their first try. Given this circumstance, even if the loads had been recorded at Fort Bragg, the division would have lost visibility as the contents were parcelled out among two or more aircraft.<sup>73</sup>

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72 Ltr, Mackmull to Gen Richard E. Cavazos, Cdr., FORSCOM [January 1984]; LL, XVIII Abn. Corps G-2, sub: Important couriers were not given priority on airflow during UF; LL, XVIII Abn. Corps G-2, sub: Lack of Intelligence Communications, encl in AAR, Mackmull to Cavazos, [January 1984]; LL, Stump, sub: There were a number of shortfalls in the joint arena; all in Historians’ files, CMH. Intervs, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; author with Cleary, 14 July 1986.

73 Interv, Hinckley with Patterson, 29 February 1984; Lt Col J. C. Burdett with Lt Col John W. Raines, Cdr., 3rd Bn., 325th Inf., [November 1983]; Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 26 October 1983, 1637.

Maj. Daniel J. Cleary led Forward Area Support Team II, a mini-battalion that he coordinated rather than commanded. It consisted of elements drawn from the three battalions that made up the division support command—a maintenance battalion, a medical battalion, and a service and supply battalion—and was designed to support the 2nd Brigade. Similar organisations supported the other two manoeuvre brigades in the division. Cleary arrived at Point Salines on the evening of 25 October with Alpha Echelon of the forward support team, which was intended to support the brigade for a few hours until the bulk of the team could arrive. It consisted of 35 officers (including Cleary) and men equipped with two forklifts (only one of which, a 6000-pound forklift he had borrowed from XVIII Airborne Corps, was capable of actually unloading pallets of ammunition and supplies), a command-and-control jeep, a maintenance truck loaded with tools and spare parts, and a trailer carrying a forward support fueling system. The jeep was loaded with radios to allow Cleary to communicate with the far-flung logistical detachments.<sup>74</sup>

Because Cleary had not been allowed to see the latest satellite photos of the airfield (apparently he did not have a high enough security clearance), he could not plan the layout of logistical functions at the airfield before he arrived. Instead he took a jeep ride down the length of the landing strip after dark and designated locations for the unloading point, supply points, and the maintenance team. His command element was small, himself and one non-commissioned officer, and all his radios were short-range. Because he had no ability to communicate directly with the division support command detachment at Green Ramp, there was no way for the division support command to easily alert him about priority chinks en route to Point Salines. For Cleary and his team, every aircraft that landed brought a surprise package. And there was one surprise about what did not arrive—the rest of his team cut out of the airflow by General Trobaugh's 'send me battalions' order. As a result, Cleary and his men spent nearly seventy-two hours unloading aircraft without any sleep and little rest. That they kept the airflow moving, by unloading each aircraft after it landed and transporting the contents off the landing surface, and

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74 Moorad Mooradian, 'DISCOM in a "Come as You Are War"', *Military Review* 58 (June 1978): 41–53; 'Brigade FASCO', *Army Logistician* 7 (September–October 1983): 17; Interv, author with Cleary, 14 July 1986.

that extreme fatigue did not lead to a serious accident are two of the minor miracles of the campaign.<sup>75</sup>

At Fort Bragg, General Smith had access to a tactical satellite radio at division headquarters, but, because both General Trobaugh and Colonel Boylan did not understand what was causing the problems in the airflow, they could not really enlighten him when their messages did, in fact, get through. All they knew was that they were not receiving the units they requested as fast as they needed them. Smith's lack of awareness of the difficulties stemmed from a disconnect in joint doctrine. There was no provision to establish a joint intelligence cell at departure airfields. Aircrew returning from Grenada were well aware of the difficulties on the ground and in the air over Point Salines, and Air Force intelligence officers duly debriefed the crews. This information never reached Smith, however, and also appears not to have influenced the frequency with which the Air Force planned to dispatch flights to the island. Smith, operating on the Air Force's schedule, sent units to Green Ramp. There they waited, all the time exposed to the elements, sometimes for days. They became very fatigued long before they boarded their aircraft.<sup>76</sup>

Early on 26 October, Lt. Col Ronald J. Kelly, the division support command executive officer and the senior Army officer at the personnel holding area just outside Green Ramp, learned about the corps movement control centre's departure from the ramp. His soldiers were just preparing to outfit the reinforcements that General Trobaugh had requested, Colonel James T. Scott's 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division. Colonel Kelly immediately went forward to Green Ramp and relieved Colonel Hurst. He had to fight for 'turf'—room to set up the division's movement control centre which heretofore had specialised in coordinating the ground movement of units to Green Ramp. It took him two days to get secure telephones installed and to obtain secure radios. He also obtained a computer and access to the Worldwide Military Command and Control System, an early military version of the internet. The key

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75 Inters, author with Cleary, 14 July 1986; Oland with 1st Lt Douglas S. Phelps, XO, Co. C, 307th Medical Bn., 2 March 1988, Historians' files, CMH. Kenneth C. Sever, 'Units and Missions—The 782nd Maintenance Battalion (in Grenada)', *The Ordnance Magazine*, 2 (Winter 1984): 3–5; Kallander and Matthews, *URGENT FURY*, 117, 120.

76 Inters, author with Maj Gen James D. Smith, Asst. Div. Cdr. for Support, 82nd Abn. Div., 4 September 1986; with Maj Frederick C. Perkins, Div. Transportation Officer, 82nd Abn. Div., 14 July 1986, Historians' files, CMH.



piece of equipment, however, turned out to be a facsimile machine which he obtained on 29 October, three days after the assault command post received similar equipment. This allowed him to dispatch copies of aircraft manifests to the assault command post which could deliver them to Major Cleary. General Trobaugh could decide which aircraft should land first based on the priority he placed on their loads. This marked the point at which the division first gained control over its airflow, two days after combat ended.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the frequent exercises in which the division participated, no one apparently had worked out appropriate procedures to call forward equipment and supplies to the airhead during an actual operation. Officers from one of the deployed battalions would go to the assault command post with a requirement, obtain an okay from Colonel Boylan acting as General Trobaugh's surrogate, call the battalion rear at Bragg, and instruct the senior officer there to put the equipment or supplies into the airflow as quickly as possible. The first time Kelly learned of this new requirement was when the officer descended on Green Ramp and demanded space on the next flight south. Green Ramp was already roiling. With the airfield closed for hours at a time due to the tactical situation on Grenada but with Smith and Kelly unaware of the stoppage let alone the cause, the airflow backed up. As priorities changed, ground crews at Pope Air Force base unloaded aircraft and put new loads on, provoking displeasure among the passengers bumped in this manner. The waiting line, with loads in chalk order, often proved bumptious, with some senior officers attempting to pull rank to move their chalk to the head of the line. They wanted to be on the next C-141 'smoking south'. Everyone was clear, or so they thought, about the career implications of participation in the operation. In the midst of this situation, the arrival on 26 October of an engineer officer with a reverse-osmosis water purification unit, which would fill an entire C-141 by itself, became the last straw for Kelly. Because there was a genuine potable water crisis developing at Point Salines, he was able to send the water purification unit south the next day when the airflow was at its sluggish worst. Henceforth, Kelly insisted, all requests for units, supplies, or equipment would have to go through normal channels, and he would

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77 Intervs, Hicks with Kelly, 18 November 1983; author with Cleary, 14 July 1986; with Brig Gen James Smith, Asst. Div. Cdr., 82nd Abn. Div., 4 September 1986; LL, Crabtree, sub: Tracking of Aircraft upon departure from Pope AFB; all in Historians' files, CMH.

only recognise the priority that General Smith assigned to the chalk. By these measures the division gradually gained control of its own airflow.<sup>78</sup>

Although the airflow was in chaos, the American tactical situation began to improve during the evening of 25 October. The lead battalion of the 2nd Brigade, the 2nd Battalion, 325th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Colonel Jack L. Hamilton, had landed by the evening of 25 October, but only the first aircraft carrying the commander of the 3rd Battalion, 325th Infantry, Lt. Col. John W. Raines, his tactical operations centre, and a few rifleman had arrived. The other planes carrying the 3rd Battalion had run low on fuel and diverted to Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. There, the troops had to deplane, reconfigure into smaller groups to fit into C-130s, and then fly back to Grenada. This took all night. Although the troops were in Grenada by the morning of 26 October, they were utterly exhausted, having been awake continuously for at least thirty-six hours if not longer. Moreover, like all the other members of the division, they were wearing the Army's new polyester battle dress uniform for temperate climates. The Army was in the process of converting to a new pattern of uniforms and had discontinued the old pattern without first purchasing tropical-weight uniforms. Heat exhaustion became all too common in the division. The rangers, who still wore Vietnam-era tropical uniforms, had no such problems.<sup>79</sup>

By 1200 on 25 October, it was apparent to Admiral Metcalf and General Schwarzkopf that the SEAL detachment at the governor general's residence needed speedy relief. As problems mounted at Point Salines, it was evident that relief from that quarter could not be speedy. General Schwarzkopf suggested that the Marines might land on the west coast of the island and drive south to St George's. Admiral Metcalf liked the idea. As a consequence, a Marine company conducted an amphibious assault

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78 Inters, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; Hicks with Kelly, 18 November 1983; Wade with Maj Samuel S. Vitucci, S-3, 82nd DISCOM [November 1983]; author with Capt Gregory A. Harding, S-4, 307th Engr. Bn., 24 June 1986; with Cleary, 14 July 1986; with Maj Carl A. Strock, S-3, 307th Engr. Bn., 30 May 1986; with Maj Philip R. Anderson, XO, 307th Engr. Bn., 9 May 1986; with Capt John L. Ramey, Asst. S-3, 307th Engr. Bn., 6 June 1986, 18 June 1986; all in Historians' files, CMH. AAR, Crabtree, sub: UF.

79 Inters, Members of the GSG with Capt Charles H. Jacoby, Jr, Cdr., Co. A, 2nd Bn., 325th Inf. [November 1983]; Bishop with Hamilton, 16 November 1983; Burdett with Raines [November 1983]; Briefing, Col Stephen Silvasy, Command & General Staff College, 7-8 December 1983, sub: Grenada; Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 25 October 1983, 1933, all in Historians' files, CMH.

north of the capitol at Grand Mal Bay at 1630 on 25 October. Reacting to reports that the Grenadian army and possibly Cubans were massing against the Marines at Grand Mal, the battalion landing team commander, Lt. Colonel Ray L. Smith, ordered a second company to reinforce the beachhead. While that company was still en route, Smith decided to attack south under cover of darkness. Led by three M-60 tanks, the marines moved south. The ammunition for the tanks' main armament remained aboard ship, buried in holds that had been administratively loaded, but the soldiers of the Grenadian army did not remain long enough to find this out. They fled, ripping off their uniforms and abandoning their weapons as they went. It had been a long day for the Grenadians, and the tanks, which none of them had ever seen before, on top of everything else was just too much. The rot spread to the capital. Everywhere troops abandoned their positions and decamped, often in the process exchanging clothing with civilians at gunpoint. At 0710 on 26 October the marines linked up with the SEALs. Less than two hours later, Governor General Scoon and his wife boarded the USS. *Guam* to confer with Admiral Metcalf.<sup>80</sup>

At Point Salines, General Trobaugh planned a very deliberate one-battalion offensive for 26 October. The 82nd Airborne Division had been training for high-tempo warfare with the Soviets in the Middle East. Trobaugh believed that this training made it very difficult for the troops to show the restraint needed to prevent unnecessary deaths amid the civilian population. His solution was a highly centralised, tightly controlled, slow, and careful advance. Given the division's lack of vehicles, in contrast to the Marines, this was something of a necessity. Aside from a few jeeps that had arrived before Trobaugh's 'send me battalions' order, the units relied on captured vehicles to bring supplies forward from the airhead. The 82nd's battalions traveled at foot speed. In addition, like the other senior officers in the operation, Trobaugh was a Vietnam veteran and alive to the dangers posed by a possible post-conflict insurgency. A methodical advance would, he believed, uncover the weapons and ammunition required to sustain an insurgency and make it physically impossible. He was further very much

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80 AAR, JTF 120, sub: Grenada; MFR, author, 28 October 2008, sub: DIA Conference on Operation UF; Memo, sub: Grenada Summary, encl in Memo, Lt Col Larry B. Hamby for Col Louis D. F. Frasc , 25 June 1984, sub: Visit to 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit; Briefing, Benis Frank, chief, Oral History Branch, US Marine Corps Historical Division, 8 December 1983, sub: Grenada; all in Historians' files, CMH. Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 9-12; Hugh O'Shaughnessy, *Grenada: Revolution, Invasion, and Aftermath* (London: Sphere Books, 1984), 24.

aware of the Reagan administration's concern about weak popular support for the Grenada intervention. He did not want to rack up a large number of casualties, American, Grenadian, or Cuban. He believed that the most psychologically destabilising factor to the defenders would be the airflow, the continuous landing of planes with the combat power they represented. Eventually, their morale would crack.<sup>81</sup>

Trobaugh's one-battalion attack had a specifically military objective. That was to divert the attention of all the Grenadians to the south. Then, when they were looking the wrong way, he would stage an airmobile assault at Grand Anse and rescue the medical students there. He only needed a company from his aviation battalion to provide the lift. The lead elements of that company began arriving in Barbados in the early hours of 26 October to find the same chaotic situation that the aviators in Joint Task Force 123 had discovered the day before. It was not chaotic for the Air Force. General Patterson's men were following plans—but plans not coordinated with the Army. Normally, XVIII Airborne Corps would have done this planning in conjunction with the Air Force, but, of course, XVIII Airborne Corps was no longer in the chain of command. Consequently, crews reassembling helicopters had to continually shift their machines as Air Force C-5s, C-130s, and C-141s landed. A task that should have consumed a few hours took more than twenty-four. Task Force B of the 82d Aviation Battalion would not be available to conduct operations on Grenada on 26 October.<sup>82</sup>

The ground attack got off on the wrong foot. The Cubans ambushed and dispersed an officer's patrol from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Infantry, killing the company commander, Captain Michael F. Ritz, wounding several others, and dispersing the survivors in thick jungle.

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81 Briefing, Silvasy, 7–8 December 1983, sub: [Grenada]; Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 25 October 1983, 1955; Intervs, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; Frasché with Akers, [December 1983]; Pirnie with T. Smith, 3 April 1985; author with Taylor, 4 December 1986.

82 Robert N. Seigle, 'Looking Backward at URGENT FURY: Army Aviation in Grenada', *Army Aviation* 32 (December 1983): 22, 24; Intervs, author with Col Robert C. Barrett, Jr, Dep. Cdr., 1st Support Command, 18 July 1986; with Capt Jimmie M. Rabon, S-4, 82nd Aviation (hereafter Avn.) Bn., 26 June 1986; Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Maj Stephen R. Baribeau with Lt Col Robert N. Seigle, Cdr., 82nd Avn. Bn., 9 November 1983; all in Historians' files, CMH. Msg, Mackmull to Cavazos et al, 28 October 1983, 1155Z, sub: UF Airflow, WIN Teleconferencing Transcript, Conference Title: Grenada, US Army Forces Command Emergency Operations Center (hereafter EOC), Ft. McPherson, GA.

They attempted to avoid the Cubans while regaining friendly lines. This left the company temporarily under the command of some very grizzled Vietnam-era non-commissioned officers. One of them took a platoon forward, rescued the wounded, defeated a second ambush, and drove off the Cubans. In the process—this was the company that did not receive more than a handful of grenades before leaving Fort Bragg—the men captured several cases of Soviet grenades that they promptly threw at the Cubans. Of even greater importance, their battalion commander, Colonel Hamilton, used firepower demonstrations and negotiations to convince the Cubans in the advisers' compound to surrender. This led to a further advance—the capture of the main Grenadian supply depot at Frequente containing sufficient arms, ammunition, and other equipment to outfit several battalions. The battalion pushed on, but the slopes became steeper—it was washboard terrain—and the jungle thicker than what the men had encountered before. Once Hamilton reached an over watch position on the main Point Salines-St George's road, he called it a day. His men were exhausted and he had already had an excessive number of heat casualties. He knew nothing about the students at Grand Anse—but that is the way Trobaugh wanted it. Trobaugh did not want Hamilton to try to rescue them, only distract the Grenadians and the Cubans.<sup>83</sup>

Hamilton had sent the five gun jeeps of the battalion's reconnaissance platoon down the Point Salines-St George's Road to scout ahead of the battalion. The Cubans, or possibly the Grenadians, had set up an ambush. They allowed the first two jeeps to pass through unmolested and then opened fire on the trailing three. The first two did a U-turn and sped back firing at the suspected enemy position. What turned the ambush into a disaster for the Cubans or Grenadians, however, was what they had not noticed on the opposite side of the road. Captain Mark D. Roche's Company C of Hamilton's battalion had occupied a dominant height with a clear view of what was happening. The men had lugged a great deal of heavy ammunition through the heat of the day with no opportunity to fire it off. Now they lightened their load enthusiastically and quickly

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83 Map Overlay, 2nd Bn., 325th Inf., 25 October 1983, 2200, sub: Plan of Attack for 260630; Briefing, Silvasy, 7–8 Dec 1983, sub: [Grenada]; Intervs, Bishop with Hamilton, 16 November 1983; with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Sfc Jerry L. Wells with Sfc Rodolfo Capetillo, 3rd Platoon, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 325th Inf., 10 November 1983; all in Historians' files, CMH.

dominated the fire fight. The ambush having been ambushed, the original perpetrators fled the scene.<sup>84</sup>

The non-arrival of the division's aviators clearly put Trobaugh's plan in jeopardy. General Schwarzkopf had an idea: use Marine helicopters to carry the Army to Grand Anse. Admiral Metcalf liked the idea, but the marines did not. They had a difficult deployment to Lebanon ahead of them, and they had already lost two helicopters. Admiral Metcalf ordered them to support the Army. The non-arrival of the follow-on airborne infantry battalions Trobaugh had requested meant that he was forced to use one of the ranger battalions, the 2nd Battalion, 75th Infantry, which had concentrated near the airstrip in anticipation of returning soon to the United States. He now had some artillery at hand. Just before the Marine helicopters with rangers aboard skimmed across the waves and onto the beach, the artillery laid down a barrage on three sides of the campus and maintained it while the rangers bundled all the students aboard the helicopters. One helicopter damaged its rotor blades when it came too close to a palm tree in the very narrow landing zone and had to be abandoned. This left too little space for all the students and rangers and meant that some of the rangers had to move back to US lines overland, which they successfully did. The students arrived at Point Salines after dark and boarded waiting transports almost immediately for flight back to the United States. It had been a near text-book military operation; there were no American casualties. The only question that lingers is whether the remaining Grenadian army units in the south warranted such an elaborate operation.<sup>85</sup>

Higher headquarters did not appreciate the slowness with which General Trobaugh conducted his operations, particularly in contrast to the largely unopposed motorised patrols that the Marines were running in the northern portion of the island. (The only firefight, initiated by the

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84 Intervs, Pirnie, MacGarrigle, and author with Hamilton, 3 June 1985; Bishop with Hamilton, 10 November 1983, and with Capt Mark D. Roche, Cdr., Co. C, 2nd Bn., 325th Inf., 19 November 1983, in Historians' files, CMH. Hamilton's normal Company C was not available for the operation as it was full of new recruits. Roche's command was normally Company B, 2nd Battalion, 505th Infantry, but was temporarily redesignated Company C, 2nd Battalion, 325th Infantry, and assigned to Hamilton for this operation only.

85 Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 26 October 1983, 1000; AAR, Hagler to Scholtes, 14 November 1983, sub: Preliminary AAR—UF; Intervs, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; with Hagler, 30 October 1983; with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983; Pirnie, MacGarrigle, and author with Hamilton, 31 May 1985.

Marines, occurred near the village of Mirabeau Hospital late on 28 October.) The assumption in Washington and Norfolk was that when a battalion commander arrived in Grenada the entire battalion was there or soon would be. This was never the case given the airflow problems, of which higher headquarters remained unaware. The communications problems on Grenada shielded Trobaugh from much of this rather pointed criticism. General Schwarzkopf, with the superior communications facilities of the *Guam* at his disposal, tried to alert Trobaugh to the problem, only to be brushed aside. Trobaugh had his plan and he was sticking to it.<sup>86</sup>

Trobaugh was by all accounts a highly intelligent officer, very austere, with a dry sense of humour, who did not suffer fools gladly. He was the kind of leader who was respected but not loved. He was also imbued with the idea that the 82nd Airborne Division was an elite formation, a view that every other member of the organisation held as well. If he sometimes rankled Schwarzkopf, his personality appears to have inflamed certain marines. In any event, because of the Marine capture of St George's, Admiral Metcalf switched the boundary line between Army and Marine Corps operations south of the capital. As Trobaugh suspected that his troops would come up on the line soon, he suggested to the Marine amphibious unit commander, Colonel Faulkner, that they exchange liaison officers. Faulkner declined, saying that if the Army stayed on its side of the line and the Marine Corps on its side that would be coordination enough. In fact, on subsequent days three unexpected collisions between the forces resulted in near tragedies. Only the exceptional fire discipline of all concerned spared the nation multiple friendly-fire casualties.<sup>87</sup>

Admiral Metcalf attempted to solve the coordination problem by appointing General Schwarzkopf as deputy task force commander, a position Metcalf and Schwarzkopf considered equivalent to ground force commander. Trobaugh and Faulkner, however, were one in ignoring his directives. Schwarzkopf was a big man, also very intelligent, whose personality filled a room. He had a volcanic temperament to match. His nickname 'Stormin' Norman' was not a term of endearment. But somehow, he kept his temper under control through all the slights. Much

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86 Intervs, Bishop with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983; with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 20.

87 Intervs, Hinckley with Metcalf, 13 February 1984; Pirnie and author with Akers [1985]; Frasché with Akers, [December 1983]; Bishop with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983; with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983.

to the surprise of observers, he and Admiral Metcalf became fast friends. Quite possibly he and the straight-shooting Metcalf saw something of themselves in the other. In fact, Metcalf rendered Captain Erie's chief of staff speechless when, called away to a conference in Barbados, he left General Schwarzkopf in command of the fleet. Apparently, the fleet survived. In many ways, Grenada was a very strange little war.<sup>88</sup>

The third day of the operation, 27 October, saw the Grenadian defences attenuate and even evaporate in the south, but this circumstance was not immediately evident to division headquarters. Hamilton drew the assignment to proceed up the St George's road with instructions to rescue some Canadian tourists who were holed up in the Ross Point Hotel. The Canadian government had been placing great pressure on Washington to rescue them immediately. At the same time, he was to clear houses as he advanced. Hamilton placed his battalion in attack formation, with units on the high ground on both sides of the road. He advanced carefully, for the events of the evening before would have induced a measure of caution. As per division order, his men inspected each structure along the road—and there were many—as potential hiding places for armed opponents. The house-clearing did yield a few small caches of arms and ammunition, but resistance consisted only of scattered sniper fire. Once the battalion reached Grand Anse, the men discovered sixteen to twenty students in the residential complex, somehow left behind by the rangers the day before. Captain Rocke sent them to the rear with an escort. Only Hamilton's right-hand company met any opposition, if that is what it was. Most evidence suggests that it was friendly fire. Because of the caution and thoroughness with which he proceeded, Hamilton spent the night short of his objective. His battalion aid station had a more thrilling afternoon, when the marines air assaulted it. Fortunately, there were no casualties on either side.<sup>89</sup>

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88 Inters, Bishop with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983; author with Lt Col James R. Childs, Director of Plans and Training, Ft Stewart, GA, 21 July 2006, Historians' files, CMH. Richard M. Butler, 'Command Structuring Amphibious Forces', (Student Paper, US Naval War College, 1986), 6.

89 Jnl, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 27 October 1983, 0054; Inters, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983; with Hamilton, 10 November 1983; with Rocke, 19 November 1983; with Capt Michael C. Okita, Cdr., Co. B, 325th Inf., 16 November 1983; Oland with Spec Denis Deszo, 2nd Bn., 325th Inf., Aid Station, 3 March 1988; Captions to photographs, Deszo; E-Mail, Charles Hendricks to author, 3 March 2010, sub: Material from Denis Deszo; all in Historians' files, CMH. Okita succeeded to the command after Captain Ritz was killed in the Cuban ambush on 26 October.



Aboard the *Guam*, under pressure from Washington to rescue the 400 Canadian, British, and American nationals reputed to be on Ross Point and dissatisfied with the division's slow advance to the objective, General Schwarzkopf decided to shift the Army-Marine operations boundary south of St George's to include Ross Point within the Marine area of operations. Colonel Smith dispatched a motorised patrol, unopposed, to the Ross Point Hotel. The marines arrived just after dark and found 26 tourists, most of them Canadians, in residence. They were obviously happy to see the marines, but none of them wanted to leave Grenada.<sup>90</sup>

Raines's battalion had moved up the Point-Salines-St George's road until he was in supporting distance of Hamilton's. His men came under sniper fire but one light anti-tank round at the right location ended that nonsense. Once his men were in position, his orders called for him to advance almost due east. Raines's objective was "The Cliff", a dominant terrain feature that overlooked a road that ran south from St George's. His left-hand company reported initial opposition. Given the close nature of the country, no one could determine whether it was really Cubans and Grenadians or simply one of Hamilton's companies. But there were no casualties. The battalion received scattered sniper fire but no organised resistance. The men came upon a prepared defensive position. Locals reported that the defenders had left shortly before Raines's battalion arrived. Raines pushed on through very difficult terrain with all the speed his men could muster to his objective. He had an Air Force controller with him and a Spectre gunship circling overhead, but nothing happened.<sup>91</sup>

Raines had left his wheeled transport at the Grenadian army depot captured by Hamilton's battalion on the preceding day. A Marine Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company supporting Raines's battalion was also there; Raines had left it behind because there were no roads or tracks in his line of advance on which the marines could move their jeep full of radio equipment. Raines had left his combat support company, commanded by Capt. Ben F. Clawson, to provide security. They came under automatic weapons fire from the east, the west, and the south. Clawson thought the fire from the south was friendly fire and attempted to call it off. While he was preoccupied and Raines was out of radio contact because

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90 Interv, Pirnie with Schwarzkopf, 1 November 1985, Historians' files, CMH; Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 21.

91 Interv, Burdett with Raines [November 1983].

of the intervening terrain, the marine in command of the Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company believed that he had located the source of some of the fire. A fighter-bomber from the *Independence* bombed a target (whether it was the location designated by the marine became a matter of controversy) that turned out to be the tactical operations centre of the 2nd Brigade. Sixteen men were injured, two lost both their legs, one of these subsequently died.<sup>92</sup>

Almost simultaneously with the bombing, another disaster overtook the division. In the morning General Vessey radioed Trobaugh directly to express his dissatisfaction with the division's rate of advance. Then about noon, without warning, Trobaugh received a 'JCS directs' order to seize the Grenadian army camp on the Calivigny Peninsula before sunset. (General Vessey later said that he never sent such a message.) The message seemed senseless, particularly the deadline. The camp would fall the next day. The intervening terrain was studded with ambush positions. Any ground approach would necessarily be slow—not something done in an afternoon. Moreover, Trobaugh had all his airborne battalions committed to other missions. By this time the greater portion of the lead battalion of Colonel Scott's 3rd Brigade had arrived, but in much the same shape as Colonel Raines's on the previous day. (The other two battalions had departed Pope Air Force Base on 26 October but became even more scattered by airflow problems than Raines's battalion and did not arrive at Point Salines until 28 October.) Trobaugh had assigned Scott's lead battalion a perimeter defence mission and then ordered a short advance to coincide with those of Hamilton and Raines. Both Admiral Metcalf and Trobaugh, acting separately, immediately protested the order to Atlantic Command, but Admiral McDonald would not countenance any delay.<sup>93</sup>

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92 Jnl, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 27 October 1983, 1655; Intervs, Burdett with Raines, [November 1983]; with Capt Ben F. Clawson, Cdr., Combat Support Co., 3rd Bn., 325th Inf. [November 1983]; Frasc  with Capt Robert L. McClure, S-4, 3rd Bn., 325th Inf., 16 November 1983; AAR, JTF 120, sub: Grenada Scenario; List, sub: Personnel Injured in 27 October 1983 Strafing Incident, Grenada, encl in Ltr, Cavazos to McDonald, 28 March 1984, sub: Joint Investigation of A-7 Strafing on 27 October 1983; all in Historians' files, CMH.

93 Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 27 October 1983, 1226, gives the order as received by the division verbatim. Intervs, Bishop with Schwarzkopf, 21 November 1983; with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; GWG with Schwarzkopf, 10 November 1983; Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987. For the most careful elucidation of the genesis of the order, see Cole, *URGENT FURY*, 66. He discovered no evidence that the Joint Chiefs of Staff ever issued such a directive.

Meanwhile, Trobaugh had been trying to organise the attack. The lead company of the 82nd Aviation Battalion had arrived, but it had only UH-60 Blackhawks, no gunships. The pilots had had little or no sleep in the last forty-eight hours. There was no fuel on-hand for them even though a request to Military Airlift Command for such fuel was over a day old. Trobaugh asked for Marine helicopters, but having already lost three helicopters, the marines said no and Admiral Metcalf saw the wisdom of their position. The Army pilots refueled by flying blivot loads of fuel from the *Guam* and then draining the blivots into the tanks of the helicopters. Because this was labour intensive, the aviators could do no substantive planning for the assault. For troops to make the assault, Trobaugh once again turned to Hagler's 2nd Battalion, 75th Infantry, which had once more hopefully gathered at the airstrip for a return flight to the United States. Hagler had at least planned to capture the camp, albeit by overland approach.<sup>94</sup>

The artillery planning was so hurried that the fire plan was botched, but a Marine controller directed Navy fighter-bombers on the camp which was soon blazing. The helicopters made an overly fast approach. The ground raised up more quickly than the pilots' maps indicated, and the camp was closer to the edge of the plateau than the aircrew expected. The result was that the helicopters shot up to a higher altitude than necessary and then slowly settled to the ground, making themselves excellent targets in the process. The explanation for what happened next varies. There may have been at most a Grenadian caretaker squad at the site, and the soldiers may have fired on the helicopters. At the same time ammunition was cooking off in the burning camp. A stray round could have done the damage. Finally, in lieu of gunships the Blackhawks had untrained door gunners firing in support of the landing. (There was a reason the Army of this era was called 'a hollow Army'.) One of the door gunners may have hit a sister ship. In any event, the third helicopter in the first flight of four received sufficient damage that it locked rotors with one of the other helicopters. Both crashed. The pilot of the fourth helicopter, manoeuvring

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94 Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 26 October 1983, 1525, 27 October 1983, 1315; Intervs, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983; with Hagler, 30 October 1983; Frasché with Scott, 18 November 1983; author with Rabon, 27 June 1987; [Baribeau] with Maj William Elder, Cdr., Task Force (hereafter TF) B, 82nd Avn. Bn., 9 November 1983, Historians' files, CMH.

to avoid the wreckage, landed in a ditch, causing his main rotor to flex and cut off his tail rotor. Without any indicator on his instrument panel to tell him that the tail rotor was not functioning, the pilot attempted to take off and promptly crashed into the other two machines.<sup>95</sup>

Rangers who remained inside the Blackhawks suffered no major injuries, but the first helicopter was only fifteen feet from the ground when the chain reaction started. Rangers were jumping onto the ground as they were trained to do during assault landings. Three were killed outright and five gravely injured. One lost both legs, traumatically amputated by a main rotor that separated from its helicopter. Hagler evacuated the dead and wounded and, reinforced by a company of rangers from Taylor's battalion, established a secure perimeter and remained through the night.<sup>96</sup>

By the end of 27 October, everyone agreed that the combat phase of the operation had ended. The operation next entered the *pacification phase*, the use of armed force and other measures to defeat an armed insurgency. Ultimately, the mission would become *peacekeeping*, the use of troops to maintain an existing peace and forestall the development of armed opposition to the sitting government. Simultaneously, the Reagan administration intended to conduct *nation building*—the re-establishment of democratic government, the rule of law, and a market economy—

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95 Intervs, Frasc  with Scott, 18 November 1983; Wells with Sgt Maj James E. Voyles, 2nd Bn., 75th Inf., 1 November 1983; Bishop with Capt Jose G. Ventura, Jr, S-4, 2nd Bn., 75th Inf., 1 November 1983; with Scott, [November 1983]; with Hagler, 30 October 1983; Danner and McMichael with Col Fred N. Halley, Cdr., 82nd Div. Artillery (hereafter Arty.), 15 November 1983; McMichael with Lt Col Freddy E. McFerren, Cdr., 1st Bn., 319th Arty., 17 November 1983; with Lt Col John J. Ryneska, Asst. Div. Fire Support Coordinator, 82nd Abn. Div., 18 November 1983; Baribeau with Seigle, 9 November 1983; Member, GWG, with Elder, and CWO 4 Thomas McWilliams, Command Pilot, Chalk 4, 1st Lift, Calivigny Air Assault, TF B, 14 December 1983; Briefing, Seigle, Lt Col William J. Miller, Cdr., 1st Squadron (hereafter Sqdn.), 17th Cavalry (hereafter Cav.), Elder, Maj Timothy R. Lynch, Cdr., Troop B, 1st Sqdn., 17th Cav., Capt Bernard C. Negrete, Cdr., Co. D, 82nd Avn. Bn., Ft. Rucker, AL, 10 February 1984, sub: Grenada; all in Historians' files, CMH.

96 Briefing, Seigle, Miller, Elder, Lynch, Negrete, 10 February 1984, sub: Grenada; Intervs, Frasc  with Scott, 18 November 1983; Baribeau with Seigle, 9 November 1983; Member, GWG, with Elder and McWilliams, 14 December 1983; Member, GWG, with CWO 2 Wayne P. Sinibaldi, TF B, 82nd Avn. Bn., Command Pilot, Chalk 3, 1st Lift, Calivigny Air Assault, 14 December 1983; Bishop with Hensler, 1 November 1983; with Hagler, 30 October 1983; Wells with Capt Mark L. Hanna, Cdr., Co. C, 2nd Bn., 75th Inf., 1 November 1983; with Voyles, 1 November 1983; all in Historians' files, CMH.

without using that name. The Army's role in the latter was primarily training indigenous units.<sup>97</sup>

Early on 28 October General Trobaugh informed his commanders that the mission had entered the pacification phase. He reiterated the need for troops to do a careful search of any area they passed through. Units continued to find caches of arms and ammunition in southern Grenada as well as gaggles of students. The 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry, the only complete battalion in Colonel Scott's brigade at dawn on 28 October, swept into the Lance aux Épines Peninsula and discovered the largest contingent of students living off campus, 202, as well as many other non-Grenadians who needed evacuation. Included among them was an elderly British couple who, uncertain about the proper dress for an evacuation, came in 'formal attire and jewels'.<sup>98</sup>

Early on 28 October, Hamilton's battalion advanced once more toward the Ross Point Hotel. Just before Hamilton's men reached their objective, they bumped into a strange force. It was US Marines; Smith's patrol had remained to provide security for the Canadians. The marines were surprised to find soldiers in their area of operation. The soldiers were surprised to find marines in what they thought was their area of operations. Hamilton did not know about General Schwarzkopf's shift of the boundary between the two forces. Schwarzkopf had notified General Trobaugh of the change at the same time he notified Colonel Faulkner, but the message miscarried and Trobaugh did not receive the news until considerably later than Faulkner. Division forwarded the information to Colonel Silvasy, but the bombing of his command post disrupted its operation. Apparently no one forwarded the information to Hamilton and Raines. Fortunately, no shots were fired and no one was injured in what could have been a very calamitous mixup.<sup>99</sup>

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97 For a discussion of the contemporary meaning of these terms, see: Edgar F. Raines, Jr, *The Rucksack War: US Army Operational Logistics in Grenada, 1983*, Contingency Operations Series (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2010), 459.

98 Intervs, Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987; Bishop with Farris, 8 November 1983; Frasché with Scott, 18 November 1983; Msg, Boylan to EOC, XVIII Abn. Corps (Attn: Col Johnson), 30 October [1983], 0757Z, XVIII Abn. Corps, EOC Records, Op. UF, RG 338, Entry 228, UD-06W, NARA—CP; Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 28 October 1983, 2230.

99 Interv, Bishop with Hamilton, 10 November 1983; Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 21-2.

The next day General Vessey arrived to survey the situation. He told the commanders that he wanted them to finish the operation as soon as possible. He wanted the Marines to get to Lebanon quickly. General Trobaugh and the elements of the 82nd Airborne Division would stay no longer than absolutely necessary. Vessey and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with their attention always focused on the Soviets, wanted the complete division ready to deploy wherever needed. It was perhaps not a coincidence that on this day General Trobaugh decided to launch his first long-range motorised patrol, mounted on an odd assortment of captured vehicles, but protected by two Army AH-1 Cobra gunships. The patrol experienced no difficulties, and Trobaugh became less skeptical of long-range patrols. Marine motorised patrols bagged most of the regime leaders, but the 3rd Brigade collared the last major holdout, General Hudson Austin and a few aides, on 30 October. That same day marines entered the last large town on the island unvisited by Americans, Sauteurs, located on the north coast, and the next day began boarding ship. The Army assumed responsibility for patrolling the entire island.<sup>100</sup>

On 1 November the Marines landed on and occupied Carriacou Island, the largest inhabited dependency of Grenada. Reports of a last regime stronghold proved much exaggerated. The one Grenadian platoon there had already stacked arms and changed into civilian clothing prior to the Marines' arrival. Colonel Scott, the 3rd Brigade commander, accompanied by Captain Mark D. Rocke, flew to the island later that day and coordinated a hand-off to the Army scheduled for 2 November. Captain Rocke and his company flew in as expected, but instead of conducting an administrative landing, the company executed an air assault. Good fire discipline prevented a tragedy, but the episode demonstrated a willingness to put ordinary Grenadians at risk when there was no operational reason for such behaviour.<sup>101</sup>

The marines reboarded their ships. On 2 November, Amphibious Squadron Four, escorted by the *Independence* battle group, sailed for the Mediterranean. At 1000 that day Admiral Metcalf reported that combat

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100 Jnl, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 28 October 1983, 0814–1000, Historians' files, CMH; George A. Crocker, 'Grenada Remembered—A Perspective: A Narrative Essay on Operation URGENT FURY' (Student Paper, US Army War College, 1987), 17 (quoted words); Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 17–18.

101 Jnl, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 2 November 1983, 0515; AAR/LL, Johnson to Mackmull, 6 February 1984; Briefing, Frank, 8 December 1983, sub: Grenada; Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 17–18.

operations on Grenada had officially ended. The next day he dissolved Joint Task Force 120. Operation URGENT FURY officially ended.<sup>102</sup>

The Army also began withdrawing troops from Grenada. Colonel Hagler's 2nd Battalion, 75th Infantry, departed by air on 28 October; Taylor's 1st Battalion followed with the last elements leaving on 29 October. General Trobaugh became officially commander US Forces, Grenada, on 2 November with the departure of the Marines. Two days later the assault command post and the 2nd Brigade left. Trobaugh remained in Grenada to brief a visiting congressional delegation. Once he completed that task, he handed over his position on 9 November to Brigadier General Jack V. Farris, the deputy commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps, and flew back to Fort Bragg. Colonel Scott remained in command of the manoeuvre force until 22 November, when he returned to the United States. The last airborne battalion, Lt. Colonel Keith M. Nightengale's 2nd Battalion, 505th Infantry, left on 12 December. General Farris departed three days later. A small number of Army trainers remained on Grenada until 30 September 1985.<sup>103</sup>

Grenada was the most complex military operation that the United States conducted between the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War, and the only one involving all four services. As might be expected, the conduct of the operation demonstrated that a certain amount of rust had developed over the years. That, as well as doctrinal disconnect, may explain the failure of Army and Air Force officers to exchange relevant information at Pope Air Force Base. The 82nd Airborne Division's lack of tropical uniforms and trained helicopter door gunners attested also that Grenada occurred in the era of 'the hollow Army' with combat units as yet unaffected by the largess of the Reagan defence buildup. Something similar may have affected the other services. At the same time, individual soldiers and marines at the small unit level demonstrated by their actions a high level of both training and professionalism.

The fact that four services were involved meant that command relationships were very complicated. It is questionable whether key

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102 Jnl, G-3, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 2 November 1983, 0515, 1740; AAR/LL, Johnson to Mackmull, 6 February 1984; Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 18.

103 Chrono, 1st Bn., 75th Inf., sub: Sequence of Events, encl in AAR, Taylor to Scholtes et al., 14 November 1983; AAR, Hagler to Scholtes et al., 14 November 1983; Intervs, Bishop with Taylor, 2 November 1983; with Hagler, 30 October 1983; author with Bishop, July 1984; Danner, Frasc , and Bishop with Farris, 18 November 1983; Briefing Slides, 82nd DISCOM, William F. Daly Papers, Historians' files, CMH.

figures like General Vessey and Admiral McDonald actually understood all those relationships. Their attempts to simplify the structure only created more problems they failed to anticipate. For the Army, the removal of the XVIII Airborne Corps was the decision most fraught with unanticipated consequences—at least some of the communications and airflow problems experienced during the operation would have been alleviated had McDonald left the corps in the chain of command. McDonald's decision set up a vicious cycle in which subordinates had to make decisions on the fly to cope. Often these decisions had unforeseen consequences that forced their subordinates to similarly make decisions that they lacked the time to think through clearly. After the operation was complete, McDonald, when asked why he removed the corps headquarters, said that he had expected that the XVIII Airborne Corps would continue to provide logistical support to Army forces just as it did during Atlantic Command's peacetime exercises. He overlooked the fact that during those exercises XVIII Airborne Corps had been in the chain of command.<sup>104</sup>

After World War II the United States adopted a system of major regional planning and intelligence gathering headquarters covering much of the world combined with a relatively small number of standing forces that could be shifted from region to region as the need arose. The success of this system depended upon well-defined lines of command and the timely exchange of information between the headquarters involved, conditions too often lacking in the Grenada intervention. Each set of planners worked in isolation from the other planning teams. Admiral McDonald did not adequately coordinate their efforts. Good military planning has a certain balletic quality about it as staff officers pass the information back and forth and produce a timely plan adapted to both available forces and circumstances in the area of operation. Such planning depends upon open channels of information, cross-talk between headquarters, and a crisp exchange of ideas. All too often preparations for the Grenada intervention, however, were more akin to a demolition derby than a ballet. Time pressures accounted for this in part. Events hurried along and participants rarely had an opportunity to revisit earlier

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104 Interv, Member, Harvard Fellows with McDonald [1988], Historians' files, CMH. Four Army officers, Lt Col Michael A. Anastasio, Lt Col Jerry Edwards, Lt Col Gilbert S. Harper, and Lt Col Michael Simmons, attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University during the academic year 1987–1988, and prepared a paper on logistics in the Grenada operation. They very kindly donated their files to the growing collection of papers pertaining to URGENT FURY at the US Army Center of Military History.



decisions. Admiral McDonald was an exception to this observation. On two occasions—General Mackmull’s telephone call and the appeal of the Army commanders at the conference on 24 October—he had an opportunity to reverse his decision about the XVIII Airborne Corps, and in each instance he chose not to.<sup>105</sup>

At the time critics accused the services of ‘log rolling’ to make certain that each service participated in the operation, but this charge seems largely unwarranted. The only event that might conceivably be so described was General Vessey’s decision to include the marines, already on station as a reserve, in the initial assault force. But given Secretary of Defense Weinberger’s guidance, he probably thought he had little leeway in the matter, no matter what the internal politics of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which were in themselves compelling on this point. Given the intelligence at hand, there appeared to be ample military justification for beefing up the assault force. The real problem lay in its effect on the command of the operation. McDonald’s first impulse, to put a Marine colonel in charge, appeared uninspired to say the least, although it speaks volumes about his real opinion of General Scholtes. To cloak his argument in doctrine meant that he ignored what everyone else in the room was aware of: Senior officers are expected to know when circumstances require making an exception to doctrine. McDonald certainly failed that test. His selection of Admiral Metcalf to be the joint task force commander was an excellent one. Metcalf was in every way an almost ideal choice to head a conglomeration of units drawn from four different services that did not work with each other on a daily basis. At the same time, however, McDonald evaded anointing a single ground force commander. When Metcalf attempted to do so in the midst of the operation, he could not make his decision stick, despite his subsequent protestations to the contrary. That Army and Marine forces did not commit fratricide had more to do with good small unit training and luck than with command arrangements.<sup>106</sup>

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105 Cole et al., *History of the Unified Command Plan*, 11–15.

106 The critics include: Ltr, Rep Jim Couter, US House of Representatives, to Rep Melvin Price, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, 5 April 1984; Rpt, William S. Lind, Military Reform Institute, to Congressional Military Reform Caucus, 5 April 1984; both in JHO Archives; Jeffrey Record, ‘Famous Victory’, *Baltimore Sun* (5 June 1984): 7; Edward N. Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 50–7; Richard A. Gabriel, *Military Incompetence: Why the American Military Doesn’t Win* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 149–86; Adkin, *URGENT FURY*, 125–44, 340; John Lehman, *Command of the Seas: Building the 600 Ship Navy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1988), 291–305. On the deputy commander issue, see Metcalf, ‘Decision Making and the Grenada Rescue Operation’, 281.

Atlantic Command was overwhelmingly a 'blue water' headquarters populated almost exclusively by sailors and marines. At least some of the problems the 82nd Airborne Division experienced arose from the fact that no one at McDonald's headquarters understood airborne operations, as witness the difficulty over when Task Force 121 would sortie from Pope Air Force Base and whether the troops would be rigged for air drop. McDonald may have felt inhibited about activating the US Army Atlantic and US Air Force Atlantic component headquarters given the Reagan administration's desire to keep preparations low key and out of the newspapers and off television. On the other hand, he certainly had the authority to request these headquarters to send forward beefed-up liaison teams headed by senior officers upon whose advice he could rely. Instead he chose to do nothing. Of course, such an action would have made a difference only if he was willing to listen to the advice from officers of the other services. His track record in that regard, in contrast to Admiral Metcalf's, was hardly inspiring.

In 1983 Atlantic Command was overstretched with responsibilities as it had been for many years. At times during the preparations for Operation URGENT FURY, McDonald appeared preoccupied. He did not take the Grenadians seriously as opponents. His intervention during the 24 October commanders' conference in favour of Ambassador Johnstone's plan to liberate Richmond Hill Prison would have been farcical except for the fact that it placed many men at risk and in the end could not be executed. McDonald's slippage of the start time from 0400 to 0500 had even greater consequences. Three Marine pilots and one Army pilot died because they had to engage Grenadian anti-aircraft defences in broad daylight. McDonald's inattention to detail and lack of knowledge of joint procedures probably lay behind his failure to host a communications conference or to insist on the development of a proper medical evacuation plan. McDonald did make one very good decision, albeit for the wrong reason, to launch the operation on 25 October. By keeping to that date, he prevented the Cubans from getting themselves organised which probably saved casualties—Cuban, Grenadian, and American—in the long run.

There was no formal inquiry into the Calivigny operation. General Mackmull, however, was incensed that so many young rangers had been killed and maimed for no apparent military reason. He attempted, working informally behind the scenes, to find out what had happened. He concluded that the order that sent the rangers there did not originate with

the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He believed that it came from Atlantic Command. He did not think, however, that Admiral McDonald knew anything about it. He believed that a staff officer, overhearing senior officers complaining about the tardy movements of the Army, sent the message, adding the phrase 'JCS directs' for effect. If his reconstruction is correct, it says little for the state of American communications discipline during the operation. Interestingly, Admiral McDonald at some point after the operation began appointed a senior member of his staff to approve all messages from his headquarters to Joint Task Force 120. It would be instructive to know if this occurred before or after the Calivigny operation.<sup>107</sup>

Of course, this was a military operation. Each headquarters made mistakes that might have been caught if there had been more time. Admiral McDonald, however, made more than his share, and, because of the position he occupied, they had greater impact than those made at lower headquarters. It seems a fair assumption that several of his distinguished predecessors at Atlantic Command could have done a much better job. McDonald's mistakes prove once again that personality matters. His errors suggest that he did not have the right temperament for such a senior position. If Grenada is a fair sample of his command performance, he appears to have been an authoritarian micro-manager curiously uninterested in details, especially those that did not fit his presuppositions. No personnel system is immune from error, and in this instance the Navy appears to have promoted him two or three grades above his level of competence.

By far the most damaging of the errors not attributable to any one headquarters was the failure to adequately plan for and then manage the Army side of the intermediate staging base at Barbados. Admiral McDonald's change of the start time to 0500 meant that the special operating force detachments needed to be over their objectives punctually at that time because they had only twelve minutes of darkness with which to work. At the same time, they had to arrive at Barbados in darkness so that they did not telegraph their impending attack to the Grenadians. The key activity during their stay in Barbados was rebuilding the 160th Aviation Battalion's helicopters. To do this they needed a designated location

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107 Intervs, Bishop with Mackmull, 29 November 1983; Hicks with Richardson [November 1983]; Metcalf, 'Decision Making and the Grenada Rescue Operation', 291-2.

recognised by the Air Force to permit the rebuilding to be unimpeded. The delay in permitting General Patterson to plan for a staging base in Barbados made it impossible to identify such a space. To be effective the planning would have had to include transportation specialists from General Scholtes's headquarters, who may not have been available due to the changes Admiral McDonald made to other parts of the plan. Part of the problem is that the establishment of an intermediate staging base did not have sufficient visibility outside the airlift community. If the Twenty-first Air Force had sent a planning team led by General Patterson to Atlantic Command earlier, perhaps he could have raised the consciousness of Admiral McDonald and his staff on the issue. That Patterson was not permitted to plan for a Barbados intermediate staging base from the beginning probably stemmed from diplomatic considerations beyond the purview of Atlantic Command, but there was no reason not to plan for using Grantley Adams International Airport as an alternative to Roosevelt Roads if Barbados joined the intervention as it did. Nor was there any reason for Patterson to contact the airport manager at Grantley Adams for planning data. Most of the information he needed had already been collected, probably by the J-2 at US Forces Caribbean Command and certainly by the G-2 at XVIII Airborne Corps. The one item they would not have known was the current stockage levels of jet fuel at the airport, but lack of this information did not prevent Patterson from establishing his staging base there. Of course, access to this data would have required more competence from the J-2 at Atlantic Command than he demonstrated during the planning phase of the operation.

The Joint Special Operations Command also committed a number of errors. Because that headquarters immediately clamped the highest possibly secrecy about its actions to prevent any serious public discussions of its shortcomings, however, it is exceedingly difficult for any analyst to completely pierce the veil drawn around its activities. As one participant later remarked, the command was supposed to represent the epitome of military professionalism in the United States. If so, then how could it commit so many amateur errors? It is to General Scholtes's credit that he immediately commissioned an internal study to examine that question. Because that study remains classified and unavailable, the suggestions contained in this paper can only be that—suggestions.<sup>108</sup>

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108 MFR, author, 28 October 2008, sub: DIA Conference on Op. UF.

The Joint Special Operations Command made three major mistakes. The inability to plan for an intermediate staging base on Barbados should have suggested that the special operations teams might not be able to launch their operations under the cover of darkness. General Scholtes ought to have considered providing AC-130 Spectre support to at least the teams sent to Richmond Hill Prison and the governor general's residence. (There is a question of how many gunships could have operated simultaneously over such a small island; there were three on station on 25 October.) The second major mistake was the failure to notify the SEAL detachments (and possibly Delta Force as well, although since the men were not able to land at Richmond Hill, the question never arose) of the changes in frequencies and call signs. This error would have limited the ability of the Spectres to intervene promptly and effectively but not prevented it entirely. The final error was the failure to pass along the information about the second campus or to plan to rescue the students there.<sup>109</sup>

All three mistakes probably reflect the chaos into which the staff at Joint Special Operations Command was thrown by Admiral McDonald's adding the Richmond Hill Prison mission at the last moment. To do this to a military organisation that depended on the well-placed rapier rather than the broadaxe and hence required exceptionally good intelligence and a maximum of rehearsal time, as McDonald well realised, was little short of criminal. General Scholtes may have entered into this operation with more hubris than was good for him or his command. The impression lingers that McDonald used the commanders' conference to take Scholtes down a peg or two. Apparently he succeeded, but in doing so he ensured that some great soldiers and sailors under Scholtes's command had to pay for their commander's education in blood.

To return to the question first posed by members of the Joint Special Operations Command as to how such a professional organisation could produce such amateur results, the SEALs, the soldiers in Delta Force, and the pilots and crew in the 160th Aviation Battalion demonstrated in combat a consummate professionalism. The blunt fact is that going into this operation the headquarters was filled with amateurs. For all their previous operations, Scholtes and his staff had no experience working with so many headquarters on such a compressed time line. Operation

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109 Couvillon, *Grenada Grinder*, 29–30.

URGENT FURY constituted a jarring introduction to the military big leagues—one which hopefully the command profited from greatly.

In retrospect, General Trobaugh may have regretted not sending a liaison team to Atlantic Command when General Mackmull suggested it. Trobaugh's explanation for not doing so was somewhat disingenuous. He had an ample number of planners at Fort Bragg to prepare for the division's role in the operation, many of whom had not even been read into the preparations yet. Of course, Trobaugh was new to the airborne community. He did not know and trust most of the officers in the G-3 section of his staff, but he did know and trust his G-3, Colonel Akers. Akers (subsequently a general officer) was another protégé of General Depuy; he had been Depuy's aide at US Army Training and Doctrine Command when Trobaugh was there. If Trobaugh had decided to send a liaison team to Norfolk, Akers would have been the logical person to head it. Trobaugh, facing his greatest test as a division commander, preferred to keep Akers beside him. This was not necessarily a bad decision. Given how obdurate officers at Norfolk proved to be to Army advice, nothing may have been lost and much gained by keeping Akers at Fort Bragg.<sup>110</sup>

The exaggerated expectations at both the Pentagon and Norfolk about what the airborne battalions could accomplish at Point Salines compared to the Marine battalion landing team reflected a lack of knowledge at both locations as to their varying capabilities. The great advantage that the Marines possessed was that they had their logistical base offshore—inaccessible to enemy activity. Everyone they deployed ashore was capable of offensive operations. In addition, they came equipped with sufficient vehicles to launch motorized patrols immediately after landing and had helicopter gunships available to fly top cover for the patrols. Finally, they benefitted from the training for the low level insurgency then occurring in Lebanon—which was much more appropriate for the conditions in Grenada than the training the division had received.

It is not surprising that senior officers in Washington and Norfolk were unfamiliar with airborne operations. In 1983 the airborne community was a small fraternity, rather isolated and inward looking, in a highly mechanised Army focused on the NATO Central Front. Since the end of World War II, there had been very few contested airdrops. The critics

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110 Interv, Pirnie and author with Akers [1985].

overlooked the airborne's 'horse-holder' problem. In the nineteenth century American cavalry regiments in the Indian wars detailed one of every four troopers to hold four horses behind the skirmish line. Any given unit could only bring three-fourths of its firepower against the enemy when fighting dismounted—the standard mode of fighting for the US Cavalry in the nineteenth century. The analogous situation for the airborne was the need to protect the airhead—the airborne's logistical lifeline.<sup>111</sup>

In the case of Point Salines, prior planning indicated that one full infantry battalion was needed to protect the airfield. On the morning of 26 October, General Trobaugh had two airborne battalions available—one rested (Hamilton's) and one recently arrived and greatly fatigued (Raines's)—and two ranger battalions, of which one was at half strength, preparing to depart to the continental United States. Trobaugh kept Raines's battalion in reserve, protecting the airhead, and as soon as the matter of the missing officers patrol was cleared up, launched Hamilton's battalion into the attack. At this point, he must have expected that the battalions of Scott's brigade would arrive promptly as Hamilton's had done the day before, rather than as Raines's had earlier that morning. In fact, the lead battalion of the 3rd Brigade had an experience very much like Raines's unit, and the following two battalions had even worse experiences. Consequently, when Trobaugh launched the Grand Anse and Calivigny operations, he had to use Hagler's ranger battalion to make the assaults. It is difficult to see how he could have done anything else given the available units under his command. Lacking vehicles, other than ones seized from the locals, his men had to advance at foot speed through difficult terrain. Hamilton's attempt to use a motorised patrol on 26 October had ended in an ambush. Unlike the Marines, Trobaugh did not have any attack helicopters to escort such patrols until 28 October. As noted earlier, the 82d Airborne Division had trained to maximise fire power in a short space of time—a totally inappropriate style of warfare in the conditions prevailing in Grenada. To Trobaugh, a highly centralised, closely controlled, step-by-step advance appeared the best approach to minimise casualties all around. Given all these circumstances, he was as prompt as possible in executing his mission.

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111 Robert K. Wright, Jr, and John T. Greenwood, *Airborne Forces at War: From Parachute Test Platoon to the 21st Century* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 123–67; Raines, *Rucksack War*, 49–51. On nineteenth century US Cavalry combat tactics, see Don Rickey, Jr, *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 275.

In retrospect, General Vessey's main criticism of Atlantic Command's plan was that it unnecessarily introduced a second ground force headquarters too early in the operation. In his view it would have been better to make the 82nd Airborne Division a supporting command and General Scholtes's Joint Task Force 123 a supported command. In this scenario the 2nd and 3rd Brigade Task Forces from the division would have come directly under Scholtes's command during the combat phase of the operation, and the assault command post would have flown in only after combat ended. The introduction of a new headquarters in combat, commented Vessey, always involves a time lag as the new commander and staff become familiar with the situation. Leaving Scholtes in command would have permitted the operation to continue at the same tempo with no interruption. It is difficult to fault the military logic of this commentary, but it overlooks one salient point: Scholtes was much less familiar than Trobaugh with the training that the division had undergone. Even with Trobaugh in command and urging restraint in the use of firepower, Marine observers on more than one occasion commented that they thought the Army was too trigger happy. It is quite possible that Scholtes would have allowed his brigade and battalion commanders to exercise greater initiative than Trobaugh did and that the result would have been more Grenadian civilian casualties. That Trobaugh remained in command was a good thing both for the reputation of the United States Army and the health of the Grenadian people.<sup>112</sup>

At the same time, there was not much left of the Grenadian army on 26 October. The Austin regime was decidedly unpopular. As of 0600 on 24 October only 257 reservists had reported to duty. These plus 463 members of the permanent force and 58 untrained 'party comrades' comprised a total force of 778. Even assuming that more reservists reported to duty on 24 October, it is difficult to see how the Grenadians could have fielded much more than 1000 fighters on 25 October. Given the disasters that overtook the Grenadians on that day, there was probably no more than a reinforced company guarding the outlets from Point Salines on 26 October. Some elements remained to provide security at Grand Anse; the rest, possibly the bulk of the force, was oriented to defend the Point Salines-St

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112 Interv, Cole with Vessey, 25 March 1987. On Marine criticisms, see Spector, *Marines in Grenada*, 22; 'Operational Overview', MCDEC [*Marine Corps Development and Education Center*] *Newsletter* (January–March 1984): 26; Briefing, Frank, 8 December 1983, sub: Grenada.



George's Road. Grenadian command and control had evaporated because the Grenadian leadership had scattered to hiding places as soon as the American attack began. Lack of command and control may explain why the Grenadian forces in the south remained oblivious to the disasters that had overtaken the defenders on the rest of the island and why they continued to perform the missions assigned to them on 25 October during the next day and possibly at least part of the 27th.<sup>113</sup>

Colonel Hamilton was the one person in the division's command structure who appreciated how weak the Grenadian defenses were on the evening of 26 October. His 'attack' after the surrender of the Cuban adviser compound had been an advance to contact in which he made no contact. On the afternoon of 26 October, he halted not because of enemy resistance but because of the fatigue of his men. At the time, there appeared to be nothing in front of him. Of course, he rethought that position later that evening when the ambush of his battalion's motorised patrol occurred in full view of his position. He had no more appreciation of the overall situation than the Grenadians opposite him. The ambush proved to be, however, a last gasp rather than the harbinger of things to come.

Colonel Silvasy had an idea that the airfield was not the best location for his tactical operations centre if he wanted to understand how the fight was developing, but, of course, when he displaced it forward it became a target for a Navy fighter-bomber. Trobaugh probably put too much credence in intelligence reports which, after the resistance encountered on 25 October, more than doubled the already exaggerated estimated size of the defenders. Even if his estimate of the situation had been accurate, however, he lacked the materiel means on 26 October to counter the fact that there were an appreciable number of Grenadians and Cubans to his front who were armed with automatic weapons and well-trained in ambush tactics. He might have advanced faster but only at the cost of a higher casualty rate. The failed ambush of Hamilton's motorised patrol on the evening of 26 October probably discouraged any idea that the enemy was weaker on his front than estimated.<sup>114</sup>

Once he landed on Grenada, General Trobaugh became progressively more isolated from what was occurring on the rest of the island. He

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113 Jnl [Grenadian General Staff], 24 October 1983, sub: Strength of the Armed Forces, Record Group 242, Entry 338, UD, NARA—CP.

114 Interv, Bishop with Trobaugh, 30 November 1983.

only learned of the Marine capture of Fort Frederick, for example, some thirteen hours after it occurred. He also did not have a particularly good feel for the amount of organised opposition on his own front, but given the terrain it was difficult to get very far forward without a good deal of time-consuming hiking. On the morning of 27 October the division was still issuing attack orders. Not until 1755 that evening did Joint Task Force 120 notify Trobaugh that the Marines had secured all of St George's. On that day, no matter what their orders said, Colonels Hamilton and Raines believed that they were advancing to contact. Part of the problem appears to have been the climate of command that Trobaugh established in the division. He does not appear to have been open to suggestions, particularly unsolicited ones, from subordinates, although Colonel Akers may have constituted an exception. In any event, Hamilton appears not to have passed his appreciation of the situation back to brigade, which at that point was still located beside the airfield. Given all that Trobaugh did not know, it is not surprising that the division issued attack orders for the 27th.<sup>115</sup>

Marine operations were conducted with considerable professional skill against minimal opposition. Only three points need to be made. Colonel Smith showed commendable initiative in beginning his drive south of Grand Mal without waiting for his reinforcing company to arrive in his beachhead. As far as Captain Erie's decision not to shift cargo to allow the M-60 main battle tanks to go ashore with ammunition for their main armament, Erie may have had more than fastidious concerns about the neatness of his decks in mind. Depending on the sea state, shifting a large amount of cargo from the hold to the main deck might have changed the centre of gravity and made the vessel unstable. There is not enough information to render any kind of definitive judgment on this issue, but this possibility should be kept in mind by those inclined to criticise him. Fortunately, landing the tanks without ammunition for their main guns turned out far more favourably than anyone could have anticipated. Finally, there remains the question of Colonel Faulkner's refusal to exchange liaison officers with the Army. While personalities may have played a role in this, service culture and a habit of operating

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115 Jnl, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 26 October 1983, 1905, records the capture of Fort Frederick. Jnl, 82nd Abn. Div. Assault CP, 27 October 1983, 1755, notes the Joint Task Force 120 message about St. George's.

independently from the Army appear to have been at play. Whatever the rationale, it was a very unprofessional decision and unnecessarily put at risk the lives of numerous marines and soldiers.

A close study of the Grenada campaign reinforces the old aphorism that military organisations should fight as they train. It also suggests that the lines of command should be simple enough in peacetime that they can actually be used in wartime. That, of course, is easier said than done because organisational politics and the need to preserve a degree of harmony between services in peacetime often introduce complexities in things that ought to be kept simple. As this is a natural human tendency, about the only solution is for decision-makers to be fully informed as to what is and what is not essential. Given the variety of career paths in any military organisation and the complexities of large military institutions, senior officers may not necessarily have a grasp of all the essential elements based on their own personal experiences. This is why senior leaders need to include representatives of all relevant staff functional areas when planning military operations rather than simply intelligence specialists and operations planners. President Reagan demanded enhanced security for the Grenada intervention primarily for political purposes—to keep the press in the dark about his administration’s plans. This demand caught the military unaware and some officers, General Vessey at the level of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Trobaugh at 82nd Airborne Division, interpreted this to mean that they should exclude logisticians from the planning. It is to their credit that in the aftermath of the intervention they rethought this decision and ensured that logisticians would be included in planning for future contingencies.<sup>116</sup>

In addition to unnecessarily complicating the air line of communications between the continental United States and Grenada, the removal of the XVIII Airborne Corps from the chain of command meant that it placed on the sidelines the one officer most likely to pull the special operating forces and airborne into a single cohesive operation. General Mackmull had experience and had earned respect in both areas. He was a former commander of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and, while stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, he was instrumental

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116 Briefing, Capt R. M. White, USN, Planning Systems Branch, Joint Staff, and Maj John A. Wening, USA, 18 November 1986, sub: Status of Resolution of Joint Operations Problems, JHO Archives; Intervs, author with Daly, 30 July 1986; with Cleary, 15 July 1986.

in organising the 160th Aviation Battalion. Even in his reduced role he was able to at least achieve a modicum of coordination between the 82d Airborne Division and Joint Special Operations Command. He also played an indispensable part in ensuring continued cooperation between the corps and the division rear. The first thought of members of corps units when pulled out of the operation was that someone had questioned their competence to perform their mission. In this situation a real possibility existed that rancour would lead to non-cooperation. Instead, Mackmull set an example of energetic support for the division. His work and that of Generals Smith and Farris set a standard for everyone else at Fort Bragg to emulate. The corps and division rear acted as a seamless whole to support the operation. At US Army Forces Command, General Cavazos told General John A. Wickham, the chief of staff of the Army, that without Mackmull's intervention there would have been much less coordination of resupply efforts, and the operation would have taken much longer. Mackmull, however, never received any public recognition for his accomplishments during URGENT FURY. When his tour at XVIII Airborne Corps ended, he retired from the Army as a lieutenant general.<sup>117</sup>

Admiral Metcalf and General Trobaugh both suffered through attacks of 'ambush journalism' in the aftermath of the Grenada operation, which did not enhance their careers. Both retired from their respective services at the grade they occupied at the time of the operation, as did both Captain Erie and Colonel Faulkner. Colonel Smith, on the other hand, rose to major general in the Marine Corps as did Colonel Silvasy and General Smith in the Army and General Patterson in the Air Force. General Farris and Colonel Scott retired as lieutenant generals, and General Schwarzkopf, of course, rose to four-star rank and commanded US Central Command during the Persian Gulf War. The officer who was promoted the furthest in the military hierarchy, however, was the brigade commander in the 82nd Airborne Division whose brigade was not sent to Grenada. Colonel Henry H. Shelton became not only a full general but also

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117 On Mackmull's unique background, see: Beverly Mackmull, 'Lieutenant General Jack V. Mackmull', Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy Webpage, URL: <http://apps.westpointaog.org/Memorials/Article/17911/>, accessed 14 September 2013; Vladimir Jakovenko, 'Lt Gen Jack V. Mackmull', SOCNET [Special Operations Command Network] Webpage, URL: <http://www.socnet.com/showthread.php?t=101662>, accessed 14 September 2013. Msg, Cavazos to Gen John A. Wickham, Chief of Staff, Army, 232100Z November 1983, sub: LL, Historians' files, CMH.

served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1997 to 2001. Admiral McDonald and General Vessey had already reached the highest rank possible in their services at the time of the Grenada operation. Admiral McDonald retired in 1986, still convinced that the Grenada operation 'was a complete success'. General Vessey had retired a year earlier and devoted much of his time in retirement to serving as a special presidential emissary to Vietnam on the question of American service personnel missing in action during the Vietnam War.<sup>118</sup>

Because in the end it was a success, the Grenada intervention did not have the same impact on Congress as unmitigated disasters that overtook US forces in Iran in 1979 and Beirut in 1983. Grenada simply reinforced the impression that something was wrong in the military. In Congressman Ike Skelton's words, the Grenada operation 'contributed but was not crucial' to reform. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 did significantly strengthen the position of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who became both the sole senior military adviser to the president and the secretary of defense and the sole person responsible for transmitting orders from the national command authority to the unified and specified commanders. Somewhat paradoxically, given the difficulties experienced at Atlantic Command, the legislation strengthened

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118 For McDonald's view of Operation URGENT FURY, see Testimony of Admiral Wesley L. McDonald before the House Armed Services Committee, 24 January 1984, in US, House, Committee on Armed Services, *Full Committee Hearing on the Lessons Learned as a Result of Military Operations in Grenada: Hearing Before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives*, 98th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1984) 15 (quotation). On the subsequent careers, see: 'Maj Gen Robert B. Patterson, US Air Force (Ret)', Airlift/Tanker Association Hall of Fame, URL: <http://www.atalink.org/HallOfFame/Members/patterson.aspx>, accessed 17 September 2013; Memo, [DA, OCPA], 28 February 1987, sub: Resumé of Service Career of Edward Lee Trobaugh, Maj Gen; Memo [DA, OCPA], 30 June 1990, sub: Resumé of Service Career of James Donald Smith, Maj Gen; Memo [DA, OCPA], 3 September 1993, sub: Resumé of Service Career of Stephen Silvasy, Jr, Maj Gen; Memo, [DA, OCPA], 31 May 1999, sub: Resumé of Service Career of John Brodie Farris, Jr, Lt Gen; Memo [DA, OCPA], 31 October 1996, sub: Resumé of Service Career of James Terry Scott, Lt Gen; Memo [DA OCPA], 31 August 1991, sub: Resumé of Service Career of H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Gen; US, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, *Department of Defense Key Officials, 1947–2004* ([Washington, DC]: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2004), 58–9. For the ambush journalism, see: Jeffrey Record, 'More Medals Than We Had Soldiers: Grenada's Decoration Glut Cheapens Honer and Valor', *Washington Post* (15 April 1984): B5; 'Grenada and Lebanon Bring a Rush of Medals', *New York Times* (5 December 1983): B8; and Bill Keller, 'For the Admiral, Warning; for G.I.'s, Jail', *New York Times* (16 February 1985): 5.

the power of the unified commanders. Congress intended to support them at the expense of the services. The 1987 Nunn-Cohen Amendment created US Special Operations Command and elevated its commander to four-star rank. General Scholtes, who successfully commanded an armoured division following Operation URGENT FURY, retired early so that he could testify without mental reservation in favour of the legislation. Thus did Admiral McDonald's conduct at the commanders' conference on 24 October 1983 have an influence on the future structure of US forces.<sup>119</sup>

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119 George C. Wilson and Michael Weisskopf, 'Pentagon, Congress Seek Solutions to Shortcomings Exposed in Grenada Invasion', *Washington Post* (20 February 1986): A24; MFRs, author, 29 August 2013, sub: Interview with Mr. Thomas Glakas, former legislative assistant to Representative Ike Skelton on 26 August 2013, revised based on comments by Mr. Glakas, 26 September 2013, sub: Telephone Conversation with Hon Ike Skelton, Former Member of the House Armed Services Committee, 25 September 2013; both in Historians' files, CMH; Interv, Yates with Scholtes, 4 March 1999.

# The Falklands

*Eric Grove*

The Falklands War of 1982 came as a surprise to the United Kingdom Government in every respect. Not only was the attack unexpected in tactical terms, but also in strategic. The UK was fully committed at the time to a defence posture orientated to land and air operations on the Central Front in Europe and maritime operations to ensure sea control in the Eastern Atlantic. There was little place for amphibious warfare in this universe. It had clung on by the skin of its teeth after the withdrawal from East of Suez in 1971, with a new emphasis on servicing NATO's strategy of 'Flexible Response' on the watery flanks of NATO. But the Mediterranean Southern Flank was abandoned in the Defence Review of 1975 and with the growth of Soviet sea denial capabilities in the north it seemed that ground forces, even the Royal Marines who had specialised in arctic and mountain warfare, would be flown in by air in a 'pre-inforcement' operation, rather than arriving by sea in the British contribution to amphibious component of the NATO striking fleet.

The arrival of the Conservative Government in 1979 promised a new emphasis on 'out of area' operations and a move to a more global and maritime strategy, but the association of these ideas with Defence Secretary Francis Pym's mismanagement of the Ministry, killed the more global approach.<sup>1</sup> When John Nott was brought in to exert Thatcherite financial discipline on the MoD, the political and strategic logic of current policy seemed overwhelming. The Royal Navy failed to convince the new Secretary of State that it had a clear grasp of developing NATO maritime strategy.<sup>2</sup> The amphibious capability was again under attack. The likelihood of an 'opposed landing is not likely enough to retain *Intrepid*

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1 See Dr Edward Hampshire's forthcoming article in *Contemporary British History*, 'Margaret Thatcher's First U-turn: Francis Pym and Control of Defence spending, 1979-81'.

2 See Sir John Nott, *Here Today Gone Tomorrow* (London: Politico's, 2002), for a disarmingly informative account of his perspective on the 1981 review.

and *Fearless*,<sup>3</sup> the two amphibious transport docks (LPDs). Nevertheless, it was decided that the three existing Royal Marine Commandos ought to be retained as the government regarded 'their special experience and versatility as of high value for tasks both in and beyond the NATO area'.<sup>4</sup> The two LPDs were, however, due for disposal in 1982 and 1984, while for a time the six Landing Ships Logistic (LSLs) were threatened. Their importance for the Continental commitment seems to have saved them.

The paper did reflect some new emphasis on operations outside the NATO area (which saved two out of the three *Invincible*-class carriers) but the emphasis in out-of-area land operations was on air mobility. The types of operation for which preparations were being made, were also relatively low level. 5 Brigade, the formation tasked with this role, had decidedly limited capabilities. As a critical, but highly perceptive Royal Marine officer observed:

5 Infantry Brigade was the British Army's lip service to the 'rest of the world' and 'out of area'. They were supposed to be prepared for intervention operations around the world, but they were structured, trained and equipped for nothing more violent than the lowest levels of insurgency. This was a result of the Army's narrow focus on Germany. They had surrendered any serious capability of projecting expeditionary military power beyond Central Europe. In spite of Britain's many residual commitments outside that area, forces earmarked for 'out of area' or 'rest of the world' operations came not only after Germany, but after Northern Ireland in the priority order. This may be understandable, but little thought had been given, and even less resources had been devoted, to the notion that such a force might have to fight anything more lethal than unruly tribesmen.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Draft defence review White Paper in FCO 46/2572, The National Archives. This wording was not followed in the published version of Cmnd. 8288.

4 *The United Kingdom Defence Programme: The Way Forward* (Cmnd. 8288) 10: para. 31.

5 Ian Gardiner, *The Yompers: With 45 Commando in the Falklands War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2012), 123-4. This is one of the finest accounts by a front-line officer ever written. As the late Richard Holmes wrote on its dust jacket, 'Gardiner writes enchantingly with perceptive flashes on every page. Marvellous Stuff.'



At the end of 1981 the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Leach, who had risked his career to defend the Navy as a whole (if not the amphibious forces or the Falklands guardship *Endurance* whose withdrawal sent a signal of wavering commitment to Argentina in the Nott Review) came to Plymouth. He told the commander of 3 Commando Brigade, the exceptionally bright and intelligent Brigadier Julian Thompson, that 'there would never be any more amphibious operations carried out by the British'.<sup>6</sup> At that time, when (contrary to the story of complete lack of preparation for a Falklands Campaign) there was study in the Ministry of Defence in which the Royal Marines argued that the Navy still had just about sufficient capability to deploy a brigade world-wide without host nation support. The internal reaction from the Naval Staff was not very encouraging:

As the wretched Director of Naval Operations (and of course Trade) who would have to put flesh on the skeleton, I can't visualise such an operation. Please let the first *victorious* Battle of the Falkland Islands remain the only one—otherwise Ministers will be led to believe we can repulse Argentina et al.<sup>7</sup>

The tide had begun to turn, if only a little, before the Falklands War broke out. The decision to go for Trident D-5 to retain commonality with the Americans in strategic nuclear capabilities, allowed money to be put back into the short-term program. The American also wanted the UK to retain an amphibious contribution to their Atlantic striking fleet. There was also a revealing demonstration of an LPD's capabilities to a heretofore unbriefed Secretary of State who was suitably impressed. The result was a reprieve, perhaps only temporary, for the LPDs.

As the crisis with Argentina deepened, air reinforcement options had only to be considered to be dismissed as impractical. When invasion loomed only Sir Henry Leach could offer Prime Minister Thatcher a way out of the political melt-down facing her, by forming a maritime task force with which to threaten a counter-invasion. The obvious land component of such a force was Thompson's 3 Commando Brigade held at seven days'

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6 Julian Thompson, *3 Commando Brigade in the Falklands: No Picnic* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2008; repr. 2012), 22 The retired officer could be rather more frank by then than he could have been in 1985 when the original edition appeared.

7 Quoted in *ibid.*

notice. Its commander later found it something of a 'mystery', that his formation was not alerted as soon as precautionary measures started to be taken on 29 March. As he put it, 'My brigade, the force which would have to land and re-take the islands, and without whom the sailing of a task force, except as a gesture, would be pointless, remained blissfully ignorant that our services might be required.'<sup>8</sup>

Only early on the day of the invasion April 2, did Major General Jeremy Moore, Major General Commanding Commando Forces Royal Marines, ring Thompson to bring the brigade to 72 hours' notice. As the dispersed personnel of the Brigade were brought back together, the Commando Logistics Regiment organised the movement of its war maintenance reserve, 30 days of combat supplies plus 60 days' stocks of general and maintenance stores. Almost 40,000 tons were moved by road, with 100 flat-bed trucks being hired to boost transport assets; 44 trains were also chartered by the end of the second week. Territorial Army drivers were mobilised to support the Royal Corps of Transport in this major movement of supplies.<sup>9</sup>

More infantry was also added to Thompson's formation. The first addition was the Third Battalion the Parachute Regiment, part of 5 Brigade and the Army's 'spearhead' unit at 24 hours' notice. It was later decided to add a fifth unit, the 2nd battalion of the Parachute Regiment, also from 5 Brigade. As the brigade commander recalled: 'This was good news indeed. The addition of 2 Para to 3 Commando Brigade merely increased the feeling that existed already among all ranks in the Brigade that the team getting ready to go south was the First XI. We were, we felt, second-to- and although outnumbered more than 2 to 1 by the enemy, we could "hack it".'<sup>10</sup>

The requirement to transport these troops plus support units, including Rapier anti-aircraft missiles and a squadron of Scorpion and Scimitar light reconnaissance tanks, placed a major strain on available amphibious transport assets. It was soon decided to requisition the

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8 Ibid., 3.

9 L. Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Volume II, War and Diplomacy; Revised and Updated Edition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 55. This revised edition should always be used in preference to the flawed hardback first edition. The official historian must, however, be congratulated for a remarkably frank, full and 'warts and all' account.

10 Ibid., 2-3.

liner *Canberra* and the ferry *Elk*, the first of many ships taken up from trade (STUFT). *Fearless* was in service to act as amphibious flagship but its sister LPD *Intrepid* had to be mobilised from reserve. Five LSLs were available (the sixth was in Belize and sent directly to Ascension) and the auxiliary *Stromness*, in process of being laid up, was mobilised as an impromptu assault transport with part of 45 Commando embarked (the rest flew down to Ascension to join the ships there). 3 Para when allocated were sent aboard the RoRo Hull ferry *Norland* with its heavy equipment loaded in *Europic Ferry*, another STUFT. Another notable requisitioned merchantman was the large container ship *Atlantic Conveyor*, which was converted into an aircraft transport for both STOVL jets and helicopters.

The ships were loaded as rapidly as possible and Commodore Mike Clapp, Commodore Amphibious Warfare (COMAW) and as the amphibious task group commander, signalled London that 'the speed of mounting, type of STUFT allocated and lack of clear amphibious objective has meant we have basically managed to squeeze what we considered essential into the given space'.<sup>11</sup> A 'shuffle' would therefore be required at Ascension Island to produce a better tactical loading of the ships. It was later assessed that it would have been more efficient to have taken more care in loading the ships, even at the cost of delaying their departure. Political considerations, however dictated a different approach. The Argentines had to be made to realise, as soon as possible, that an amphibious operation was in the offing.

The Command structure adopted for Operation Corporate, as the Falklands operation was designated, was to set up a combined Task Force Headquarters at Fleet HQ at Northwood with CINCFLEET, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, in command. The HQ was combined as in addition to the surface and amphibious forces that made up Task Force 317, there was a separate Task Force 324 made up of a single group of nuclear-powered submarines that would act a cover for the other force. The first arrangement was to make Rear Admiral John 'Sandy' Woodward both commander of the carrier battle group Task Group 317.8 the overall operational commander. As Flag Officer First Flotilla, he had been conducting 'Springtrain' exercises around Gibraltar and was the flag officer least far away. His most suitable destroyers and frigates were reinforced by the carrier *Hermes* and the new

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11 Quoted in Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 54.

*Invincible*, both configured to carry Sea Harriers fighter bombers and Sea King helicopters. As the rapidly and very publicly sailed carriers came south, Woodward joined *Hermes* as his new flagship on 15 April.

By then, the command structure had changed (on the 9th) to reflect, if only partially, current amphibious doctrine. Whereas initially subordinate to Woodward, the amphibious group Task Group 317.0 under Commodore Clapp, was now directly subordinate to TF 317 as was the landing group under Thompson, TG 317.1. They were now equal in status although Woodward was still treated as 'Senior Task Group Officer', being a two-star as against the two one-star TG commanders. On 17 April, Woodward became officially 'Primus Inter Pares'. This was a recipe for confusion and misunderstanding. As Thompson later explained:

It was an uncomfortable compromise, leaving much to personalities, requiring a degree of tolerance and understanding all round; two characteristics which are often in short supply under stress. Sandy was put in a difficult position by this imprecise command organisation, but to his credit refused to try to take charge of me, despite being ordered on one occasion to do so.<sup>12</sup>

What should have occurred, was to appoint the Flag Officer Third Flotilla, the Naval organisation concerned with carriers and amphibious ships with a proper staff to organise such operations at a higher level, as an on-the-spot commander. Rear Admiral Sir Derek Reffell, the existing FOF 3, was the obvious choice. He had played a role in early planning (before being shut out) and could have been given appropriate rank. Thompson sums up what this might have produced:

A three-star operational level commander, riding initially perhaps with General Jeremy Moore [appointed Fieldhouse's Land Deputy-EG], in a ship with the right communication fit, such as *Glamorgan* or *Antrim*, built with accommodation for a Flag Officer and staff, would have been invaluable. Positioned forward in the operational area, he could have drawn together the strands of the carrier, amphibious and landing force battles. He could have decided on priorities, seen for himself what

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12 Thompson, *3 Commando Brigade*, 25.

was happening and removed the sources of friction. Perhaps most useful of all, he could have taken the responsibility for speaking directly to Northwood off the backs of the busy group commanders.<sup>13</sup>

The weaknesses of the command structure were shown up at the first meeting of the Task Group commanders on board *Fearless* on 16 April. Northwood had not helped by discussing with Woodward the possibility of establishing an airfield on West Falkland. The two other Group commanders were understandably horrified at this totally unrealistic notion which had not been vouchsafed to them. Commodore Clapp described the scene thus:

We were not, however, prepared for what was to take place. Although he was the senior, we had not expected Sandy to want to take the lead at this meeting in such, at least to us, a tactless way. We believed that we [i.e. he and Thompson–EG] were the best people to discuss amphibious problems and expected him to want to hear our views. Instead he gave us a number of instructions which we considered to be complete red herrings. Unfortunately, since he was the senior we would be obliged to waste our staff's time ... All this was seen on board *Fearless* as an unnecessary attempt to dominate and it acutely embarrassed the naval members of my staff, while infuriating the Royal Marines and, more particularly, the Army members who were new to the Royal Navy and its quirks. Trust was broken and it would take a long time to repair.<sup>14</sup>

Later Commodore Clapp added to this assessment that seems to have come as something of a surprise to the Admiral.<sup>15</sup> It is worth quoting in extenso as an important 'lesson learnt':

What we have recounted here is not intended as a snide attack on a competent officer with much on his mind. It is an important lesson that must be learnt and avoided. It should be

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13 Ibid.

14 Michael Clapp and Ewen Southby-Tailyour, *Amphibious Assault Falklands: The Battle of San Carlos Water* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2007; repr. 2012), 56-7.

15 See Woodward's defence in the Preface to the second edition of his book written with Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (London: Harper Collins, paperback 3rd edn, 2012), xxiii-xxiii.

read as a most unfortunate example of what can happen, all too easily, when busy and worried people with very differing backgrounds and personalities, not all from the same service or of the same rank, meet for the first time, in a hurry, but with no agreed agenda. In consequence, not being fully prepared and in already stressful conditions, neither party is likely to foresee the needs of the others. The event, even if based on misunderstandings, nevertheless had an adverse effect that was to mar proceedings for a long time.

Neither Julian nor I had ever worked with Sandy before (indeed, Julian and I were only now just getting to know each other reasonably well). We were far from sure whether he expected to be put back in overall charge of us, or what he knew that we did not.<sup>16</sup>

The following day, 17 May, Fieldhouse arrived to meet his Task Group commanders at a meeting on board *Hermes*. In Thompson's words, 'the air was considerably cleared'.<sup>17</sup> It was made clear that the three Task Groups would be allowed to do their own planning. It was made clear that the staff in *Fearless* 'would have the final say in landing plans'.<sup>18</sup> A timetable was set, with the carrier battle group to leave the next day, to prepare the way for the amphibious forces that would sail from Ascension on 29 April with a proposed landing date on 16 May. The carrier battle group and the submarines would enforce the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ), take on the Argentine naval and air forces to obtain the conditions for an amphibious operation and land special forces for vital reconnaissance. During the stay at Ascension there would be reloading, training and testing of hitherto unknown procedures such as using light tanks and LCUs as modern version of the Second World War LCG and loading men from *Canberra* into landing craft. A proper rehearsal, as demanded by doctrine, was impossible, because of lack of training areas, beaches and helicopter landing zones as well as a shortage of helicopters for both the supply transfer and operational rehearsal.

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16 Clapp and Southby Tailyour, *Amphibious Assault Falklands*, 290.

17 Thompson, *3 Commando Brigade*, 27.

18 Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, *Amphibious Assault Falklands*, 69.

Political pressure to sail the amphibious force early to improve the British diplomatic bargaining position, caused 'dismay' at Ascension, 'leading to an uncompromising warning from Commodore Clapp, replete with references to Gallipoli, of the severe and possibly catastrophic operational penalties that could ensue'.<sup>19</sup> In order to keep the earlier movement option open, the Rapier missiles were not fired but kept aboard their LSL where they deteriorated, with significant negative results later. Clapp was also frustrated that the eventually successful recapture of South Georgia had lost valuable helicopter assets due to the over-ambition of the SAS on Fortuna Glacier.

On 26 May an Outline Plan for Operation Sutton, the code name chosen for a landing, was received from Northwood. 'A strong and sustainable presence' was to be established ashore by landing the reinforced brigade on or about 16 May. 'The force will establish a bridgehead (sic) close enough to exert direct military pressure against the main Argentine force in the Port Stanley Area. This may be enough to convince the Argentines that their own position is militarily untenable and that they can honourably agree to withdraw, but the possibility that the enemy may advance for a decisive battle must be allowed for in selecting the position for the bridgehead.'<sup>20</sup>

Ambiguity was restored in the command structure as Woodward was referred to in this plan as 'Commander Combined Task Force'. Operational control of what was again disturbingly called the Amphibious Task *Unit* 'may be delegated to COMAW as Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF)' and Thompson was nominated as Commander of the Landing Force (CLF). 'Subject to the overall authority of COMAW, responsibility for the conduct of operations ashore is vested Cmnd 3 Commando Brigade. When the Landing Force is established ashore the Tactical Control of the Landing Force will be delegated to Cmnd 3 Commando Brigade RM as Commander Landing Force.'<sup>21</sup> The acceptance of established doctrine was thus tempered by the implication of a reversion to Woodward's formal command at some point.

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19 Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 211.

20 Quoted in Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, *Amphibious Assault Falklands*, 74.

21 *Ibid.*, 75.

There was doubt, both in London and in the Task Groups, that the reinforced Commando Brigade might not be enough to deal with the superior numbers of Argentine forces. The clear candidate for such reinforcement was 5 Brigade, which had already lost two of its units to the Commando Brigade. The last battalion in the brigade was the 1/7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles and a controversy broke out between Nott (a former Gurkha officer) and General Sir Edwin Bramall, the Chief of the General Staff, about their usability. Bramall used his position as Colonel in Chief of Nott's old regiment to insist on the battalion's deployment. The Gurkhas would be accompanied by two Guards battalions, the Second Battalion Scots Guards and the First Battalion Welsh Guards, fresh from what was perhaps their major role, ceremonial duties in London. Supporting units were allocated while the brigade was trained for possible deployment. The brigade was sent on 'Exercise Welsh Falcon' to acquire cohesion and obtain a little experience in mountainous conditions. The problem for the hapless Brigade Command, led by Brigadier Tony Wilson, was that he was unable to exercise the higher staff work of his formation, rather than just engage in basic field training. It was hardly optimal preparation for a challenging campaign to try to put together three unfamiliar units. As the Brigade's sympathetic historians have put it: 'No other brigade in modern history could have been more badly prepared and the blame should not be levelled at Brigadier Wilson. Some very strange decisions were made at the Ministry of Defence anyway.'<sup>22</sup> On 27 April, the Task Force Commander, Fieldhouse, asked for the extra brigade. Bramall was very doubtful about the commitment. Indeed he 'doubted whether the situation merited a military operation on the scale envisaged'.<sup>23</sup> Both the Army and Air Force chiefs were clearly, quite literally, out of their depth. It took two meetings of the Chiefs of Staff for them to agree, under some political pressure, that Fieldhouse's requests for further reinforcement should be met. On 2 May the 'War Cabinet', Committee OD/SA (Oversea Policy and Defence Committee/South Atlantic), approved the deployment. A serious problem was that even using the liner *Queen Elizabeth II*, there was only space for 3000 men from the 4000 total strength of the Brigade. The container ship *Atlantic Causeway*, originally intended as an aircraft transport, had to be used for

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22 Nick Van Der Bijl and David Aldea, *Fifth Infantry Brigade in the Falklands* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2003), 24.

23 Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 215.



most of the logistical support. They sailed from UK on 12 May and the evening of the 13/14th.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of the preceding month, on 30 April, Woodward's battle group had reached the edge of the Total Exclusion Zone declared around the Falkland Islands. The slow LSLs were also sent south from Ascension on 1 May with the escort of the ill-fated frigate *Antelope*. This took something of the pressure off Clapp as it could be presented politically that 'an "invasion force" could be seen to have sailed for operations in the South Atlantic'.<sup>25</sup> On 2 May, after the British scored a signal and decisive victory by sinking the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano*, the Argentine Navy, including their aircraft carrier, withdrew to territorial waters and took no further part in operations. One major threat had been neutralised but Argentina's land based air power still remained, as did its submarines.

On 7 May, *Norland* and *Europic Ferry* finally arrived at Ascension with 2 Para and their support. There was only time for one rehearsal with landing craft for the paratroopers. The previous day *Canberra* and *Elk* had sailed with the tanker RFA *Tidepool* and the frigates *Argonaut* and *Ardent 9* (the latter also ill-fated). On the evening of the 7th, most of the amphibious force sailed from Ascension, closely followed by *Intrepid* that left the following day to join up. The LSL *Sir Bedivere* was also on its way crammed with supplies and due to arrive at the Total Exclusion Zone on 23 May.

During this period the staffs of Task Groups 317.0 and TG 317.1 had been working on the landing site, the Amphibious Operational Area (AOA). Fieldhouse had left it to his subordinates and they had decided on San Carlos Water on the north-western corner of East Falkland. This was finally decided in *Fearless* on 10 May.<sup>26</sup> Two days later Fieldhouse issued the order to repossess the islands as soon as possible and San Carlos had been approved as the AOA, an area that was virtually undefended. On 18 May the amphibious ship rendezvoused, some 32 ships and the Cabinet decided that the landing should take place, even if air superiority had not been obtained. This was a considerable risk, but in the circumstances politically

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24 Ibid., 216-17.

25 Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, *Amphibious Assault Falklands*, 88.

26 Ibid., 99. This book includes an extensive explanation of the logic of this decision.

necessary, however much the local commanders were uncomfortable with the situation. Amphibious landings were not supposed to occur in conditions of contested air power.

The same day Thompson issued his operations order, holding an 'O' Group with his commanders the next day. As the historically minded officer later put it, 'The forthcoming amphibious assault would be the first carried out by the British since Suez in 1956 and one would have to go back to the Second World War to find an example of a landing on this scale being conducted by the British alone. Without allies.'<sup>27</sup> He laid out the plans for a silent landing in two waves in the still very lightly defended San Carlos area. Five beaches would be used around Port San Carlos, San Carlos Settlement and Ajax Bay. The high ground around was to be secured by first light and then artillery and Rapier missiles flown in by helicopter. As more intelligence came in, the plan was amended in detail and an attack with naval gunfire and SBS on the Argentine company found to be at Fanning Head added

Timing was dictated by the air situation. The final approach was to be made at night but even this meant at least half the approach through the Total Exclusion Zone would have to be made in daylight. On 17 May the main amphibious group joined the LSLs. A major cross-decking operation was planned for the 19th with the carrier group. Special Forces and the absolutely vital Naval Gunfire Observation parties not already in place would join the amphibious group and support units would be married up with their infantry. This was intended to be a relatively short affair, but then a jittery Northwood, expecting the loss of at least one major ship, stepped in to demand that troops be spread more between ships. 40 Commando and 3 Para were transferred to the LPDs by landing craft, the weather being fortuitously calm for those southern latitudes. The only losses were two SAS troops whose helicopter crashed.

The ships ran towards the islands on 20 May under 'gloriously foul' weather and in complete radio silence<sup>28</sup> The weather only cleared at dusk. *Fearless* put 40 Commando in its landing craft while *Intrepid's* went across to Norland to land 2 Para who were the first troops ashore. The first wave began to go ashore at 0430 local time, two hours late, followed by 45 Commando and 3 Para. 40 Commando was kept in *Canberra* as a reserve.

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27 Thompson, *3 Commando Brigade*, 50.

28 *Ibid.*, 62.

As Thompson later recalled the main difficulty on D-Day was tactical communications, a chronic problem that had deep-seated sources:

One of the frustrations of that first day was the poor state of landing force communications, the inability to speak on the radio with the units already ashore, or to my light helicopters in the air. The cause was familiar from my previous experience with the LPDs. The landing force nets shared the same antennae on the *Fearless* as the naval assets. The naval radios, being more powerful, almost completely blotted out the incoming signal from the units ashore who were working with low power man-pack radios, and the same occurred with the relatively low powered sets in my light helicopters. The problem would be sorted out as the day wore on and the unit rear link radios in the BVs [tracked command vehicles—EG] were landed. Retuning the radios in *Fearless* would also help. No tuning had been possible before H-Hour because we were on radio silence. In short, the communications took time to settle down and become reliable. These imperfections were well known, but lack of money had prevented any improvements in the communications of the LPDs.<sup>29</sup>

One might add, lack of priority and the perception in high places that amphibious warfare was obsolete in the NATO context.

The amphibious ships sailed into San Carlos water, which Clapp, an experienced strike aviator, realised would give some protection from fast jet bombing. This began in the morning and after a lull on D+1 continued and only began to fall off after 25 May. In these attacks, the Argentines were forced to fly so low that the old style bombs with which they were largely equipped failed to explode. Four Skyhawks were shot down by AA systems and eight Daggers and five Skyhawks by Sea Harriers equipped with the all-angle infra-red homing AIM-9L Sidewinder missile, a decisive technical advantage over the Argentine aircraft. No Sea Harriers were lost in air-to-air combat. The pilots tended to concentrate on the warships, but only two frigates and a destroyer were sunk. The STUFT amphibious ships were quickly withdrawn before being fully unloaded, although

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29 Ibid., 71.

*Norland*, *Europic Ferry* along with *Stromness* were used to bring in supplies cross-decked at sea. Shore-based medical facilities and logistics had to be established rather more quickly than planned.

The most serious loss occurred, aptly enough on Argentina's national day, 25 May, when Argentine Navy Super Etendards put two Exocet missiles into *Atlantic Conveyor*, setting it on fire and causing the total loss of the ship. Ironically they had been diverted by the escorts' chaff onto the large target, not so equipped. The aircraft transport was in fact a vital 'mission essential unit' and three large Chinook helicopters and six smaller Wessex transport helicopters were lost with her. The loss of these assets would cast a long shadow. Luckily one of the Chinooks had already disembarked.

Nevertheless the air battle, 'The Battle of Clapp's Trap' as it has been called, had been a success for the British. As the late David Brown, a former Head of Naval Historical Branch, put it, 'although it had ended so tragically, the British forces had scored a major victory in a grim battle of attrition'. The losses and accumulated damage to the Argentine Air Force's three fighter bomber brigades 'had reduced effectiveness to the point at which only by husbanding their resources would they be able to make a major effort from time to time and certainly not on a daily basis'.<sup>30</sup>

Moore, who was now overall land forces commander, had previously ordered the Brigade to secure a lodgement ashore from which a re-possession operation could be mounted. The Brigade 'was to push forward ... as far as the maintenance of its security allows, to gain information, to establish moral and physical domination over, and to forward the ultimate objective of re-possession the enemy'. It was then Moore's intention to establish his HQ in *Fearless* around D+7 'to land 5 Brigade into the beachhead and to develop operations for the complete re-possession of the Falkland Islands'.<sup>31</sup> Thompson interpreted this as an instruction not to move in strength out of his positions already established.

Moore could not update his orders as he and his divisional staff were incommunicado coming south with 5 Brigade in *Queen Elizabeth II*,

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30 David Brown, *The Royal Navy and the Falklands War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987), 225.

31 Quoted Thompson, *3 Commando Brigade*, 80.

whose satellite communications had failed no sooner than it had picked up the Major General at Ascension. As London fretted about apparent inaction by the Commando, Brigade Thompson began to receive copies of signals to him 'including among other things instructions to break out of the bridgehead. I assumed I should carry out what he had been told to do, but without being able discuss it with him to ensure that is what he actually wanted done and formed part of the plan he had in mind.'<sup>32</sup>

Thompson planned to use 2 Para, his southernmost unit, to mount a raid on the Argentine forces at the settlement of Goose Green to establish 'moral and physical domination. This had to be cancelled at the last minute, because bad weather prevented the necessary supporting artillery being brought forward. The warship losses were causing considerable worries in London. General Sir John Stanier, Commandr UK Land Forces, visited Fieldhouse at Northwood to find 'an atmosphere of very considerable stress at the underground Task Forces HQ.' Fieldhouse, a submariner with little understanding of the dynamics of amphibious operations and the need to build up supplies, reportedly said: 'I've put five thousand troops ashore and absolutely nothing has happened! The weather is deteriorating and I'm taking stick. What are *you* going to do?' That question demonstrated Fieldhouse's mental state; neither he nor Stanier was in command of the two deployed brigades. Stanier formed the distinct impression that the Joint Commander simply could not sustain any further loss of ships in the confined waters of the Falkland Sound and that unless something on land were to happen quickly, 'he would be forced to contemplate lifting the Commando Brigade off the beaches'.<sup>33</sup> Nothing could demonstrate better the problems of putting command and control authority too close to political pressures and too far from operational realities.

The outburst, however, led Stanier to consult with the new Land Deputy to the CTF who had replaced Moore, Major General Richard Trant. It was agreed that Moore's orders of 12 May meant Thompson had to wait for Moore. Attention then turned to Goose Green as a possible threat to the flank of an advance on Stanley. Stanier proposed that a battalion supported by artillery and naval gunfire be rapidly sent south to capture the position. He put this plan to Fieldhouse before he left. The CTF took the General's advice.

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32 Ibid., 81.

33 An interview with Stanier quoted in J Wilsey, *H Jones VC: The Life and Death of an Unusual Hero* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 248.

Thompson had never intended more than a raid on Goose Green. He did not consider the Argentines there a threat to the planned advance on Stanley for which he was laying the foundations. The loss of *Atlantic Conveyor* ruined plans for the rapid forward movement of troops by helicopter. That might have allayed London's jitters. Thompson and his staff were beginning to plan a forward movement on foot, when he was summoned to the Satellite Communications Terminal recently installed at what had become the Ajax Bay Brigade Maintenance Area. It was made crystal clear to Thompson that 'The Goose Green operation was to be re-mounted and more action was required all round. Plainly the people at the back end were getting restless.'

The attack on Goose Green was thus highly political from the start. Thompson later regretted not giving 2 Para extra support that might have helped, perhaps to the extent of making a two-battalion brigade attack. The nature of the reasoning behind the operation was demonstrated when the paras were horrified to hear their advance had been leaked to the media in London. Clearly, the need to be seen to be 'doing something' outweighed operational security! In the attack, the battalion commander Lt Colonel 'H' Jones was killed, being later awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. This may have had positive effects in two ways. Politically, it provided London with a suitable hero, and secondly, as Spencer Fitz-Gibbon has argued, the Paras were able to adopt a much more 'mission command' style of operations. Finally, demoralised by carrier-based RAF Harriers armed with cluster bombs, the Argentines surrendered on 29 May, liberating 112 civilians and capturing about 1000 Argentines, including the Argentine helicopter-borne reserve.

Thompson later overcame his initial prejudices against the operation and gave this typically fair assessment:

The battle was to have a profound effect on the conduct of the rest of the campaign. It signalled to the Argentines the determination of the British to succeed. It opened up the southern route to Stanley and, because the Argentines were convinced right to the end that the main British attack would come from the south, it served to confirm their assessment, distracting them from what was actually the major thrust by 3 Commando Brigade from the North and West.

By this time this advance had begun. 45 Commando and 3 Para were 'yomping/tabbing' (depending on the service) on foot to reach their first objectives, Teal Inlet Settlement and Douglas. These they reached on 28 May. Meanwhile 5 Brigade was completing its journey south. On the 27th the large guided-missile destroyer *Antrim* picked up General Moore, his Tactical Headquarters and Brigadier Wilson, the commander of 5 Brigade and his Reconnaissance Group. It had been decided not to risk the *QEII* close to the Falklands and the personnel of the brigade were transferred to *Canberra*, *Norland* and *Stromness* off South Georgia for the run to what was now designated the TRALA (Tug, Repair and Logistics Area). Three other *STUFT*, *Nordic Ferry*, *Baltic Ferry* carried equipment and *Atlantic Causeway* much-needed Sea King and Wessex helicopters went straight there. Four ASW Sea Kings were also re-roled from the carrier group to act as transports.

Moore transferred from *Antrim* to *Fearless* on 29 May where he could keep close touch with Clapp, who now acted as his amphibious adviser. He was accompanied by Brigadier John Waters to act as his deputy but also as a possible replacement 5 Brigade commander. Wilson had not so far impressed and the condition of his ad hoc formation caused concern. In the event the problems of replacing a commander in the heat of battle outweighed those of any problems of personal leadership. Ian Gardiner had been able to assess Wilson and his brigade when his Marines had been deployed against 5 Brigade on exercise in England shortly before; 'even as a visiting player, I was not filled with confidence. While the staff were conscientious and professional, their commander appeared to be overly concerned about how he and the brigade might appear to others, including me.'<sup>34</sup> In any case Wilson's job was a challenging one. His formation completely lacked realistic training at battalion and brigade level. It had no modern radios but, perhaps more importantly, lacked experience in joint warfare which puts a premium on good communications.

As Gardiner cogently put it:

Initially 5 Infantry Brigade were briefed that they would garrison the Islands after we [i.e. 3 Commando Brigade-EG] had captured them. Then they were told they would fight. It took years of expensive, assiduous and rigorous training

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34 Gardiner, *The Yompers*, 124.

preparation to make 3 Commando Brigade ready for just this sort of operation, in precisely these arduous conditions. Indeed many Royal Marines had to pinch themselves as a reminder that this was not simply another exercise. Not so for 5 Infantry Brigade, and to pitch the men of this semi-trained, improvisatory, ill-supported, unready formation into an amphibious, high intensity, joint, conventional conflict, at no notice was, to say the least, to ask a very great deal of all the people in it.<sup>35</sup>

To make matters even worse, Wilson while with Moore in *QEII* had obtained a promise from the Major General of equal treatment with the Commando Brigade as to the availability of helicopters and other support. Even with the extra helicopters, this would prove to be impossible, not helped by the lack of tactical loading of the Brigade's supplies. The Commando Brigade's march on Stanley already begun had to remain the main priority. Clapp had personally to calm Wilson down when the lack of helicopters was explained and Wilson demanded all of them. Such an allocation would have meant no supplies for the advanced forces.

Moore, although authorised by a jittery, inexperienced and out-of-touch London and Northwood, to replace Thompson, had confidence in this trusted officer, although he had to remind him that he needed to be kept fully informed to manage relationships with Northwood. As he said, 'It has been increasingly difficult to protect you from ill-informed criticism, while I have been totally devoid of real information.'<sup>36</sup> Thompson welcomed Moore's arrival as he could now concentrate on his brigade responsibilities and move his command further forward to Teal Inlet using his tracked command vehicles. 45 Commando was ordered to advance on Teal Inlet to secure the new base. *Forward* and *Sir Percivale* were dispatched with supplies. The commandos were in place by 30 May. And that evening, using the one available Chinook, elements of 42 Commando and three 105mm guns replaced the SAS at Mount Kent overlooking Port Stanley. As the forces landed a battle was in progress between the SAS and an Argentine patrol. If the recce party had not been in place, there might have been a disaster. The Brigade commander congratulated himself on

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35 Ibid., 125.

36 Quoted in Freedman, *War and Diplomacy*, 586.



having stood up to strong pressure from Fieldhouse himself to advance on the feature without reconnaissance. As he put it, the clear lesson was 'you cannot dictate tactics from 8000 miles away'.<sup>37</sup> One might add that even submariners can get out of their depth. There was also another security breach emanating from London that Teal inlet was now the base for the advance on Stanley. It was lucky for the information managers, who could always dishonestly imply that the BBC or another media outlet was at fault, that the Argentines lacked the initiative to exploit these exercises in irresponsible political media management

By 4 June the Commando Brigade was in place along the advanced line Mount Estancia (occupied by 3 Para on 1 June)–Mount Vernet–Mount Kent–Mount Challenger. Thompson expected he would soon receive 40 Commando that was to be relieved by one of the 5 Brigade units guarding the San Carlos area, to rejoin the brigade. It was however decided, much to the anger of its commander who made his views plain to Moore, that this was a misuse of a valuable well-trained unit. Moore, when publicly taxed with this error by the author shortly after the campaign, angrily said they were not Arctic-trained. This was true but the overall background and training of the Marines still fitted them perfectly for an expeditionary and amphibious context, either in the Commando Brigade or as a quality reinforcement to 5 Brigade. Unlike the Welsh Guards, who tried to 'Tab' across the island but failed, they could have yomped forward, so diminishing stress on helicopters and landing craft. The Welsh Guards, the less capable of the two Guards units, would have been excellent static defenders of the beach head area. Guards are stolid in defence if nothing else (except looking smart on public duties) and their poor performance in amphibious operations would soon become only too clear. Moore was also swayed by arguments that the Argentines might still try an attack on West Falkland that would rely on amphibious expertise, so he played safe. In the event, when the Welsh Guards' inexperience in amphibious operations led to the 'Bluff Cove' disaster, personnel from 40 Commando had to be sent to replace the casualties. The Guards did little to enhance their reputation with the Royal Marines when their recce unit led the Commandos into a minefield causing casualties.<sup>38</sup>

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37 Thompson, *3 Commando Brigade*, 114.

38 Interview with one of those casualties shortly after the war at BRNC Dartmouth. It was the premature end of a promising young Royal Marines officer's career.

Instead 5 Brigade, reinforced by 2 Para transferred back to its old formation, was ordered to advance on Stanley by the southern route, a direction of advance that had not been used by the Marines because of its inherent difficulty. The combination of this approach with 5 Brigade's weaknesses, especially its unwillingness to vouchsafe its action to others, was asking for trouble. Ian Gardiner's succinct description of the events that followed cannot be bettered:

The methods applied [in the 5 Brigade advance—EG] were controversial. It started with 2 Para discovering by telephone that there were no Argentines in either Fitzroy or bluff Cove. Now back under the command of 5 Infantry Brigade, and with the agreement of their brigade commander Brigadier Wilson, 2 Para hijacked the precious single Chinook on 2 June and packing men in as if on a London tube they flew 50 km forward and took possession of Fitzroy and Bluff Cove. They were now sitting on ground of great potential value, but they were also very isolated and vulnerable. They needed to be reinforced very quickly indeed. But an inherent problem was that the brigade was hobbled by poor communications and had no transport of their own. They had no means to back this view up and had not consulted those upon whom they would have to depend to do so. When he heard about it by accident, this bold but unilateral initiative placed the commander of land forces Major General Moore, in a very difficult position. He either had to tell five Infantry Brigade to back them up. A withdrawal would have been humiliating for Wilson and the Paras and would have been difficult to explain to Northwood, forever looking for for good news to give to the politicians. And yet to back them up would put even more strain on a fragile logistic chain which was already struggling to sustain 3 Commando Brigade in the north. Moore chose to back them up. The advance along the southern route finished with the capture of Sapper Hill, twelve days later. In between these events, the Chinook and its strap hanging Paras were very nearly destroyed by British artillery; 600 Scots Guardsmen were almost sunk at sea by British warships; four soldiers were killed by HMS *Cardiff* which shot down their helicopter; a landing craft from *Fearless* bombed in Choiseul Sound killing six men: and fifty men, mainly Welsh Guards, died when the

Argentine Air force damaged *Sir Tristram* and destroyed *Sir Galahad*. Many more were injured. These disasters and near disasters were individually the results of many and various factors, but they were all a part of a struggle to balance 5 Infantry Brigade after its initial, precipitate, ill thought out move.

Gardiner does not blame the personnel of the Brigade. 'The reputations of the Army chiefs were salvaged from a mess of Crimean proportions', he argues, 'only by the innate spirit of their soldiers and junior officers, the battleworthiness of the Parachute Regiment and the dogged gallantry of the Scots Guards on Tumbledown Mountain.'<sup>39</sup>

The latter comment refers to the Brigade's part in the final battles outside Port Stanley that were delayed because of the need to wait for Wilson. These actions were successful despite more command changes and confusions. On 9 June, Moore came to 3 Brigade HQ to tell Thompson that as intelligence indicated the Argentines were expecting an attack on the southern axis Thompson was to be reinforced not by 40 Commando which he really wanted, but 2 Para (under Lt Col David Chaundler, its new commander who had parachuted from a transport to be picked up by a frigate to be taken to San Carlos) and the Welsh Guards from 5 Brigade. Thompson was to capture Mount Harriet, Two Sisters and Mount Longdon, Wilson would then take Mounts Tumbledown and William with his two remaining units while Thompson took Wireless Ridge, and finally the Commando Brigade would capture Sapper Hill and the rest of the high ground south of Stanley.

The first objectives were achieved by 45 and 42 Commandos and 3 Para on the night of 10-11 June . The Welsh Guards were temporarily returned to 5 Brigade for the next stage but there was face to face disagreement at 5 Brigade HQ on 16 April, between Thompson and Wilson as to whom the Welsh Guards would go afterwards. Wilson wanted them to take Sapper Hill but Thompson, to whom they were due to revert, had already planned to use 45 Commando for this role and then exploit with the Guards ,who would move through the commandos. Orders for this had already been issued to the Guards. Thompson left the HQ having obtained apparent agreement on this plan, of which Wilson was fully aware.

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39 Gardiner, *The Yompers*, 126-7.

In the evening, as the Argentines began to retreat, Thompson suggested to Moore that as speed was now of the essence, the Guards stay with Wilson as they were already on the 5 Brigade radio net 'and therefore more easily gathered up by Wilson, since speed was now of the essence'.<sup>40</sup> The problem was that Wilson had issued Lt Col. Rickett, the commander of the Guards Battalion, with orders to take Sapper Hill. Rickett now had two conflicting sets of orders and perhaps naturally, chose those of Wilson, his Army superior and went for Sapper Hill. Wilson did nothing to try to get him to abide by the original plan. Thompson was not informed. Effectively, the Welsh Guards had been hi-jacked for a move that conflicted with 3 Commando Brigade.

As Thompson puts it:

The unilateral move by 5 Brigade without telling anybody, had major potential for a major 'blue on blue' ... Sapper Hill was 45 Commando's objective; this was known to divisional headquarters. Perhaps Tony Wilson, smarting at having lost the earlier argument over who was to have the Welsh Guards under command, was determined to take Sapper Hill himself. As 45 Commando advanced up Sapper Hill they were surprised to find it already occupied by the Welsh Guards. Luckily it was daylight and visibility was good.<sup>41</sup>

It now became a race between units to occupy Stanley as the Argentines surrendered. The conflict had, despite everything, been a signal success. The United Kingdom still had sufficient maritime and amphibious capability to gain sufficient command of the sea and, less certainly, the air to mount a successful amphibious landing many thousands of miles away and to bring the land campaign to a successful conclusion. This would not have been possible without the experience of the specialist Royal Marines or the amphibious ships that provided the vital core of CTG 317.0. The problems in integrating 5 Brigade with the Commando Brigade show that such operations cannot be carried out effectively ad hoc and at short notice. Doctrine, experience and, perhaps above all, effective joint communications need to be honed over the years in repeated exercises.

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40 Thompson, *3 Commando Brigade*, 182.

41 *Ibid.*, 184.

The lessons for Australia seem clear. Assault ships and well-intentioned rhetoric from senior officers may not be enough to create the maritime power projection capacity that Australian defence policy now so clearly requires. Relying on host nation support for air portable forces is a highly uncertain policy, as the UK found out in 1982. On a watery, blue planet, there is no alternative to using the the sea, if one is interested in mounting serious operations at a distance. Creating Royal Australian Marines is clearly not practical, or, perhaps, even desirable. What is needed are soldiers fully aware doctrinally and in terms of training of the special demands of amphibious operations. This requires a wholehearted espousal of amphibious warfare, its challenges, doctrine and dynamics and especially its communications requirements. The UK still had just enough amphibious capability in 1982 to prevail against a not-too-demanding opponent. The next opposing force in this part of the world might not be so accommodating. You have been warned!

# Strategic Mobility, Tactical Utility: US Marine Air and Ground Task Forces in the Global War on Terrorism

*Charles D. Melson*

## Introduction

To begin with a note of Marine Corps heritage: The terrorists struck in the middle of the night at a military arsenal. On arrival they took over road, rail, and communication centres with minimal violence. News of this event was soon conveyed to the nation's capital by the disruption of scheduled services. Attacking the federal facility brought in government troops. The military command recognized the threat but lacked forces to respond quickly. The army commander dispatched his chief of staff and an aide to the incident wearing civilian clothes. The only available forces to support them were US Marines from the Washington Barracks. An armed duty section of 86 men under the officer of the day (First Lieutenant Israel Greene) and the chief paymaster (Major William W. Russell) boarded a train for Harpers Ferry. The US Army representatives (Colonel Robert E. Lee and Captain James E.B. Stuart) and state militia stood by and let the Marines kill or capture the terrorists. This was John Brown and a mixed band of 'freedom fighters' who aimed to foment an insurrection among the slave population of the southern states in 1859. Once more, 'The Marines had landed and the situation was well in hand.'<sup>1</sup>

When asked to comment on maritime strategy and the war on terror, I naturally turned to the perspective of a service that 'makes Marines and wins battles', to paraphrase General Charles C. Krulak. I have chosen to

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With thanks to the Chief of Army, the Army History Unit, and the Australian Defence College for underwriting this paper.

1 Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 88-90.

take a broad historical approach to deal with the last decade of current operations.<sup>2</sup> According to Headquarters, United States Marine Corps:

Since World War II, in nearly every crisis, the United States Marine Corps has deployed projection forces with the ability to move ashore with sufficient sustainability for prolonged operations. These forces have been organized into Marine air-ground task forces, a combination of air, ground, and support assets. Marine air-ground task forces are established for specific missions, or in anticipation of a wide range of possible missions ... Selective, timely and credible commitment of air-ground units, have on many occasions, helped bring stability to a region and sent signals worldwide to aggressors that the United States is willing to defend its interests, and it is able to do so with a significantly powerful force on extremely short notice.<sup>3</sup>

If this reads like a sales pitch, it's because it is one. These are the official 'talking points' about the Corps' place within maritime strategy in response to global threats of terrorism. It concludes: 'Expeditionary is

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2 McMullen Seapower Forum. US Marine Corps and Seapower. Panel for the Fifteenth Naval History Symposium, Annapolis, MD: 2001, cancelled with 9/11 attacks. Unless otherwise noted, general references and further reading for this paper included the following:

Congressional Research Service, *U.S. Low-Intensity Conflicts, 1899-1990*. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services study (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1990).

Aaron L. Frieberg, 'A History of the U.S. Strategic Doctrine, 1945-1980', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 3:3 (December 1980), 37-71. Reprinted by the US Army War College, 1983.

John B. Hattendorf, et al. (eds), *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1970s: Selected Documents* (Newport: Naval War College, 2007).

\_\_\_\_\_, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s: Selected Documents* (Newport: Naval War College, 2008).

\_\_\_\_\_, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1990s: Selected Documents* (Newport: Naval War College, 2006).

History Division, *The Cold War and Beyond: Marine Conflicts, Campaigns, Expeditions, and Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 2002).

Charles P. Neimeyer (ed.), *On the Corps: USMC Wisdom from the pages of Leatherneck, Marine Corps Gazette, and Proceedings* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008).

Frank N. Schubert, *Other than War: The American Military in the Post-Cold War Decade* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 2013).

3 HQMC (Public Affairs), MEU Tracker, 17 June 2013.

not a bumper sticker to us, or a concept, it is a state of conditioning that Marines work hard to maintain.' To understand where the Marine Corps is today, knowledge of its history and its progression to present modes of operations are in order. I view this as institutional evolution rather than revolution. As such, I intend to address maritime strategy from the perspective of the American naval services. <sup>4</sup>

### **Security: 'Walking Johns' and 'Seagoing Bellhops'**

*'To take charge of this post and all government property in view; To walk my post in a military manner, keeping always on the alert, and observing everything that takes place within sight or hearing.'* General Orders for Sentries, Numbers One and Two.

While the focus of this paper is about the response to the Global War on Terrorism and the following 'Long War', broader aspects of American military history need to be kept in mind. Due to limitations of space and time, these will be given minimal mention. Further research into the sources used would provide needed insight into specific events or periods. In some ways, the United States of America developed as a continental power but acts like an island nation in its need for sea control. The Federal Constitution mandated militia, land, and naval forces whose form and function have evolved over time. A component of this was a Corps of Marines or Sea Soldiers. Early in our nation's history these services developed that reflected the need for security. They included ships and supporting establishments that provided for personnel, construction, maintenance, and stores. Safe guarding facilities whether ashore or afloat against enemies foreign and domestic has always been a Marine staple since 1775, along with a dual mandate to support the US Navy or US Army as needed for expeditionary or amphibious duty.

As a *naval service*, there were two basic employment structures at the beginning: Marine guards with detachments afloat on navy ships and

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4 My paper is based on historical rather than doctrinal analysis. The present Marine Corps Conceptual Basis for Capability Development lists six sea service (Navy and Marines) core capabilities: forward presence, maritime security, humanitarian assistance, disaster response, power projection, and deterrence. Service specific capabilities include the conduct of military engagement, to respond to crises, to project power, the conduct littoral maneuver, and to counter irregular threats. HQMC (Programs & Resources), *U.S. Marine Corps Concepts and Programs: America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 2011), 4-6.



with Marine barracks at naval facilities ashore. These had interchangeable functions and through much of its early years this was how Marines served. The US Navy in general was used for conflict driven *guerre de course*, scientific and commercial surveys, and support to continental campaigns (blockades, bombardment, landings). The Corps itself did not exceed 5707 officers and men through most of the 19th Century.<sup>5</sup> Marine detachments and barracks would also be combined for foreign expeditions under either US Navy or US Army control at battalion-strength, but these were exceptions until the advent of standing advance base forces. Writing about posts and stations, Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr, felt that 'Only the globe itself ... trademark of the Marines ... limits the number of places where you, as a Marine, may ultimately serve. Here, however, we are going to take a look at the permanent posts and stations of the Corps. These are the places where, between expeditions, you will spend much of your career.' He continued: 'Marine Corps Bases ... and Marine Barracks ... are the basic permanent posts for support of ground units of the Corps. Marine Corps bases and camps are devoted to field training and support of major tactical units, whereas most (but not all) Marine Barracks perform security missions.'<sup>6</sup>

David Ulbrich has written that the modern Marine Corps was built on a doctrinal stool with three legs: advance base defence, amphibious assault in large wars, and expeditions for small wars. Over time organisation, technology, and personnel provided varied applications of this trinity.<sup>7</sup> I will examine some of these from a historical perspective that will connect the dots as to how tactical utility translated into operational capabilities for maritime strategy, along with the formation of unique Marine anti- and counter-terrorist forces.<sup>8</sup> This is an overview rather than a doctrinal presentation on current operations, as the wave tops need to be covered to explain the contemporary Marine air-ground task force, the 'mag taf' to use a horrid acronym (MAGTF).

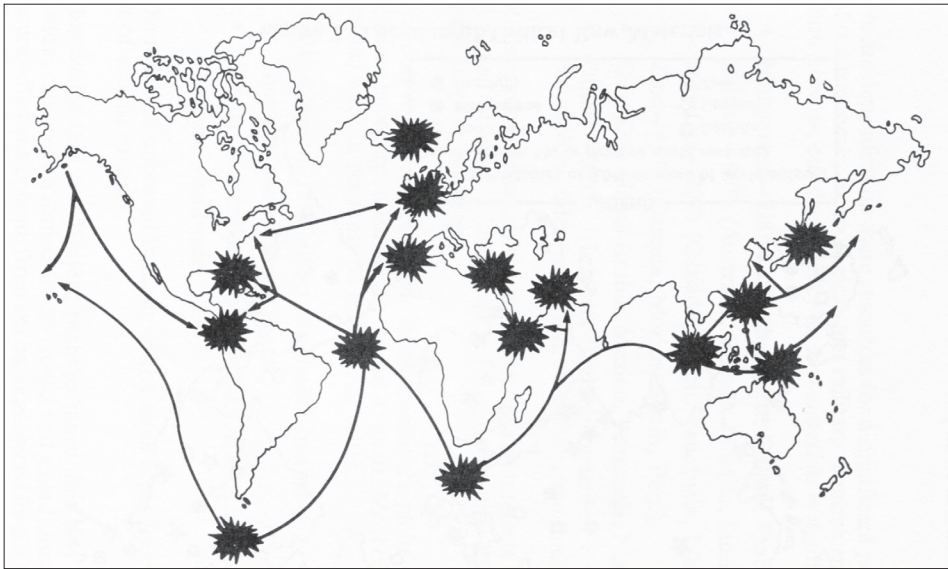
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5 Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 654.

6 Robert D. Heinl, *The Marine Officers Guide* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1967), 178.

7 David J. Ulbrich. *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936-1943* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 36-7.

8 Doctrinal terms which have changed with a merging of defence and offensive efforts in current circumstances.



Sea Lanes and Chokepoints.

My narrative starts with Marine experience in the mobilisation, organisation, training, and deployment for expeditionary service in the Spanish American War, conflicts in the Philippines, and China. As the 20th Century dawned, the steam navy developed as a fleet-in-being to be used for sea control. This brought the need for a standing or full-time advance base force to seize, occupy, and defend forward bases for the US Navy to use as coaling, oiling, and communications stations in the course of naval campaigns. The organisation that accompanied this maritime strategy by 1913 consisted of a brigade-size force with fixed and mobile regiments—one for offence and one for defence. Accepted principles of *combined arms* were used to organise infantry, artillery, and armour units. It is significant that along with these basic forces, aircraft became a part of the mix. Important to this story, it was taken as a given.<sup>9</sup>

Two infantry brigades served alongside the US Army in World War I, with several aircraft squadrons.<sup>10</sup> With the positioning of Marine East and West Coast advance base brigades in the inter-war years for

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9 Making combined arms work in concert has always been the challenge going back to the origins of warfare. Conjunct or combined operations involving naval and ground forces are also of this lineage.

10 Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1920).

possible threats to American areas of interest at home (the border with Mexico) and overseas (Caribbean, Pacific, China) there was a series of active 'small wars' (Panama, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua) that provided opportunities for the development of small unit leaders and a degree of practical experience.<sup>11</sup> As conflicts in the Far East and Europe loomed, the US Marines focused on a possible war with Japan and what was needed to conduct operations in support of a naval campaign in the Pacific. The discussions included the advance base concepts, amphibious tactics, techniques, and procedures supported by the Fleet Marine Force from 1933. Similar debates took place in the US Navy between battleship, aircraft carrier, and submarine advocates and the structure of a balanced naval fleet to include surface, submarine, anti-submarine, air, anti-air, amphibious, logistics, and even cyber task forces (X Fleet anti-submarine efforts).

There were regimental-sized Marine forces in Shanghai, China and at the Cavite naval base in the Philippines before World War II. But the first forward basing of units in the possible theater of conflict was with the 'defence' battalions sent to Hawaii, Midway, Johnston, and Wake Islands in 1940-1941. These organisations were the offspring of the fixed regiments of the advance base force. They were regiment-size, consisting of coast artillery, air defence artillery, and heavy machine guns (strategically deployed by sealift, these lacked tactical mobility and supporting infantry, even if every Marine was a rifleman). Focused on defending naval air and sea bases, other forward deployments before America's entry into the war were to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Iceland. At this point another principle of the air-ground task force was demonstrated: *forward deployment* prior to the commencement of hostilities. This would be on transports or at an advanced shore base. Once the war began, American Samoa became the hub of base defence.<sup>12</sup> These same battalions later accompanied the Marine ground and air units for other island campaigns

The major expeditionary and amphibious organisations for the big war formed in 1941 were the divisions, aircraft wings, assorted brigades or aircraft groups, and support troops of the Fleet Marine Force with the Pacific and Atlantic Fleets. The subsequent details of 'Marines and

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11 Harry A. Ellsworth, *One Hundred and Eighty Landings of the United States Marines, 1800-1934* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1934).

12 Charles D. Melson, *Condition Red: Marine Defense Battalions in World War II* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1996).

Amphibious War' from 1942 through 1945 are well known, as was their staging in Australia and New Zealand, and will be passed by to continue the story.<sup>13</sup> It started with the small-division landing on Guadalcanal in 1942 and eventually witnessed a reinforced three-division assault on Iwo Jima in 1945. During the same year there was a total of 485,053 Marines, of whom 125,162 were with five aircraft wings, 32 air groups and 135 flying squadrons.<sup>14</sup> World War II was the defining conflict of the United States Marine Corps and ended with its III and V Amphibious Corps in Japan and China. Needless to say after a wartime expansion to six divisions, five aircraft wings, and supporting establishment, the post-war reductions came as a shock that seemed to be the Marine Corps demise for the benefit of the US Navy, US Army, and newly independent US Air Force. It took the *National Security Act* of 1947 to codify the Marine Corps' existence. Its current position in the Armed Force at a mandated level of four divisions, four aircraft wings, and support was established in 1952, a direct result of the contribution to the naval war against Japan in the Pacific on 'land, sea, and air' as our hymn goes.<sup>15</sup> This was predicated on military necessity rather than tradition or emotion as some have suggested.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Cold War and Beyond**

From World War II peak strength, a trough of 74, 279 men and women was reached in 1948.<sup>17</sup> Barracks and ships detachments still supported the US Navy, while a battle for survival took place and a hollow Fleet Marine Force was in place. This same year saw battalion landing teams forward deployed with the Mediterranean's Sixth Fleet. Over a decade later, the Western Pacific's Seventh Fleet would follow with battalion landing team deployments. Of note, in December 1948, a Marine Security Guard was formed with the Department of State which continues to this day for protection of American embassies and consulates. This continued the Marines' historic role of backing public diplomacy.

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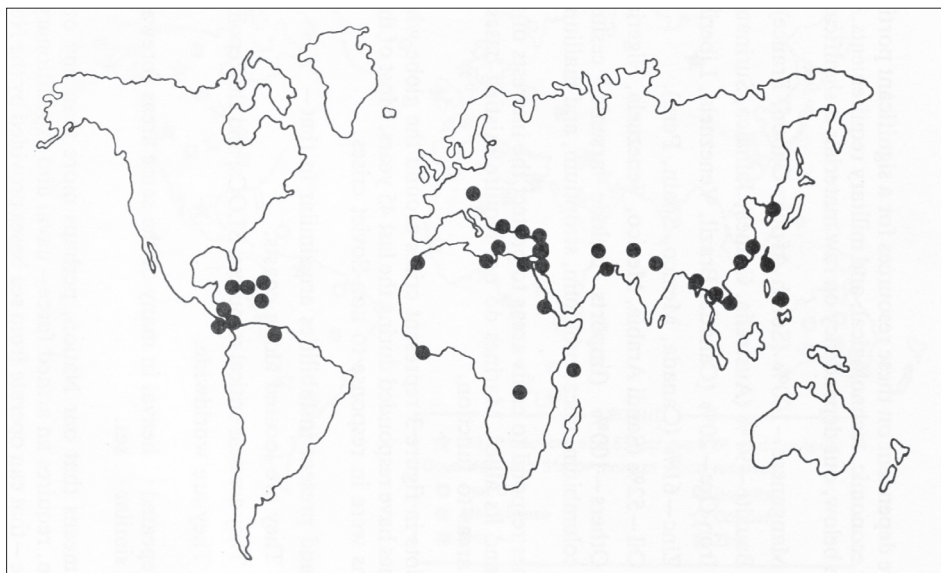
13 Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marine Corps and Amphibious War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951); History Division, *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, 5 vols (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1958-1971).

14 Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 654.

15 Public Law 416, 1952.

16 B.H. Liddell-Hart, 'Marines and Sea Power, 1776 to Present', *Marine Corps Gazette* (January 1980), 22-31. First published in July 1960.

17 Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 654.



Cold War and Beyond Crisis Response  
(1945–Present)

From 1950-1953, the Korean War demanded expeditionary and amphibious forces. This illustrated another principle, *immediate response*. Ready or not, Marines would be in the fight. In this case the initial elements were a brigade and aircraft group, including helicopters, while other fighter squadrons flew with the aircraft carriers of the fleet. While not a formal Marine air-ground task force, an agreement between Fleet Marine Force Pacific Lieutenant General Lemuel Shepherd and the Far East Commander for Korea General Douglas MacArthur to keep the Marine units together was seen as recognition of placing them under their own command rather than centralising the air, ground, and logistics elements under the larger theatre US Army and Air Force commands. Another principle was recognised from the story: *common command* structure. Again, the fighting of the 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in Korea became a matter of record, along with the United Kingdom Commonwealth forces.<sup>18</sup> What is significant is that the service came out of the conflict justifying on the battlefield budgetary support for its mandated and hard-won place in the defence establishment. But

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18 History Division, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, 5 vols (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1954-1972).

with the emerging global situation turning into a Cold War, the question about the best to contribute with the Fleet Marine Force was again subject to debate.<sup>19</sup>

How would the principles of *naval service, combined arms* (including aviation), *forward deployment, immediate response, and common command* work in this modern security environment? One side of the debate focused on atomic and nuclear weapons defence and delivery from the triad of fixed and mobile platforms that seemed to consume the interest of the US Air Force and Navy. This spilled over into the ground forces of the US Army and Marine Corps who found their traditional structures under attack and underfunded. Added to the mix were wars of national liberation that occurred with greater frequency with the end of empires and were an asymmetrical response to the major nuclear powers by the non-aligned coalitions. Marine Corps' small wars experience came into play here rather than having to invent 'special warfare' or 'counterinsurgency'. One element that was used to solve problems of battlefield movement in either conventional or unconventional circumstance was air mobility, specifically with helicopters launched from amphibious transports.<sup>20</sup>

### **Marine Air Ground Task Forces**

Aaron O'Connell saw these developments as the 'rise of the amphibious force-in-readiness'.<sup>21</sup> A provisional air-ground task force was established in Hawaii in 1953 for Fleet Marine Force Pacific, soon followed by a clone with Fleet Marine Force Atlantic. This was formalised with doctrine, organisation, and equipment by 1963 that made the US Marine Corps unique in the last half of the 20th Century and laid the ground work for responding to the threats of the 21st Century as well. In effect, the air-ground task force structure was documented to include common elements. While task organisation would call for a structure based on the analysis of unique situations, the forward deployment of basic amphibious units

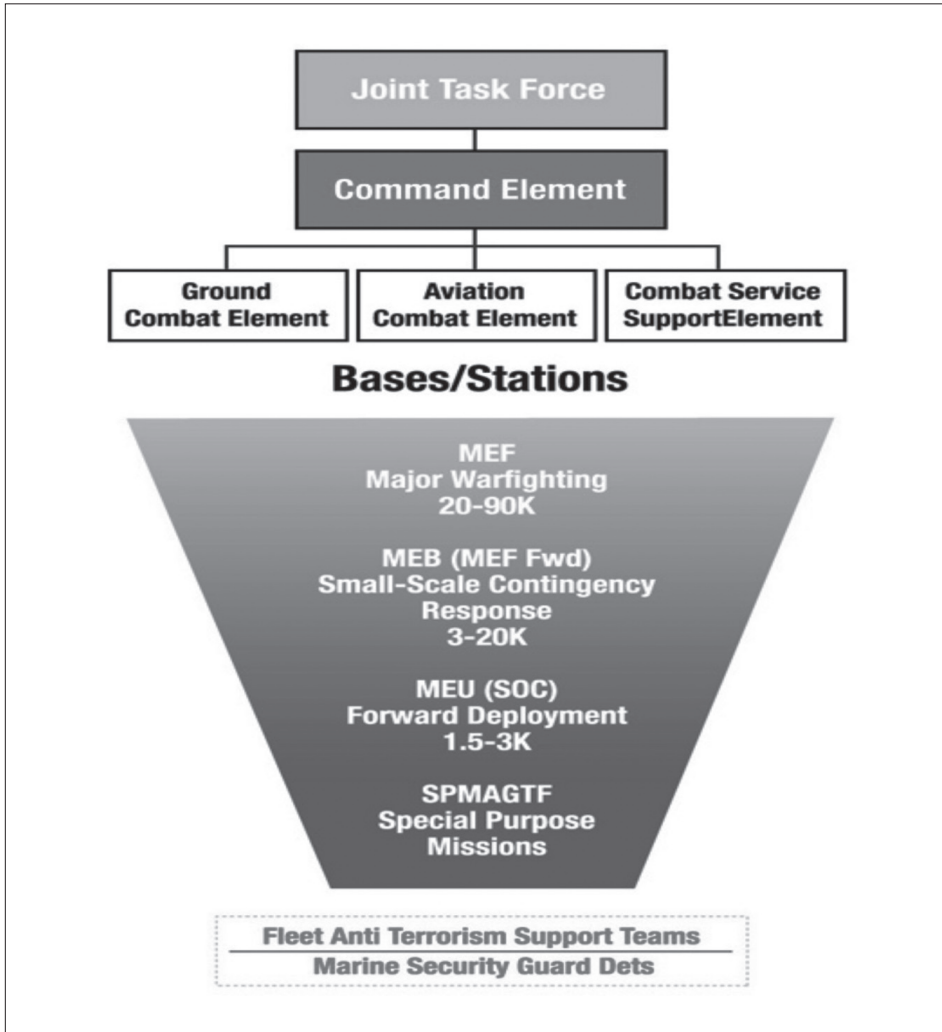
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19 Joseph H. Alexander and Merrill L. Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers in the Cold War: Amphibious Warfare, 1945-1991* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 9-25.

20 Lynn Montross, *Cavalry of the Sky: The Story of U.S. Marine Combat Helicopters* (New York: Harpers, 1954). Used in combat by the Royal Navy and Marines at Suez in 1956!

21 Aaron B. O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 231-67.

called for a 'Swiss Army Knife' approach of having a little bit of everything in case you might need it. At times this might not be the best fit, but it worked.<sup>22</sup>



Marine Air-Ground Task Force Components.

22 James A. Donovan, Jr, *The United States Marine Corps* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 103-07; Alexander & Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers*, 26-44.

Composition of an air-ground task force depended upon the size of the organisation ranging from the amphibious or expeditionary<sup>23</sup> unit, through brigade, to force level. Each consisted of several elements: command (unit, brigade, force), ground (reinforced battalion, regiment, division), aviation (composite squadron, group, wing), and logistics (brigade, group, unit). In theory, these could be tailored to the assigned mission but in practice they were standard compositions needed for a balanced force. Of note was that the commander could be either a ground or an air officer in recognition of the service's aviation-centric concept of combined arms. The origins of which can be found in the fact that early aviators had a ground background and a degree of common training and experience and, despite the increasing specialisation of naval aviation, remained committed to the air-ground team.<sup>24</sup>

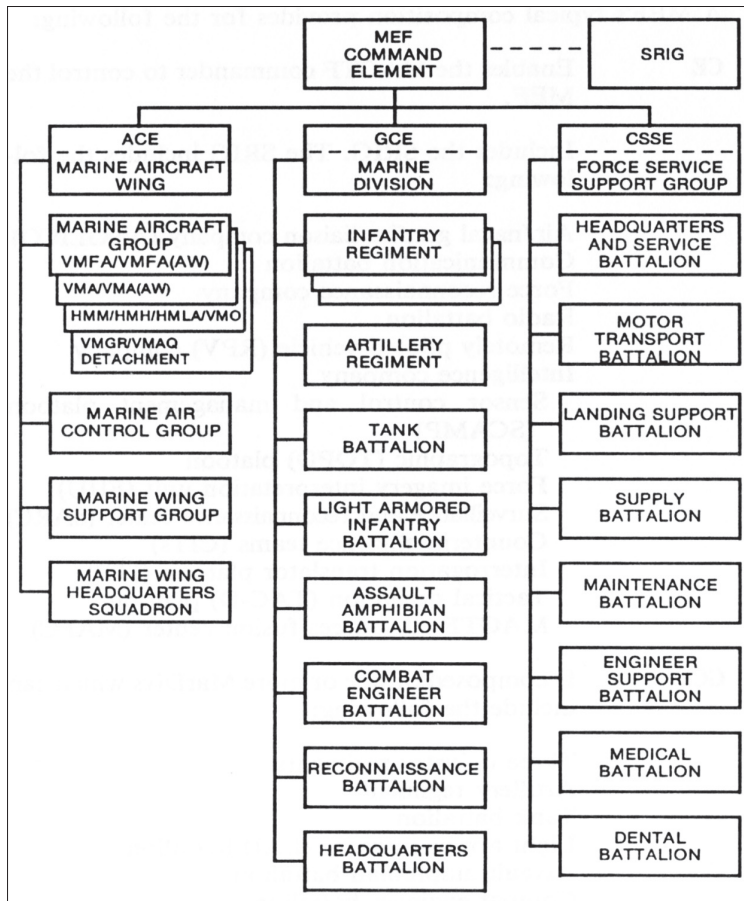
At the expeditionary force-level an air-ground task force would be based on one or more Marine divisions, aircraft wings, and service support groups under a lieutenant general. These corps-level organisations were manned by 55,000 Marines and Sailors. Designed to deploy in echelon, the lead element, designated a forward Marine expeditionary force, was capable of reaching a theatre of operations within 30-45 days and then conducting simultaneous amphibious operations along the coast and self-sustained operations ashore for up to 60 days in duration. It could move by sea or air transport, with US Navy amphibious shipping being a limiting factor for forcible entry or assault. Each expeditionary force also had a light contingency battalion for rapid deployment by air. For example, during the Vietnam War of 1965-1973 this was with the 1st and 3rd Marine Divisions, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and the Force Logistics Command. For the Gulf War in 1990-1991 this was with the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and 1st Force Service Support Group reinforced by the 2nd Force Service Support Group. In 2003, the deployment of the I Marine Expeditionary Force to Iraq was with the 1st Marine Division, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and 1st Force Service Support Group. Like earlier wartime expeditions, these were the exceptions rather than the rule for employment.

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23 'Expeditionary' until 1965 and 'amphibious' until 1988, used here somewhat interchangeably.

24 The present Commandant of the Marine Corps was a fighter pilot. Alexander & Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers*, 45-61, 148-66.

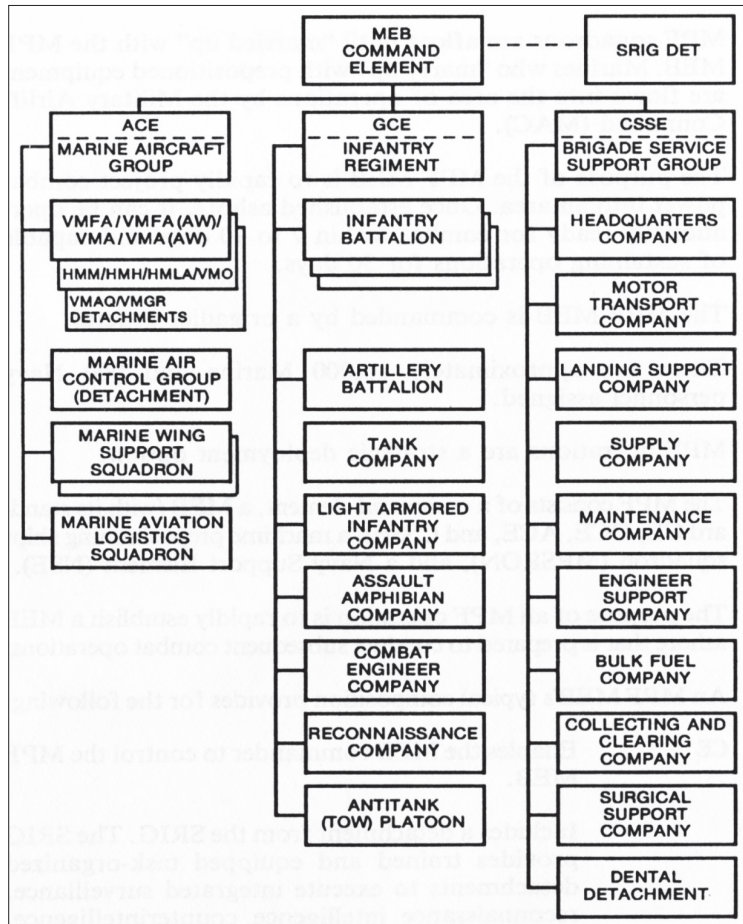




Expeditionary Force.

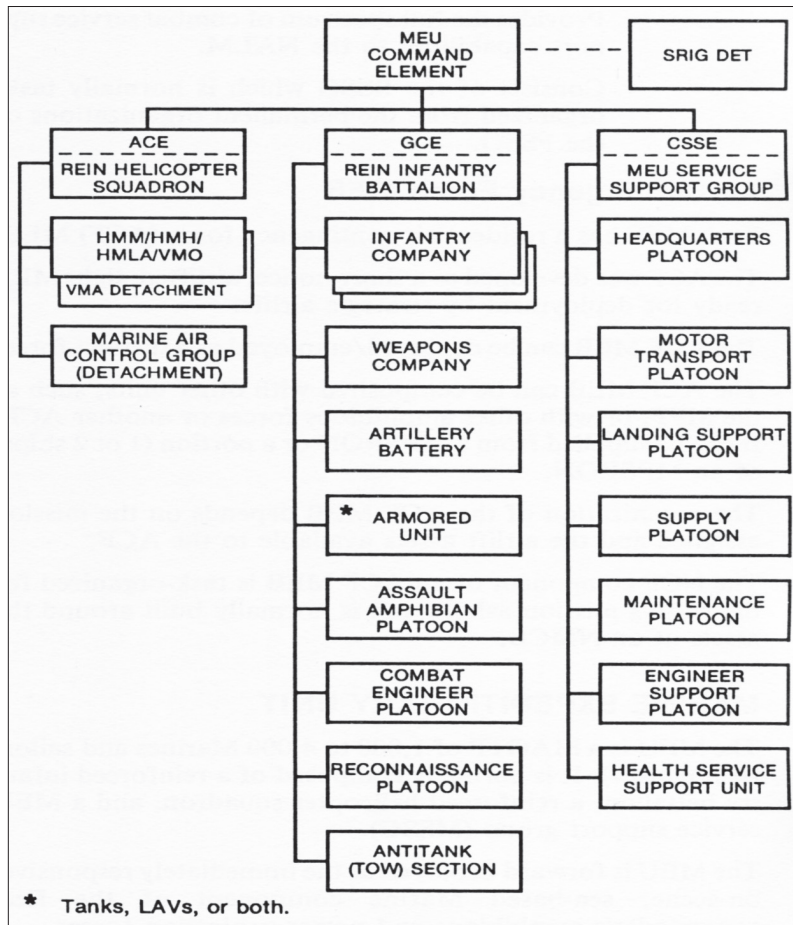
At the brigade-level air-ground task forces included a regimental landing team, aircraft group, and service support group. Led by a brigadier general, usually the deputy expeditionary force commander, these were the preferred mid-intensity Marine air-ground task force. A notionally tailored brigade with some 14,500 personnel could reach a combatant commander's area of responsibility in 7 to 30 days. As a result, amphibious and expeditionary brigades were often the first in and last out of crisis situations. This allowed flexible and robust employment that could combine into a brigade-sized force relatively quickly such as with the Lebanon, Thailand, Cuban, and Dominican crises. Other examples were the 3rd and 9th Marine Brigades in Vietnam in the mid-1960s, the 9th Marine Brigade in 1972 and 1975 for Vietnam, or the 4th Marine Brigade in the 1973 October War in the Middle East, and the Gulf War's 4th, 5th,

and 7th Marine Amphibious Brigades. In some ways, the later Iraq and Afghanistan deployments were with brigade-sized forward elements of the respective I and II Marine Expeditionary Forces.<sup>25</sup>



Expeditionary Brigade.

25 With continued joint deployments with the U.S. Army, the term regimental combat team has been used vice Marine expeditionary brigade to avoid confusion with the mixed service definitions of the term 'brigade'. Some of these differences are logistical and reflect the requirements for the Marines and Navy to use 'sea basing' or to obtain basing rights ashore that include more extensive airfield, port, and fixed facilities.



Expeditionary Unit.

At the unit-level, the air-ground task force was a battalion landing team, composite aircraft squadron, and service support group. Commanded by a colonel, these contained approximately 2200 personnel. Normally embarked on one of the US Navy's expeditionary squadrons, they were the landing force of the amphibious ready group and served as a joint commander's immediately employable combined arms force. Capable of employment within six hours of reaching a specified operations area, the special operations capable unit served as a forward echelon of a brigade-size force. For example, a battalion landing team had three rifle companies, a heavy weapons company, motor transport, communications, and supply. It was reinforced with an artillery battery, tank or light armoured vehicle platoon, assault amphibian vehicle

platoon, reconnaissance patrol platoon, and engineer platoon. The composite squadron had a mix of aircraft to include assault transport helicopters, gunships, and even fixed-wing assets in the form of Harrier jets. The combat service support unit allowed an even more eclectic mix of trucks, engineers, communications, medical, and supply platoons and detachments.<sup>26</sup> This has been the characteristic forward force for much of the Cold War and the subsequent Global War on Terrorism. Vietnam provided a good example of the specific application of these units in a wartime role.<sup>27</sup> From 1965 through 1969 sea-based battalion landing teams and helicopter squadrons with Seventh Fleet were known as the Special Landing Force. From 1970, these were designated as Marine amphibious or expeditionary units based around helicopter assault carriers or from smaller deck amphibious ships (Amphibious Ready Groups Alpha and Bravo). Often these were used to reinforce existing forces ashore which was also a means of employment used for Iraq and Afghanistan.

At times provisional or 'special' air-ground task forces were created, some with and some without the standard mix of elements. These could be ground heavy, aviation heavy, or in theory logistics based.<sup>28</sup> For example, a logistics-based special air-ground task force conducted the reconstitution of maritime prepositioning ships and the departure of forces from Iraq in 2003. It was built around transportation, maintenance, engineers, military police, communications, and medical units or detachments.

### **US Navy Fleet Deployments**

According to Peter Swartz, the US Navy has had eight or so variations of fleet deployments over the years since 1775.<sup>29</sup> These provided the maritime strategy and logic for the dispositions of the various Marine air-ground task forces. Forward deployment of battalion landing teams started soon after World War II with the amphibious ready groups landing forces in the Mediterranean and the Western Pacific (Sixth and Seventh Fleets). Forces were also be assigned as needed to the Caribbean, Atlantic, and

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26 HQMC (P&R), 14-18.

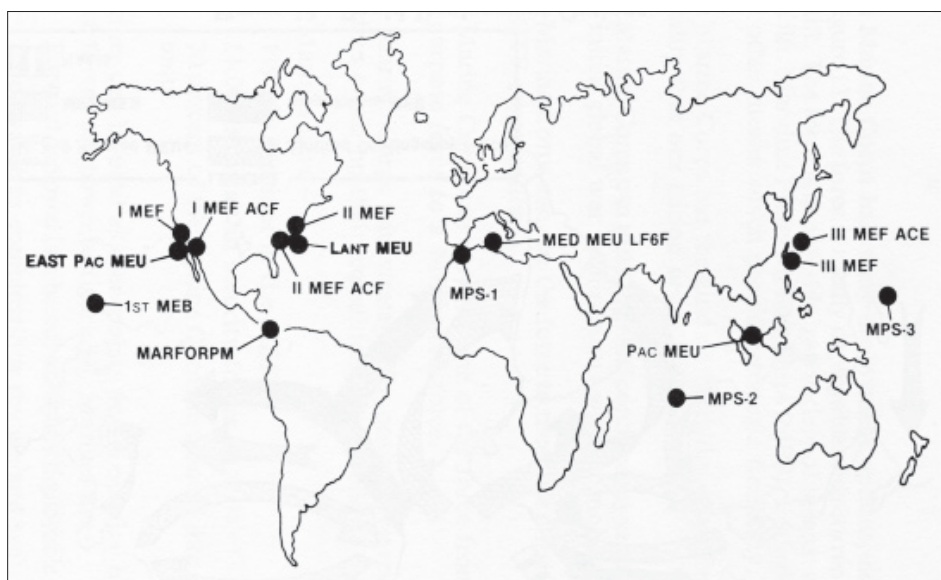
27 History Division, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1975*, 9 vols (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1977-1997).

28 O'Connell, *Underdogs*, 231-67.

29 Center for Naval Analysis, *USN and USMC Future Deployment Options and Past Deployment Record* (Draft deployment options and workshop; Alexandria, VA: 9 July 2013), slides 193-202.

Gulf regions (Second, Third, and Fifth Fleets). At present, these are assigned through Marine Forces Pacific and Atlantic with the unified combatant commands using air transport and seaborne deployment options.

As early as 1959, 'transplacement' battalions rotated to the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia. With transplacement, a unit from California or Hawaii would be traded for a like unit, accompanied by a change in designation.<sup>30</sup> The current unit deployment program has been in effect since 1977, based on the amphibious unit structure predicated on an existing base of infantry battalions (27 at present) with supporting batteries and companies, medium helicopter or tilt-rotor squadrons (16 at present), and fixed-wing squadrons or detachments. This normally excluded reserve battalions and squadrons, but these have met some of the unit deployment requirements during the Global War on Terrorism.



Marine Air-Ground Task Force 'Spearpoints,' 1980s–1990s.

In 1980, near-term prepositioning ships based at Diego Garcia supported a standing brigade (the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade) for deployment to Southwest Asia with all manner of supplies and material. By 1985, this evolved into the Maritime Prepositioning Force which kept

30 i.e.: 1st Battalion, 5th Marines in California could become 1st Battalion, 9th Marines on Okinawa.

three squadrons in Rota, Spain, Diego Garcia, and Guam (adding a final principle of logistical *sustainment*).<sup>31</sup> Each squadron carried sufficient equipment and supplies to maintain 17,000 Marines for up to 30 days. Cargo could be landed to the pier or from a squadron's own small boats while anchored offshore.

The *Goldwater Nichols Act* of 1986 established the US Special Operations Command and refined service roles and missions.<sup>32</sup> While not part of the joint special operations arena, the Marine Corps laid out its interest in this vital area of national defence. From World War II, Marine units and individuals have served in a variety of 'special warfare' situations, particularly with raids and reconnaissance. Marine amphibious or expeditionary units always had the implied ability to conduct special operations, but now had a graduated special operations capable response with a stated anti- or counter-terrorism focus and training.<sup>33</sup>

Marine Security Force Battalions Atlantic and Pacific were formed in 1987 (combined in 1993 and designated a regiment in 2008); again always an implied capability, but now providing a graduated response from previous Marine barracks and detachments with the US Navy. At present, some 2200 Marines and Sailors man fleet anti-terrorism security team companies and security force battalions. The 'Fast' companies provide a rapidly deployable force to deter or defend terrorist threats to naval installations, vessels, and US embassies worldwide. These have proven themselves with more than 70 special security missions from Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm to the attack on the USS *Cole*, with missions in Liberia, Panama, Cuba, Kenya, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Iraq.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Two squadrons at present.

32 History and Research Office, *U.S. Special Operations Command History* (MacDill Air Force Base: Headquarters, US Special Operations Command, 1998). This was the result of the joint service experiences in Iran in 1980 and Grenada in 1983. Its first real test was in Panama in 1989.

33 These include amphibious operations: assaults, raids, maritime interception operations, advance force operations. Expeditionary support of crisis response or limited contingency operations: evacuations, humanitarian assistance, stability operations, tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel, joint and combined operations, aviation operations from expeditionary sites, theater security, airfield and port seizures, visit-board-search and seizure. HQMC (P&R), 18.

34 Through 2011; HQMC (P&R), 42-3.

In 1990, another pre-positioning effort became operational, the Norway Air-Landed Marine Expeditionary Brigade program. It was first envisioned as a program to store air and ground supplies that could support forward deployed forces, cold weather exercises, and training in the European theatre. Although established with a Cold War focus, it became a major crisis response and humanitarian assistance asset for Marine Forces Europe.<sup>35</sup>

The 1990-1991 Gulf War marked the end of the Cold War and brought in a changed international security situation that increased rather than decreased the need to respond to irregular threats and assaults. Expeditionary service validated concepts of manoeuvre warfare that had been discussed since the 1980s.<sup>36</sup> It also seemed to ratify all the principles of the Marine air-ground task force to date for conventional conflict: *naval service, combined arms* (including aviation), *forward deployment, immediate response, common command, and sustainment*.<sup>37</sup>

In April 1991, Major General Mathew P. Caulfield of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command concluded that the 'MAGTF' was a 'global capability' with 'a full range of combat capabilities integrated into a single-Service, air-ground, combined arms team.'<sup>38</sup> For a period, brigades were eliminated from the mix because it was felt that if a brigade went, a complete division-wing force would soon follow. In 1994, with post-Cold War reductions and realignments, the expeditionary brigades were regulated to a conceptual status until 2000, when these were again activated with the command staff of each expeditionary force. In 1996, concern for asymmetrical attacks with 'weapons of mass destruction' resulted in the establishment of the unique Chemical, Biological, Incident Response Force of some 580 Marines and Sailors for use within the continental United States. This contributed another specialised element

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35 Redesignated Marine Corps Prepositioning Program-Norway in 2004; HQMC (PA), Marine Corps Pre-Positioning Program-Norway, 17 June 2013.

36 Henry T. Hayden (ed.), *Warfighting: Maneuver Warfare in the U.S. Marine Corps* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1995), for the background on Fleet Marine Force Manuals 1, 1-1, and 1-3.

37 Paul W. Westermeyer, *U.S. Marines in the Gulf War, 1990-1991*. Forthcoming.

38 Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication 2-12, *Marine Air-Ground Task Force: A Global Capability* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1996), 2. Narratives that detailed the workings of the amphibious units at the time include David Browne Wood, *A Sense of Values: American Marines in an Uncertain World* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1994), and Tom Clancy, *Marine: A Guided Tour of a Marine Expeditionary Unit* (New York: Berkley Books, 1996).

to the Marine Corps mix that would see employment in a string of events from the Olympic Games, G20 and NATO summits, Presidential Inaugurals, and State of the Union gatherings.<sup>39</sup>

But would the air-ground concept work in the long, irregular Global War on Terrorism?<sup>40</sup> The 11 September 2001 attacks found the US Marine Corps ready to respond with a variety flexible and capable units and commands to a Global War on Terrorism and other conflicts. An anti-terrorism brigade of 4800 Marines and Sailors was established in 2001 from existing structure (Marine Embassy Security Guard Group, Marine Security Force Battalion, Chemical and Biological Incident Force, and an anti-terrorism infantry battalion). A dedicated US Special Operations Command Detachment (Det One) was put in place from 2003 until 2006 for use in Iraq. This evolved into the US Marine Corps Special Operations Command by 2006 as a full-time part of the U.S. Special Operations Command. Its 2600 Marines and Sailors have conducted 107 unit deployments including teams and companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mobile training teams have been used in Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South America, and the Middle East.<sup>41</sup>

In recent years, afloat maritime forces have acted as theatre reserves such as Task Force 58 in 2001 in Afghanistan that combined the naval assets of two separate amphibious ready groups and expeditionary units (with the Australian Special Air Service, the 15th, and 26th Marine Expeditionary Units ). In other examples in Iraq, battles at Najaf and Fallujah in 2004, al-Qaim in 2005, and Ramadi in 2006 were conducted with added force levels from the expeditionary units. Since then, Marines have served ashore in Iraq and Afghanistan with the ability to 'composite' at short notice (known as 'ad-hocery,' 'aggregation,' or 'disaggregation'). Big war combat in Afghanistan<sup>42</sup> in 2001-2002 and Iraq<sup>43</sup> in 2003 gave way

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39 HQMC (P&R), 42.

40 The Department of Defense used Global War on Terrorism through January 2005, after which Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom continued in use as part of The Long War.

41 Through 2011. Marine Special Operations Command capabilities include: direct action, special reconnaissance, security force assistance, counterinsurgency, foreign internal defence, counterterrorism, and information operations; HQMC (P&R), 38.

42 Nathan S. Lowrey, *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001-2002: From the Sea* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 2011).

43 Nicholas E. Reynolds, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Basrah, Baghdad, and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 2007).



to sustainable troop level surges in each theatre.<sup>44</sup> This was with nine to twelve battalions in Iraq for two regimental combat teams and seven to eight battalions in Afghanistan with two regimental combat teams (to avoid confusion with the differing use of the term brigade). The *Small Wars Manual* of 70 years ago was again updated with the US Army to provide doctrine for the conflict in the form of the field manual *Counterinsurgency*.<sup>45</sup> In this effort service historian Nick Schlosser found that 'the Marine Corps did not undergo any kind of radical transformation as it trained and fought the Global War on Terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, it adapted principles that had shaped and defined its war fighting mission throughout much of its history.'<sup>46</sup> The current strategic mobility and tactical utility of US Marine forces, brigades, and expeditionary units seems to have assured continued employment.

This ends where we began, with security. The current Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard Group consists of some 1400 men and women assigned to 148 embassies and consulates in 133 countries. In recent years they have been involved in embassy bombings in Lebanon, Kenya, and Tanzania; terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The program is planned to expand by another 1000 Marines to meet continued irregular threats.<sup>47</sup>

### **Conclusion: Back to the Future**

Marines regard themselves as innovators. Maybe like French winemakers, they are making the best of necessity. The service's evolution has required it to do what is necessary and making a virtue of its unique place in the national defence structure. America is a continental power with an army and air force, but is a maritime nation with a Navy and a Marine Corps. The Marines are an armed force that believes it is a traditional regiment. As a service that has evolved into a balanced and self-sustaining force, it contributes to national defence in whatever theatre it finds itself employed. In the last decade this has been with conventional

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44 Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (eds), *Counter Insurgency in Modern Warfare* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 220-40, 241-59.

45 US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. Reprint of the December 2006 FM3-24/MCWFM 3-33.5 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

46 Nicholas J. Schlosser, *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare Instruction, 2000-2010* (Forthcoming).

47 HQMC (PA), Marine Security Guard Expansion, 17 June 2013.

and unconventional forces and the flexibility to move between the two poles. It can provide direct combat power on land and in the air, but it is also capable of a range of humanitarian efforts in remote locations or those with the lack of functioning infrastructure. The US Navy considers combat-credible forward presence as a deterrent; the US Marine Corps views it as crisis response with actions on the objective. In the uncertain circumstances that exist for the immediate future, the US Marine Corps continues to provide a capability that is characterised as a *naval service* under a *common command* with air, ground, and logistic *combined arms* that is *forward deployed, sustainable*, and available for *immediate response*. I have come up with six characteristics or principles that impact on Marine Corps tactical utility combined with strategic mobility for a war on terror. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, has his own ten articles for 'national necessity and the world we live in'.<sup>48</sup> But I believe recent events will prove both of us are saying the same thing from differing perspectives.

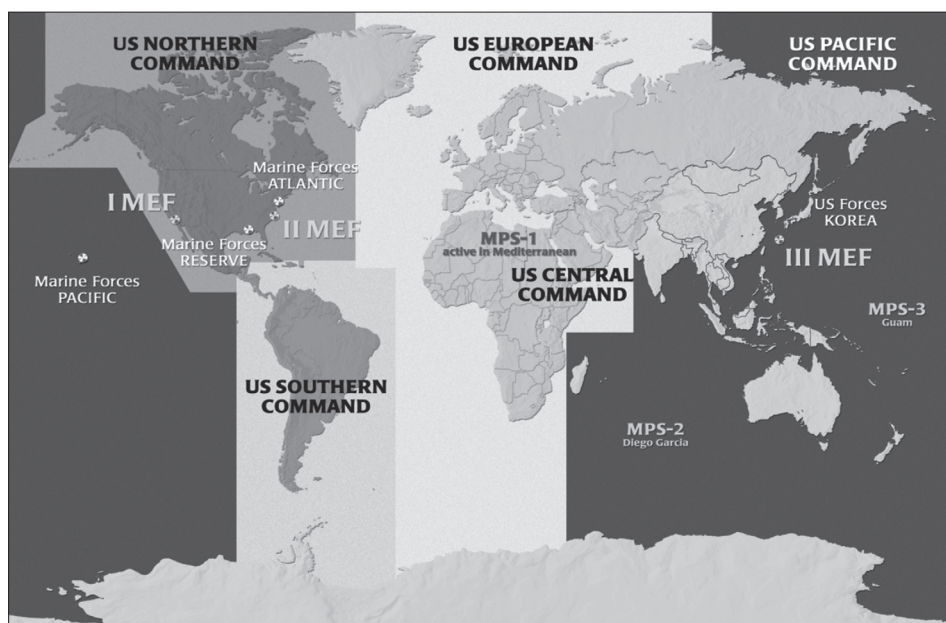
A case in point is Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, Regional Command Southwest stood up in July 2010 from I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) under Major General Richard Mills. It was followed in rotation in 2011 by Major General John Toolan with II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), then back to I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) under Major General Charles Gurganus. Since February 2013, Major General Walter Miller, Jr, was there with II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). Regional Command Southwest's area of responsibility included Helmand and Nimroz Provinces. The US Marines provided the majority of the command headquarters, ground combat element, air combat element, and logistical combat element as well as Task Force Belleau Wood. Partners in this were United Kingdom forces, including the command's deputy commander. The United Kingdom also had the lead with provincial reconstruction teams in Helmand Province for development of governance and economic development. Six other coalition members were present: Estonia, Jordan, Denmark, Bosnia, Georgia, and Tonga.

The regional command's mission evolved from one of removing the Taliban and denying al-Qaeda a safe haven in Afghanistan to advising, assisting, and training Afghan national forces to take over their own

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48 Commandant of the Marine Corps, 'True North: Marines in Defense of the Nation', November 2012.

self-defence. The coalition effort totaled approximately 15,000 personnel during the surge and has come down to some 10,000 members as parts of the surge recovery effort, of these 7000 were US Marines. For the Corps this has called for a reduction from two regimental combat teams to one; six infantry battalions were reduced to two. Since March 2012, some 143 American and United Kingdom bases were closed or transferred to Afghan security forces.<sup>49</sup>



Current U.S. Commands and Marine Forces.

With the ending of active expeditionary roles in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US Navy and US Marine Corps returned to their amphibious roots with various alternatives for fleet deployments and expeditionary unit tracking.<sup>50</sup> This was to reset the air-ground task force structure that had been critical to strategic response for the last half century. Three expeditionary forces (I, II, and III) each commanded by a lieutenant general serve as the primary standing task forces and provide the principal war fighting organisations for large-scale conflicts in the major theatres. The Marine expeditionary forces are based in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Camp Pendleton, California; and Okinawa, Japan. At the next lower level, three

49 HQMC (PA), Afghanistan (RC-Southwest), 17 June 2013.

expeditionary brigades (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) are derived from each of the standing expeditionary forces, for which they also served as a forward echelon. Able to respond to demands ranging from forcible entry to humanitarian assistance, these are capable of penetrating up to 200 miles inland and sustaining operations ashore for up to 30 days.<sup>51</sup>

Seven standing expeditionary units (11th, 13th, 15th, 22nd, 24th, 26th, and 31st), three of which were continuously deployed, represent the smallest air-ground task forces. These performed anything from disaster relief to noncombatant evacuations. These could project combat elements up to 200 miles inland within 24 hours by air and surface means. To quote field historian Nate Lowrey, 'by design or default, the expeditionary unit's forward presence, rapid response time, and demonstrated operational effectiveness not only made them the hallmark of Marine Corps expeditionary warfare capability but may also have overshadowed the potential possessed by the larger expeditionary brigades and forces'.<sup>52</sup> The current headquarters 'MEU Tracker' has expeditionary air-ground units in the Mediterranean, the Western Pacific, and the Indian Ocean.<sup>53</sup>

Special purpose air-ground task forces deserved mention and are an indication of the flexibility inherent in the concept and introduce a more unspeakable acronym (SPMAGTF, a 'Spmagtaf?'). These were created when the standard air-ground task forces are inappropriate or too large to use, but were still built around the ground, air, and logistics combat structure. In support of the United States Africa Command, a Special Purpose MAGTF-Crisis Response is based at Moron Air Base in Spain, with other basing options considered. It consisted of some 500 Marines and Sailors in rotation from II Marine Expeditionary Force in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The intent was to have a forward deployed force capable of response in support of US Embassies, evacuations, humanitarian assistance, or tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel.<sup>54</sup>

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50 CNA, slides 193-202; Robert P. Kozloski, 'Marching Towards the Sweet Spot: Options for the U.S. Marine Corps in a Time of Austerity', *Naval War College Review* 66: 3 (Summer 2013), 11-36.

51 Depending on the planned availability of the Bell-Boeing MV-22 Osprey, General Dynamics advanced amphibious assault vehicle, and the LHA and LPD class of amphibious assault ships.

52 'The Evolution of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare,' in Lowrey, *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan*, 35-7.

53 HQMC (PA), MEU Tracker, 17 June 2013.

54 HQMC (PA), Special-Purpose MAGTF-Crisis Response, 17 June 2013.

Another special purpose Marine air-ground task force under the US European Command was the Black Sea Rotational Force 13 (BSRF-13) based at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base in Romania. It was also from II Marine Expeditionary Force units consisting of the normal air-ground task force elements. Its purpose was to build partnerships, partner capacity, and promote regional stability as well as being a European Command crisis-response force in the Balkan, Caucasus, and Black Sea region. The long term goal was to develop support to international security assistance and for overseas contingency operations.<sup>55</sup>

Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Africa (SPMAGTF-Africa 13.2) based out of Sigonella Naval Air Station, Italy, was also an effort in support of US Africa Command. First deployed in 2011, it is staffed primarily with Marine Reserves out of New York. During six-month deployments it conducted mobile training teams for such tasks as engineering, communications, convoy operations, counter-mining, and logistics. Recent missions were to Burundi, Uganda, Cameroon, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and the Seychelles. In part, this was to address future security concerns but also included embassy reinforcement in Tripoli, Libya.<sup>56</sup>

Key to the expeditionary US Navy squadrons and US Marine units were the squadrons and ships of the Maritime Prepositioning Force based in the Atlantic or Mediterranean, Guam, and Diego Garcia. These allowed a rapid deployment and assembly of an air-ground task force in a permissive environment using a combination of strategic airlift and forward deployed prepositioning ships in support a designated combatant or regional commander. Tailored to support anything from an expeditionary unit to brigade for up to 30 days, with a reminder that this includes 'beans, bullets, bandages' and petrol, oil, lubricant for air and ground combat. In addition, each squadron had an 'enhanced' vessel to improve the capabilities for expeditionary airfields, construction battalions, and fleet hospital cargo.

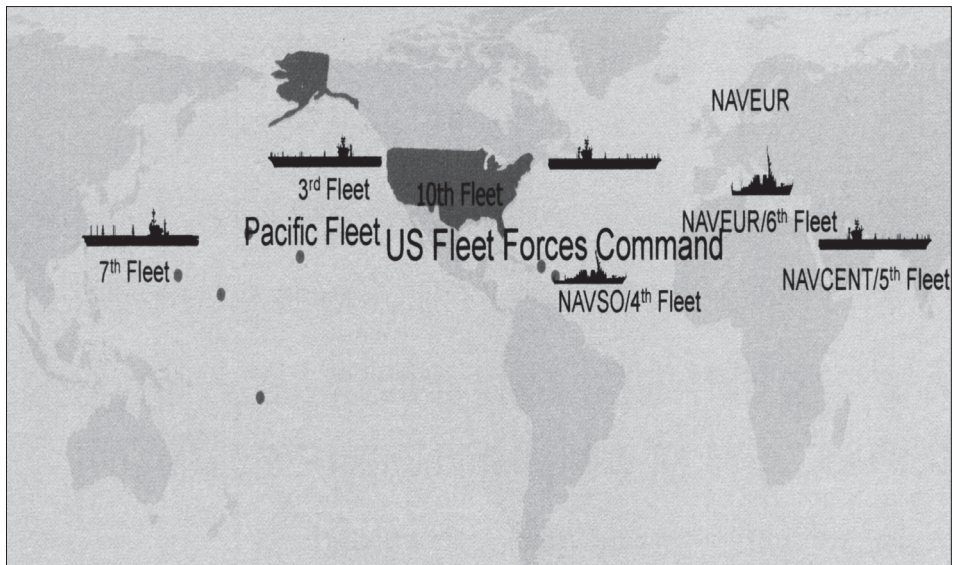
Based on the President's Strategic Guidance, the Marine Corps since 2012 has been engaged in a 'Pacific Reorientation'. Considering that two-thirds of its modern force structure was based around the Pacific Rim, this

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55 HQMC (PA), Black Sea Rotational Force-13, 17 June 2013.

56 HQMC (PA), Special-Purpose MAGTF-Africa, 17 June 2013.

was not necessarily new before '9/11'. The European, African, Southwest Asia emphasis of the last decades changed the emphasis. America needed a two-ocean Navy, but will have a Pacific Ocean focus when all is said and done. On one hand, five of America's mutual defence treaties are with Asia-Pacific nations, on the other hand, natural disasters have killed an average of 70,000 people a year in the last decade in Asia and the Pacific. Asia-Pacific region's strategic importance includes more than half the world's surface, 61 per cent of the world's population, seven out of 15 of America's trading partners were in the region, 40 per cent of the world's trade passes through the Malacca Straights, and 13 of Asia-Pacific's 15 mega-cities were within 100 kilometres of the coast. No forces were more suitable in addressing emerging strategic needs in the Pacific than naval amphibious forces. According to Headquarters, US Marine Corps: 'Naval amphibious forces can station off the coast and leave a temporary and light footprint when partnering or conducting humanitarian operations, or they can serve as an enabler for a larger joint force effort.'<sup>57</sup>



Notional Fleet Deployments (CNA).

57 HQMC (PA), Pacific Reorientation, 17 June 2013.

The Unit Deployment Program had to be reset after being reduced in scale with the effort in Afghanistan and Iraq in support of the US Central Command. With the recent reduction in requirements, the Marine Corps resumed a normal deployment cycle of sending infantry battalions and aircraft squadrons to the Western Pacific for six months in support of the US Pacific command. These forces are in addition to those deployed with the amphibious ready groups. This rotation has also included Marine Reserve units and detachments. Historically, this was three infantry battalions rotating through Okinawa and the Japanese mainland. Other basing options included Hawaii, Guam and, as you well know, Darwin in Australia.<sup>58</sup>

The 2012, Marine Rotational Force Darwin (MRF-D) consisted of a rifle company of 200 Marines and Sailors with a support and coordination staff. The Marines have been hosted at the Robertson Barracks and conducted training at existing facilities in the Northern Territory and participated in other military exercises in Australia and New Zealand. The intent was to establish a rotational presence of a forward deployed Marine air-ground task force of up to 2500 personnel. But I suspect that you are more familiar with this than I am.<sup>59</sup> It continues a history of joint Australian and American service that goes back to World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Not to be taken the wrong way, it almost seems as if America and Australia need a war now and again to get along so well!

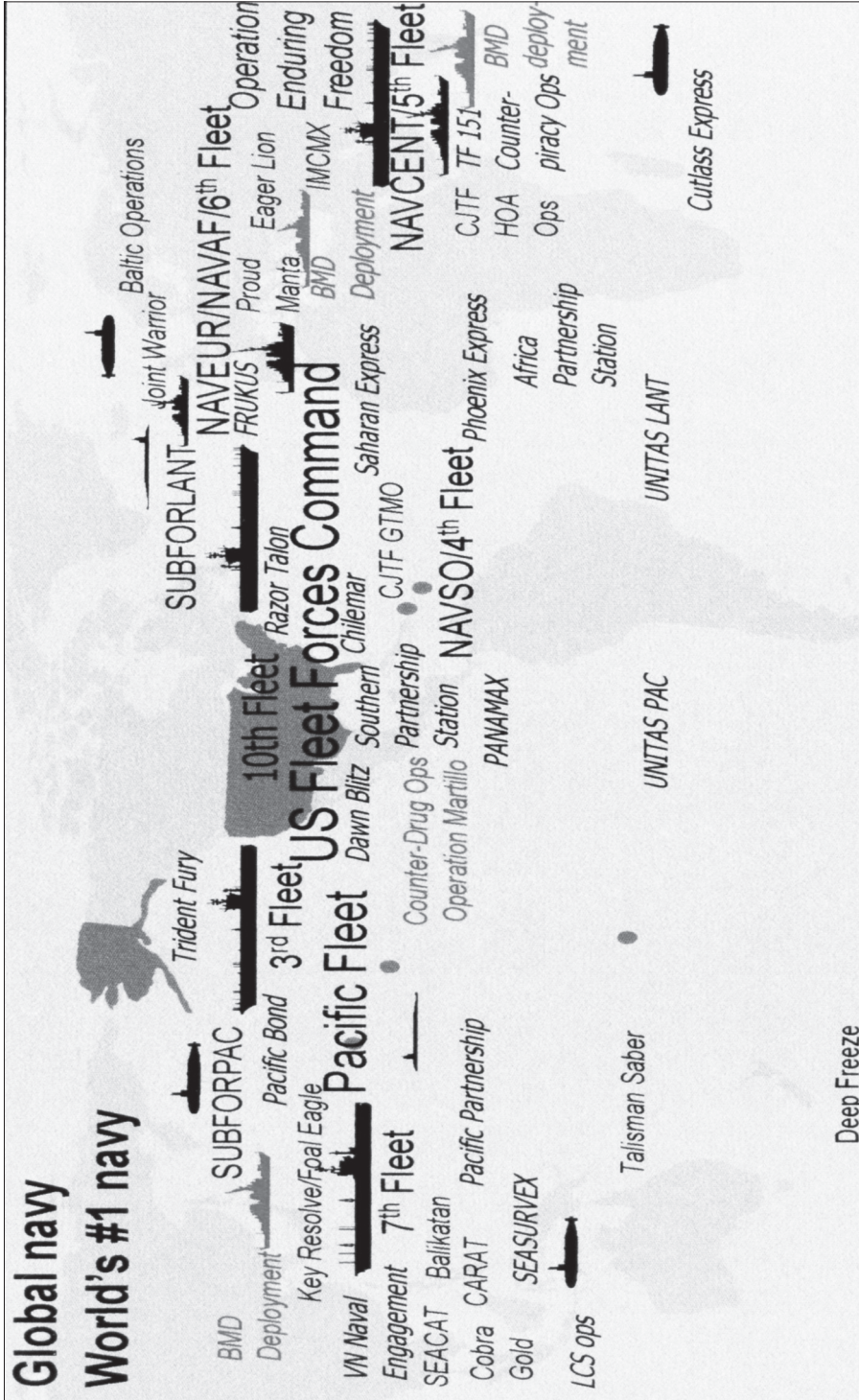
I hope that my paper has given insights into the origins and benefits of a Marine Corps solution that combines strategic mobility with tactical utility that has proven useful in conflicts both large and small. And that for Marines, the terms naval service, combined arms (including aviation) forward deployment, immediate response, common command and sustainment are articles of organisational culture as much as doctrine.<sup>60</sup>

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58 HQMC (PA), UDP Resumption, 17 June 2013.

59 HQMC (PA), Marine Rotational Force-Darwin, 17 June 2013; John W. Black and Evan Renfro, 'Kangaroos and Kiwis: On the Marine Corps partnership with Australia and New Zealand', *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 2013), 48-52.

60 O'Connell, 254-67.



Current Fleet Deployments (CNA).



## **Appendix 1**

### **US Marine Corps Special Operations, 1940 to Present**

#### PRE-WAR

Marines with the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Security Group, and as military attaches.

#### WORLD WAR II

Individual Marines with the US Navy Scout-Raiders, Office of Strategic Services, and Sino-American Cooperation Organization.

- 1st Parachute Battalion
- 2nd Parachute Battalion
- 3rd Parachute Battalion
- 4th Parachute Battalion, later
- 1st Marine Parachute Regiment, I Marine Amphibious Corps
- 2nd Marine Parachute Regiment, I Marine Amphibious Corps

- 1st Raider Battalion
- 2nd Raider Battalion
- 3rd Raider Battalion
- 4th Raider Battalion, later
- 1st Raider Regiment, I Marine Amphibious Corps

- Amphibious Reconnaissance Company, V Amphibious Corps, later
- Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific

#### KOREAN WAR AND COLD WAR

Individual Marines with Special Operations Group, Amphibious Group One, Pacific Fleet, and Far East Command Liaison Group.

- Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
- Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic

#### VIETNAM WAR AND COLD WAR

Individual Marines with Military Advisory Command Vietnam Studies and Operations Group and Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support

- 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
- 2d Force Reconnaissance Company, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic

3d Force Reconnaissance Company, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific  
3d Force Reconnaissance Company, US Marine Forces Reserve  
4th Force Reconnaissance Company, US Marine Forces Reserve  
5th Force Reconnaissance Company, US Marine Forces Reserve  
6th Force Reconnaissance Company, US Marine Forces Reserve

#### COLD WAR AND GULF WAR

Individual Marines with Joint Special Operations Command, Department of Defense Special Activities, and US Special Operations Command.

11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)  
13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)  
15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)  
22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)  
24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)  
26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)  
31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)

US Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, Pacific  
US Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, Atlantic

#### GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Individual Marines with Joint Special Operations Command, Department of Defense Special Activities, and US Special Operations Command.

4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism)

US Marine Corps Security Force Regiment

US Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment, Naval Special Warfare Group

US Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, US Special Operations Command

Note: This excludes Marine cyber command, training and advisory groups, embassy security guards, chemical-biological incident response, air-naval gunfire liaison, small craft, civil affairs, combined action, psychological, and advisory efforts that are considered special operations by other services.

## Appendix 2

### **Global War on Terrorism publications by the History Division (Washington, DC: United States Marine Corps) or Marine Corps University Press (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University)**

By way of credit to my institution, since 1919 the US Marine Corps History Division has examined various great wars, small wars, low intensity conflicts, military operations other than war, irregular conflicts, humanitarian efforts, and wars on terrorism. This has been with staff papers, publications, exhibits, and reference support to official and unofficial consumers. This is so military commanders, staff officers, and students have the essential facts of previous events for use with current and future military actions. The desire has been to root an understanding of the present into an appreciation of the past. An added dimension since 2008 has been the Marine Corps University Press which allowed the engagement of writers from academic, military, and policy realms on issues of international relations and national security. At this time, a number of monographs or studies have been prepared to deal with the different geographical campaigns of the Global War on Terrorism, the Long War, and the now so-called Overseas Contingency Operations.<sup>61</sup> These included:

- Rod Andrew, Jr, *U.S. Marines in Battle: An-Nasiriya, 23 March-2 April 2003*. 2009.
- David A. Benhoff, *Afghanistan: Alone & Unafraid*. 2010.
- , *Among the People: U.S. Marines in Iraq*. 2008.
- Robert M. Cassidy, *War, Will, and Warlords: Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001-2011*. 2012.
- Norman Cigar, *Al-Qaida, the Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle*. 2011.
- , *Saddam Hussein's Nuclear Vision: An Atomic Shield and Sword for Conquest*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011.
- Norman Cigar and Stephanie E. Kramer (eds), *Al-Qaida: After Ten Years of War*. 2011.
- Kenneth W. Estes, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2004-2005: Into the Fray*. 2011.
- Stephen S. Evans, *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare, 1898-2007: Anthology and Selected Bibliography*. 2008.
- Michael S. Groen et al., *With the 1st Marine Division in Iraq*, 2003. Occasional paper. 2006.

- Christopher M. Kennedy et al. (eds), *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography*. 2006.
- Francis X. Kozlowski, *U.S. Marines in Battle: An-Najaf, August 2004*. 2009.
- David W. Kummer, *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography*. Forthcoming.
- Nathan S. Lowrey, *Marine History Operations in Iraq: Operation Iraqi Freedom*. Occasional paper. 2005.
- , *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001-2002: From the Sea*. 2011.
- Timothy S. McWilliams and Kurtis P. Wheeler (eds), *An-Anbar Awakening: American Perspectives*. 2009.
- Timothy S. McWilliams and Robert A. Yarnall, *U.S. Marines in Battle: Fallujah*. Forthcoming.
- Jerry Meyerle, Megan Katt, and Jim Gavrilis (CNA), *On the Ground in Afghanistan: Counterinsurgency in Practice*. 2012.
- Melissa D. Mihocko, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Combat Service Support during Operation Iraqi Freedom*. 2011.
- Gary W. Montgomery and Timothy S. McWilliams (eds), *Al-Anbar Awakening: Iraqi Perspectives*. 2009.
- John. P. Piedmont, *Det One: U.S. Marine Corps U.S. Special Operations Command Detachment, 2003-2006*. 2010.
- Nicholas E. Reynolds, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Basrah, Baghdad and Beyond*. 2007.
- William Rosenau (CNA), *Acknowledging Limits: Police Advisors and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*. 2011.
- Patricia D. Saint, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: 23 Days to Baghdad with the Aviation Combat Element*. Forthcoming.
- Nicholas J. Schlosser, *U.S. Marines in Battle: Al-Qaim, September 2005 - March 2006*. 2013.
- (ed.), *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2004-2008: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography*. 2010.
- , *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare Instruction, 2000-2010*. Forthcoming.
- Nicholas J. Schlosser and James M. Caiella (eds), *Counterinsurgency Leadership in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond*. 2011.
- Daniel B. Sparks (ed.), *Small Unit Actions*. 2007.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Basic Terms and Assertions**

Some basic terms and assertions underlying this paper include:

1. War is the threat or use of force to compel another to one's ends.
2. Force can be direct (annihilation) or indirect (attrition).
3. War is conducted by both direct and indirect means.
4. Ends in external war are peace and of strategy, victory.
5. Ends in internal war are to retain or obtain control of society.
6. Society is composed of the people, army, and state.
7. Doctrines—collective deductive theory or inductive experience; beliefs used to understand, organise, equip, train, and to fight wars.
8. Practice—
  - a. Strategy—political goal, military object, ends and means, allocation, timing, priorities, intelligence, and logistics.
  - b. Operations—employment, deployment, information, and supply.
  - c. Tactics, techniques, procedures—shoot, move, communicate.
11. And as a question, do institutions or personalities define doctrine and practice?

# The Third Way: Towards an Australian Maritime Strategy for the 21st Century

*Michael Evans*

*Australia is an island. It is very big and difficult to defend. It is very big and difficult to attack. Those three propositions, which are not contradictory, lie behind every discussion of Australian strategy.*

Vice Admiral Richard Hill,  
*Medium Power Strategy Revisited* (March 2000).

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In 1915, in the midst of the First World War, the British maritime strategist Sir Julian Corbett wrote of ‘the mysterious power [affecting] the men who go down to the sea in ships’. He went on to suggest that ‘the free-spirit of the sea’ was understood intuitively by the British and the Americans as maritime peoples but not by the continental Germans and French. For Corbett, both Germany and France—despite their development of formidable navies—remained at heart land powers dedicated to the might of their armies.<sup>1</sup> Almost a century on, given the powerful combination of a continental identity and the ANZAC tradition, one could easily add Australians to Corbett’s list of peoples for whom ‘the free-spirit of the sea’ remains elusive.

As the world’s largest island-continent lying between the Southern, Pacific and Indian oceans, enclosed in the east and north by the Timor, Arafura, Coral and Tasman seas and dependent on oceanic trade and sea lines of communication for its prosperity, one might expect Australians to be natural seafarers. After all, Australia’s colonial development in

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1 Julian S. Corbett, ‘The Bugbear of British Navalism’, *New York Times*, 25 May 1915, 7-8. See also Bernard Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy: Ideology, Interest and Sea Power during the Pax Britannica* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), *passim*.

the nineteenth century coincided with Britain's greatest era of oceanic-consciousness. As Howard Isham has written of the Victorians, 'perhaps no people in history have been so conscious of the importance of the sea for their livelihood and safety since those citizens of Greek city-states in the fifth century BC'.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, a British consciousness of the sea was not shared by the Australian colonists. On the contrary, from settlement in 1788 onwards, it was not the sea but what Corbett might have called 'a free-spirit of the land' that shaped Australian identity. A decade after Federation in 1901, a major national newspaper could observe that, despite its origins in British civilisation, the new Australian Commonwealth was not Shakespeare's 'sceptred isle' intimately 'bound in with the triumphant sea' but a continent containing 'essentially a nation of landmen'.<sup>3</sup> While Australia's population is settled mainly along the coastal rim and while although the country possesses an important naval tradition neither a littoral lifestyle nor naval professionalism is synonymous with a maritime strategic consciousness in the classic Mahan-Corbett sense that 'the sea is history'. Rather what prevails in Australia is the maritime ambivalence of a nation whose modern history began on the 'fatal shore' of a vast and unknown continent. It has been noted that, 'confusion still lingers about what to call Australia: children are taught that they live in "the-world's-largest island-the-world's-smallest-continent"'.<sup>4</sup>

Australia's continental ethos, its army and its pastoral and mining industries have always been of more importance than its maritime awareness, its navy and sea-based industries. To paraphrase Lord Bryce, the history of maritime strategic thought in Australia 'is like the study of snakes in Ireland: There are no snakes in Ireland.'<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it was only in

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2 Howard Isham, *Image of the Sea: Oceanic Consciousness in the Romantic Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 251.

3 *Argus*, Melbourne, 25 February 1911. See also Oskar Spate, 'Geography and National Identity in Australia', in David Hodson (ed.), *Geography and National Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 277-82.

4 Quoted in John Gillis, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 85. For Australia's conceptual difficulties with classical maritime thought see Lee Corder, 'An Australian Perspective: Does Australia Need a Maritime Strategy?', in Jack McCaffrie (ed.), *Positioning Navies for the Future: Challenge and Response* (Sydney: Halstead Press, 2006), 56-63.

5 James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 565.

2000 that an Australian Defence White Paper actually employed the term 'maritime strategy' for the first time. Yet even at this late date, the term was still mainly equated with narrow concepts of naval activity for continental defence measures. There was little evidence in *Defence 2000* of a modern maritime philosophy that saw the sea as an arena that embraces all the elements of national power.<sup>6</sup> It is surely the greatest paradox of modern Australian history that an island-continent, settled by the British, the greatest seafaring people of the modern era, remains bereft of an effective maritime culture to guide its strategic theory and practice. It is a paradox, moreover, that any serious student of Australian strategic history must explore and seek to explain, if one is to ponder future national security requirements.

Australia's immaturity of maritime outlook has not gone unnoticed by successive generations of observers. In 1910, as the new Commonwealth debated its direction in defence policy, the Melbourne *Argus* pointed to the differences between Britain and Australia in maritime outlook:

[In the British Isles] the insularity of the country, the deeply indented nature of the coast, the proximity of alert and powerful enemies, who could be struck by means of sea-power and by no other means—these were and still continue to be, great factors of British maritime supremacy. The situation in Australia is in almost every respect entirely different.<sup>7</sup>

In 1959, in his comparison of the United States and Australia, H. C. Allen was struck by the fact that 'America has a great maritime tradition, which Australia, having been perhaps too long reliant on that of the mother country, really has not'.<sup>8</sup> A decade on, the historical geographer James Bird lamented: 'Australia is a maritime nation and scarcely knows it.'<sup>9</sup>

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6 Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2000). It is significant that in a recent Royal Australian Navy study, a leading American scholar of maritime strategy was moved to emphasise to his audience that a modern maritime strategy implies 'the direction of all aspects of national power that relate to a nation's interests at sea'. See John B. Hattendorf, 'What is Maritime Strategy?' in Justin Jones (ed.), *A Maritime School of Strategic Thought for Australia: Perspectives* (Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, Sea Power Series 1, 2013), 19-28, at 23.

7 *Argus*, Melbourne, 10 November 2010, 10.

8 H.C. Allen, *Bush and Backwoods: A Comparison of the Frontier in Australia and the United States* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1959), 4.

9 James Bird, *Historical Gateways to Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1-2.



Similarly, in 1979, John Bach bewailed the absence of a sense of the sea in the Australian psyche, observing: 'European Australia should have been the archetype of a maritime nation. The offspring of a mighty sea-power it might have been expected to look instinctively to the same source for its strength.'<sup>10</sup> More recently, Frank Broeze, has highlighted how Australia's states have been captive to a 'regional littoralism' which has restricted the evolution of a national maritime outlook. While New South Wales and Queensland look out on to the Pacific, South Australia abuts the Southern Ocean and Western Australia overlooks the Indian Ocean. The nation's maritime diversity between east and west is further compounded by the fact that the Northern Territory's seaward focus is on the Timor Sea and into South East Asia through the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter argues that it is the peculiar trajectory of Australia's national culture that has impeded a sense of a maritime consciousness and that this situation is particularly reflected in defence policy. Historically, the imperial, literary, and politico-economic aspects of Australian cultural awareness have tended to uphold a strong continental ethos, elements of which have transmuted themselves into a view of defence that have prevented the emergence of a mature appreciation of the strategic value of the sea. Three areas are examined to support this thesis. First, the way in which British naval power from 1788 until the fall of Singapore in 1942 fostered in Australian strategy a tradition of maritime dependence on the colonial motherland and permitted a mainly volunteer military tradition to flourish is briefly assessed. Second, the manner in which a lack of responsibility for national defence permitted an unhindered focus on settlement and internal development of a vast continent—a process which created a cult of the inland in the Australian cultural imagination—is outlined. Finally, as Australia emerges as a significant twenty-first century middle power in a globalised world, the potential for developing a coherent maritime strategy is explored. Such a maritime strategy might serve as a 'third way' between the traditional approaches of continental defence and expeditionary warfare and so contribute to an evolution in both Australian strategic maturity and national identity.

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10 John Bach, *A Maritime History of Australia* (Sydney: Thomas Nelson, 1976), 2.

11 Frank Broeze, *Island-Nation: A History of Australians and the Sea* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1998), 258-9.

## **Maritime Dependence: British Naval Power and the Defence of Australia**

John Hirst has observed that 'for most of human history defence spending has been the biggest item in government budgets. In the Australian colonies it was one of the smallest, which allowed government funds to be spent on the internal development of the colony.'<sup>12</sup> From settlement in 1788 to Federation in 1901, Australia was part of the world's greatest seaborne empire and its defence was underwritten by Britain's global naval supremacy. The metropole subsumed Australia's maritime identity into an imperial system, absolving the colonists from any direct responsibility for defending themselves in international affairs. Australia's colonists were able to settle an island-continent while cultivating a sense of *mare incognitum*. With physical safety ensured by the Royal Navy, colonial Australia possessed the luxury to focus on social and economic development and the evolution of constitutional government. The transition to democratic self-government in the 1850s and 1860s saw colonial governments such as New South Wales and Victoria duplicate the virtues of British political stability, providing security for property rights and individual liberty under common law.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the 19th Century, the defence of the Australian colonies was conceived in imperial rather than in national terms. Indeed, it was only in 1901 with the creation of Federation that defence became a serious political consideration. While modern Australia's founding fathers, Edmund Barton, Joseph Cook, Alfred Deakin and Andrew Fisher, came to view defence as a national responsibility they continued to view any Australian effort as part of a wider imperial system. Australia's geographical size and small population meant that national defence could only be practical if it sought to reinforce and, in turn, be reinforced by the resources of empire.<sup>14</sup> In the first decade after Federation in 1901, the formation of the 'Australian Settlement', expressed a synthesis of domestic socio-economic ideals, national defence imperatives and imperial

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12 John Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History*: (Melbourne, Black Inc., Agenda, 2005), 311.

13 *Ibid.*, 314-15, 317-19.

14 Michael Evans, 'Island-Consciousness and Australian Strategic Culture', *Institute of Public Affairs Review* 58: 2 (July 2006), 21-3.

strategy.<sup>15</sup> At its core the Settlement was cast in terms of a fortress defence of an expatriate Anglo-Saxon civilisation. In the words of Paul Kelly:

Australia was founded on faith in government authority; belief in egalitarianism; a method of judicial determination in centralised wage fixation; protection of its industry and its jobs; dependence on a great power (first Britain, then America), for its security and finance; and above all hostility to its geographical location, exhibited in fear of external domination and internal contamination from the peoples of the Asia/Pacific. [The Australian Settlement's] bedrock ideology was protection; its solution a Fortress Australia, guaranteed as part of an impregnable Empire spanning the globe.<sup>16</sup>

Given Australia's development of a strong military tradition after 1915, it is easy to forget how the post-1901 Australian Settlement enshrined Dominion navalism as the original strategic creed of the nation. In adopting this creed, Australians were merely following the advice of American naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, who wrote in 1902 that Australia must 'frame its [defence] schemes and base its estimates on sound lines, both naval and imperial; naval by allowing due weight to battle force; imperial, by contemplating the whole, and recognizing that local safety is not always best found in local precaution'.<sup>17</sup>

In 1911, the Royal Navy's Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson envisaged Australia's future defence planning and acquisition in terms of naval rather than military power. He estimated that by the early 1930s, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) would transition from a local squadron to a regional fleet of 40 surface vessels and 12 submarines with 15,000 naval personnel.<sup>18</sup> It is a striking irony of Australian historiography that,

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15 For a critical analysis see Geoffrey Stokes, 'The "Australian Settlement" and Australian Political Thought', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 39: 1 (March 2010), 5-22.

16 Paul Kelly, *The End Of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 2.

17 'The Views of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, USN July 1902', Document 6 in David Stevens (ed.), *In Search of a Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Element in Australian Defence Planning since 1901* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1997), 155.

18 Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson, *The Naval Forces of the Commonwealth; Recommendations*, in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers II: 7* (1 March 1911), 4; David Stevens and John Reeve, 'Introduction: The Navy and the Birth of the Nation', in Stevens and Reeve (eds), *The Navy and the Nation: The Influence of the Navy on Modern Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 7.

prior to 1914, C.E.W. Bean was known as an ardent supporter of Dominion navalism. In his 1913 book, *Flagships Three*, Bean celebrated the birth of the RAN, describing Australians as sharing the 'blood of sea peoples'. He went on to assert that 'Australia is *the* sea continent' and 'the sea is Australia's best means of defence'.<sup>19</sup>

In strategic consciousness, post-Federation Australia remained in the grip of what Gregory Melleuish has called 'the meta-narrative of Empire'.<sup>20</sup> Although this imperial narrative was to last for the first half of the 20th Century, its early concentration on the navy over the army as a focus for national identity did not survive the First World War. This transition was exemplified by Bean himself—who transferred the power of his pen from sailors to soldiers—so elevating Australia's military performance into the ANZAC tradition by marrying the bushman to the digger to create the legend of the 'natural soldier'. By 1921, the first volume in Bean's official history, *The Story of Anzac*, eclipsed the early Dominion navalism of *Flagships Three* and replaced any maritime vision with a dashing military image of Australian troops fighting on distant fields in Europe and the Middle East. Bean's earlier invocation of 'the blood of sea peoples' disappeared as he celebrated the 'spirit and skill of the Australian Imperial Force'.<sup>21</sup> The subsequent official histories of Australia in the First World War only reinforced the supremacy of the ANZAC tradition as the embodiment of Australia's martial spirit.<sup>22</sup>

What this meant in strategic terms was that, when Prime Minister Billy Hughes went to the Versailles Conference in 1919, he did so in the ironic knowledge that Australians had made their reputation not as sailors in defence of their continent but as soldiers in a far-flung expeditionary army. His major concern, then, was to try to ensure that Australia's military sacrifice on the battlefields of France would underwrite a British

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19 C.E.W. Bean, *Flagships Three* (London: Alston Rivers, 1913), x, 218, 206, 366. Emphasis in original. For the rise of Dominion navalism see John C. Mitcham, 'Navalism and Greater Britain, 1897-1914', in Duncan Redford (ed.), *Maritime History and Identity: The Sea and Culture in the Modern World* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2014), 271-93.

20 Gregory Melleuish, 'Meta-History Narratives in Nineteenth Century Australia', in idem, *The Power of Ideas: Essays on Australian Politics and History* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009), 215-46, at 215.

21 C.E.W. Bean, *From Anzac to Amiens* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1983 edn), 494.

22 See Jane Ross, *The Myth of the Digger: The Australian Soldier in two World Wars* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985), and Ken Inglis, 'Anzac and the Australian Military Tradition', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, April 1988, 4-15.

naval counterweight to the rapid rise of Japanese power in the Far East. As Hughes put it, 'the [northern Pacific] islands [are] as necessary to Australia as water to a city. If they were in the hands of a superior power there would be no peace for Australia.'<sup>23</sup>

Yet, while Japan's strategic challenge to Australia might be identified, resolving it was far more problematical. Paradoxically, the replacement of the early Federation vision of Dominion navalism by the First World War ANZAC military tradition meant that despite Australia's enormous contribution to the victory of the British Empire over Germany in the First World War, the country became more, not less, dependent on Britain. In the inter-war period it was the Singapore strategy that Australia relied upon for its maritime security. The problem of a threat from a great Asian power and a growing lack of maritime security in the inter-war years exemplify what Bruce Grant has called the 'double dilemma of Australian existence':

The dilemma of Australian nationhood is the desire to be a nation, while lacking the capacity to defend the national territory. The dilemma of Australian civilisation is that Australia is white, capitalist and Christian in a part of the world subject to ancient and powerful Asian influences. Cherishing Western values, Australians have become intellectually and materially dependent on the power centres of the Western world to protect them from Asia, thus inhibiting the growth of an Australian nation.<sup>24</sup>

To this double dilemma one can add Australia's ambiguity about the value of the oceans as strategic space and the increasing tendency towards 'sea-blindness' over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> Sea-blindness has been usefully defined by Duncan Redford as 'the inability to connect with

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23 Norman Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend: A Study of Australian American Relations Between 1900 and 1975* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1987), 30. Hughes' diplomatic approach is outlined in Neville Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901-23: Vol 2, Australia and World Crisis, 1914-1923* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), chapters 15, 16.

24 Bruce Grant, *The Australian Dilemma: A New Kind of Western Society* (Sydney: Macdonald Futura, 1983), 4-5.

25 John Reeve, 'Conclusion: Maritime Nations—The Lucky League' in Stevens and Reeve (eds), *The Navy and the Nation*, 370-83.

maritime issues at either an individual or political level'.<sup>26</sup> In Australia, prominent admirals from William Creswell to Anthony Synnot have failed to capture the national imagination in the manner of generals such as John Monash or Peter Cosgrove.<sup>27</sup> In terms of philosophical outlook, many of Australia's most influential strategic thinkers in the first half of the twentieth century from Edward Hutton through E.L. Piesse to Richard Casey, were men with military rather than naval backgrounds—dingoes rather than sharks. Moreover, despite the post-Vietnam dalliance with the doctrine of a direct 'Defence of Australia', little has occurred to change the pattern of Australian overseas deployments which continue to remain heavily-dominated by land forces. One historian sums up the supremacy that the Australian Army has achieved over the Royal Australian Navy in the 20th Century in the following terms:

The experience of the second half of the twentieth century seems to suggest that, when cabinets or senior ministers decided that serious military action, or the threat of military action, was appropriate, they thought principally of the commitment of troops, either infantry, or more recently special forces. These were perceived as 'the sharp end' of the defence force's support for the nation's diplomatic and strategic goals.<sup>28</sup>

Australia's history of sea-blindness has been much lamented by figures as diverse as Frederick Eggleston, T.B. Millar, Kim Beazley and Alan Robertson. In 1930, Eggleston, a pioneer of Australian strategic thought, noted, 'we do not have that sense of the sea and our surroundings which is generally developed in an island people'.<sup>29</sup> In a similar vein, Millar, in his 1965 book, *Australia's Defence*, was moved to remind his readers that Australia was an island-nation and as such did not have to be invaded in order to be defeated by events occurring at sea.<sup>30</sup> In the late 1980s, the political architect of Australia's continental defence doctrine, Kim

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26 Duncan Redford, 'The Royal Navy, Sea Blindness and British National Identity', in Redford (ed.), *Maritime History and Identity: The Sea and Culture in the Modern World*, 62.

27 Peter Edwards, 'The Royal Australian Navy in Australian Diplomacy', in Stevens and Reeve (eds), *The Navy and the Nation*, 149-62.

28 *Ibid.*, 160.

29 Quoted in Warren G. Osmond, *Frederick Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 139.

30 T.B. Millar, *Australia's Defence* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965), 30; Evans, 'Island-Consciousness and Australian Strategic Culture', 21-3.

Beazley, could observe, 'Australia is not a maritime nation and its people do not sustain much of an interest in Australian maritime strategy'.<sup>31</sup> For most of its existence what has passed for a maritime philosophy of the sea in Australian defence is, in Commodore Alan Robertson's memorable words, 'a continentalist's idea of maritime strategy'.<sup>32</sup>

An Australian maritime strategic outlook has also been further retarded by the character of a national political debate that is marked by division over how the country might best develop its own defence. Australians have never agreed on the fundamental question of democratic national defence, namely: who should bear arms and where? The country was bitterly divided by the conscription disputes of the first half of the twentieth century which shattered any consensus on the shape and direction of future defence policy. Indeed, the defeat of conscription in 1916-17 was a disaster for the evolution of coherent defence policy-making in Australia—not least because it severed the political bond between the duty of bearing arms and the rights of citizenship.<sup>33</sup> The conscription debates made discussion of defence issues less a priority of the state than an issue of partisan politics in which Australians have been constantly at odds over where it is proper for them to fight. As one political analyst writes, 'Australia [has] been a pro-war and anti-conscription country, a unique mixture'.<sup>34</sup> From the schisms over defence in 1916-17 and again with the 'two armies' policy of 1942 through to the political divisions over Vietnam service in the 1960s, '[the proposition] that defence of the nation is a single project, and that the State should have the power to command all men to serve—these commonplace ideas have not been accepted in Australia'.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, even when Australia fought in a great maritime campaign vital to its national survival in the South West Pacific from 1942-45, the country continued to bicker over the wisdom of deploying conscripts into

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31 Kim C. Beazley, 'The Development of Australian Maritime Strategy', in Commonwealth of Australia. *Selected Speeches 1985-1989 by the Hon Kim C. Beazley, MP Minister for Defence* (Canberra: Directorate of Departmental Publications, 1989), 184.

32 Alan Robertson, *Centre of the Ocean World: Australia and Maritime Strategy* (Henley Beach, SA: Sea View Press, 2001), 52.

33 Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History*, 229, 257-8.

34 Paul Kelly, *100 Years: The Australian Story* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 14.

35 John Hirst, *Australia's Democracy: A Short History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 293-4.

the strategically vital northern islands. As American sea power replaced that of Britain's after the fall of Singapore and secured Australia against Japan, many Australians came to believe that the 2nd AIF's amphibious offensives of 1944-45 in New Guinea and Borneo represented futile campaigns against a beaten enemy. Attacking trapped Japanese garrisons on isolated islands was often seen as an 'unnecessary war' and missions of 'evident futility'.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Australia's strategic conduct in the Pacific War during 1944-45 has inspired a verdict from the British journalist and historian, Max Hastings, that 'the last year of the year proved the most inglorious of Australia's history as a fighting nation'.<sup>37</sup>

The controversial island campaigns of 1944-45 threw a pall over the amphibious operations of the 7th and 9th Divisions of the 2nd AIF that continues to resonate. This legacy has served to ensure that the South West Pacific campaign of World War II is overshadowed in the national iconography by the 1st AIF's undoubted contribution to Allied victory in World War I in France.<sup>38</sup> In 2015 when Australia celebrates the centenary of Gallipoli, festivities will arguably be less about a failed seaborne assault in the Dardanelles than on the bravery of the Australian soldiers who, upon landing, created the ANZAC legend fighting the Turks at Lone Pine and the Nek. The pomp of the ANZAC centenary will serve only to camouflage two essential truths. First, for all its controversy, the 1942-45 South West Pacific campaign remains far more relevant for developing Australian strategy in the twenty-first century than the ANZAC effort of World War I. The second truth is that for all the proud exploits of Australian arms in Europe and the Middle East between 1915 and 1918, a tradition of discord and disunity has marked the history of national defence policy.

Such paradoxes are, as foreign observers as diverse as Mark Twain and Jeanne MacKenzie have pointed out, central any real understanding of the anatomy of Australian history. As Twain wrote at the end of the nineteenth century, Australian history represents a strange narrative so full of 'incongruities and contradictions and incredibilities' that many of

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36 See for example Peter Charlton, *The Unnecessary War: Island Campaigns of the South-West Pacific 1944-45* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1983), and Max Hastings' chapter 'Australians: "Bludging" and "Mopping Up"', in idem, *Nemesis: The Battle for Japan, 1944-45* (London: HarperCollins, 2007), 363-72.

37 Hastings, *Nemesis*, 45, 363.

38 Evans, 'Island-Consciousness and Australian Strategic Culture', 21-3, and *The Tyranny of Dissonance: Australia's Strategic Culture and Way of War, 1901-2005* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2005).



its essential truths are either concealed or simply appear to be 'the most beautiful lies'. Writing over sixty years later, the English writer, Mackenzie, reached a similar conclusion, reflecting: 'To see that Australia is a set of paradoxes is, perhaps, the beginning of an ability to understand it.'<sup>39</sup> In perhaps no other sphere are the observations of Twain and MacKenzie more pertinent than when applied to the history of Australia's defence. In the face of such historical paradox, critics are correct to point out that Australia possesses 'a martial history of symbolism and emotional significance, without experience in applying the first principle of the martial arts, which is that of self-defence' and that 'defence has been the empty core of Australian nationhood'.<sup>40</sup>

The legacy of disputation over defence policy endures today even in an age when the volunteer principle clearly defines the Australian profession of arms. The most recent manifestation of political discord was the sharp division between the Coalition government and the Labor opposition over involvement in the Iraq War between 2003 and 2007.<sup>41</sup> In the second decade of the twenty-first century, then, Australia possesses a strategic culture which, while it embraces a naval tradition and an expeditionary military ethos, lacks the essential maritime identity required by a people who occupy an island—an identity that might help to ensure a more coherent approach to formulating the nation's defence policy.<sup>42</sup> Yet, for all the paradoxes and divisions in defence policy, perhaps the greatest barrier to Australia developing the kind of maritime strategy it will require in the twenty-first century is as much cultural as it is political. Nowhere is this more evident than in representations of the country's literature and art.

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39 Mark Twain, *Following the Equator* (New York: National Geographic Adventure Classics, 2010 edn; originally published in 1897), 168; Jeanne MacKenzie, *Australian Paradox* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1962), 11. See also Kaye Harman (ed.), *Australia Brought to Book: Responses to Australia by Visiting Writers, 1836-1939* (Balgowah, NSW: Boobook Publications, 1985).

40 Grant, *The Australian Dilemma*, 80; John Hirst, *Australia's Democracy*, 295.

41 For perspectives on the political division over Iraq see Mark Latham, *The Latham Diaries* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005), 183-258.

42 See Evans, *The Tyranny of Dissonance*, 23-51, 95-104; 'The Withheld Self: The Impact of National Culture on the Development of Australian Maritime Thought', in Jones (ed.), *A Maritime School of Strategic Thought for Australia*, 37-46; and 'The Challenge of Australian Maritime Identity', *Quadrant*, November 2013, 22-30.

### **Australia's National Culture: The Challenge of the Cult of the Inland**

The way in which a country's literary culture develops plays a vital role in determining a nation's sense of political identity and self-consciousness. Australia is no exception to this rule. As Vance Palmer wrote in the *Melbourne Age* in February 1935:

We have to discover ourselves—our character, the character of the country, the particular kind of society that has developed here—and this can only be done through the searching explorations of literature. It is one of the limitations of the human mind that it can never grasp things fully till they are presented through the medium of art.<sup>43</sup>

Palmer was reflecting on the reality that for much of Australia's existence there has been a division in artistic culture between universalists who have upheld Britishness and European ideas, and nationalists who have upheld Australianness and local ideas.<sup>44</sup> With physical security guaranteed by British warships, Australian settlement was free to concentrate on the interior geography of a vast continent. In the nineteenth century, the major concern of the colonists became the struggle to master the land. As T. Inglis Moore has written, in the course of the nineteenth century there developed in Australia a spiritual geography of landscape leading to 'a literature born of the land'.<sup>45</sup> He notes:

[The land] has not only been the background of the nation's story, but also the home of its heroes, the maker of its ideals, and the breeding ground of its myths. It has even developed amongst a people eminently secular and pragmatic, an unexpected strain of mysticism that has produced a mystique of the bush.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, it is no accident that in 1973, Geoffrey Serle chose to call his important study of artistic creativity in Australian culture, *From Deserts*

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43 Vance Palmer, 'The Future of Australian Literature', *Age*, Melbourne, 9 February 1935, 6.

44 See Gregory Melleuish, 'Randolph Hughes Versus Percy Stephensen; An Australian Cultural Battle of the 1930s', 257-77, in *idem*, *The Power of Ideas*.

45 T. Inglis Moore, *Social Patterns in Australian Literature* (Berkeley, CA: UCLA Press, 1971), 329.

46 *Ibid.*, 68.

*the Prophets Come*. The line was drawn from A.D. Hope's poem 'Australia', the quintessential literary description of Australia as 'the last of lands' but one from whose alien shores and inland sands, a new people might emerge.<sup>47</sup> As poet Bernard O'Dowd was to write, Australia's immense landscape was 'the scroll on which we are to write'.<sup>48</sup>

The sense of security that emanated from a global combination of British mastery of the seas and the intellectual supremacy of ideas of the European Enlightenment fuelled a fierce quest for a distinctive national identity. It is another one of the great paradoxes of Australian history that British seaborne security and European universalism came to encourage an inward-looking cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century. Indeed, between settlement in 1788 and the consolidation of the self-governing colonies in the 1880s, Australia underwent what Melleuish describes as a 'transformation from an outward-looking and dynamic view of the world and historical processes to one that saw the world in static and national terms'.<sup>49</sup>

Under such conditions, it was not mariners but explorers such as Sturt, Leichardt and Burke and Wills who captured the Australian imagination.<sup>50</sup> Echoing T. Inglis Moore, Alan Moorehead notes that the explorers elevated their trials with an implacable interior into 'a mystique, a cult of barrenness and asceticism'.<sup>51</sup> This mystique of the Australian landscape was reflected in the books of Marcus Clarke and Rolf Boldrewood and later further elevated by the bohemian writers and journalists of *The Bulletin*. Australian literary culture celebrated the struggle with the land as symbolised by convicts, pioneers, bushrangers, diggers and drovers. By the 1890s, Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson emerged as the two great poets who would immortalise the bush as a Lost Eden and the bushman as the true Australian national type. Joseph Furphy's 1903 novel, *Such is*

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47 Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia, 1788-1972* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1973), 7; A.D. Hope, 'Australia', in Chris Wallace-Crabbe (ed.), *The Golden Apples of the Sun I: Twentieth Century Australian Poetry* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1980), 42.

48 Bernard O'Dowd, 'The Bush', quoted in Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, 208-09.

49 Melleuish, 'Meta-History Narratives in Nineteenth Century Australia', 224.

50 Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, 7.

51 Alan Moorehead, *Cooper's Creek: Tragedy and Adventure in the Australian Outback* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1965), 10-11.

*Life*, about rural workers in the Riverina of New South Wales, is perhaps the most celebrated example of the bush genre in Australian literature.<sup>52</sup> Those few Australian writers with any interest in the sea such as the poets Roderic Quinn, John Blight and Edward James Brady could not counterbalance Australia's overwhelming literary preoccupation with its landscape. One looks in vain through Australian literature to find a parallel for Herman Melville's celebratory remark: 'Meditation and water are wedded forever.'<sup>53</sup> At best, Australia is what one writer has called a 'veranda country', in which experience of life on the coastal fringe rather than a genuine sea-consciousness, reigns supreme.<sup>54</sup>

As it was in literature so too was it in art. The seascapes of painter John Passmore have never matched the popularity of the Heidelberg painters of the 1880s. Like their literary counterparts, artists such as Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder idealised the landscape, the outback and the pioneer spirit. Australia's Heidelberg School celebrated 'a visual continentalism' that complemented and reinforced the literary impact of the writers and poets, so infusing a powerful imagery into Australian patriotism.<sup>55</sup> It was the romanticised interior that came to inform the works of later painters such as Russell Drysdale and Sidney Nolan and writers such as Patrick White, Ion Idriess and Russel Ward. For example, White's novel, *Voss*, based on the explorer Ludwig Leichardt, is characterised by a striking imagery of landscape in which, 'the great empty mornings were terrible until the ball of the sun was tossed skyward'.<sup>56</sup>

The victory of an inward-looking, nationalist paradigm in Australia's literary culture and sense of identity became increasingly evident in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, in some respects it is possible to detect in some Australian writing an antagonism toward the sea. In the 1940 poem, 'Underground' by Ian Mudie, the land is deliberately celebrated over the sea:

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52 Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, 63.

53 Isham, *Image of the Sea*, 203.

54 Philip Drew, *The Coast Dwellers: Australians Living on the Edge* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1994), xiii, 34-5.

55 Broeze, *Island-Nation*, 224; Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, 77-8; Andrew Sayers, *Australian Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 81-9.

56 See Brian Kiernan, 'The Novels of Patrick White', in Geoffrey Dutton (ed.), *The Literature of Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1964), 461-84.

Deep flows the river,  
deep as our roots reach for it;  
feeding us, angry and striving  
against the blindness  
ship-fed seas bring us  
from colder waters.<sup>57</sup>

For Mudie, it is the outback, not the ocean, that grips the minds of Australians 'like heart and blood, from heat to mist'.<sup>58</sup> As a member of the nationalist Jindyworobak literary movement, Mudie viewed the sea as alien and representative of an unwelcome pseudo-Europeanism and transplanted Englishness. What has been styled 'Jindyworobak nativism' assumed a political dynamic in the 1930s and 1940s as writers and poets affiliated with, or influenced by, the movement such as Rex Ingamells, Percy Stephensen and Roland Roberts 'came close to, or participated in, an organic [Australian] nationalism that was often at loggerheads with a more internationalist vision concomitant with the Allied effort in both World Wars'.<sup>59</sup>

The Jindyworobaks were strongly influenced by D.H. Lawrence's 1923 novel, *Kangaroo*—a book which remains unrivalled in its brisk evocation of the connection between landscape's 'spirit of place' and the evolution of a national psyche in Australia.<sup>60</sup> For Lawrence, the Australian preoccupation with a harsh, alien landscape characterised by 'grey, charred bush ... so phantom like, so ghostly, with its tall, pale trees, and many dead trees, like corpses' encouraged a metaphysical dread in the form of a withered and empty space in the national consciousness that created 'a profound Australian indifference'. Australia's British colonisers were for Lawrence, like souls without passports, mere 'hollow stalks of corn' confronted by the immensity of the continent. Lawrence detected a 'withheld self' in the Australian psyche that symbolised an inner struggle to reconcile with the natural environment.<sup>61</sup>

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57 Quoted in Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, 133.

58 See Evans, 'Island-Consciousness and Australian Strategic Culture', 21-3.

59 Nicholas Birns, 'Australian Poetry from Kenneth Slessor to Jennifer Strauss', in Nicholas Birns and Rebecca McNeer (eds), *A Companion to Australian Literature since 1900* (Rochester, NY: Camden Press, 2007), 184; 173-89.

60 D.H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985 edn).

61 *Ibid.*, 36, 146, 379. For an analysis of the significance of *Kangaroo* see John Pringle, *The Australian Accent* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), 26, 35, 37.

It was to overcome this sense of alienation that the Jindyworobaks insisted that the Great South Land should roll itself inward like an antipodean hedgehog or porcupine. As Percy Stephensen put it, Australia needed to concentrate on assimilating a national cultural identity from 'the Spirit of the Land, the *genius loci*'.<sup>62</sup> Stephensen's 1936 polemic, *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*, has been described as 'probably the most influential piece of critical writing in the [inter-war] period'.<sup>63</sup> Elements of Jindyworobak nativism with its rejection of cosmopolitanism and fierce embrace of Australia's landscape are reflected in the work of such literary figures such as Xavier Herbert, Judith Wright, A.D. Hope and, more recently, Les Murray.<sup>64</sup> It was Hope who memorably dismissed Australia's cities as 'teeming sores' and their inhabitants as 'second hand Europeans [who] pullulate timidly on the edge of alien shores'.<sup>65</sup>

In artistic terms, then, an inward-looking, nativist spirit has dominated much of Australian cultural life. Even the evolution of a body of cosmopolitan authors such as Miles Franklin, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Patrick White, Peter Carey, Thomas Keneally, and David Malouf—all of whom demonstrate interest in the integration of the national and the universal—has never extended to oceanic themes or the reasons for the absence of an Australian maritime consciousness. It is also striking that Christopher Koch's insightful novels about Australians confronting violence and war in Southeast Asia are devoid of any sense of maritime milieu. In some ways, the writer who is nearest to the sea is the West Australian, Tim Winton, whose books often concern the interface of ocean and land. Yet, on close examination, Winton's works are more properly described as coastal and regional rather than maritime and national in spirit.<sup>66</sup>

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62 Percy Stephensen, *The Publicist* (Sydney, The Publicist Publishing Co, 1938), 8, and Gary Clark, 'Environmental Themes in Australian Literature', 429-43 in Birns and McNeer (eds), *A Companion to Australian Literature since 1900*, 429-43.

63 John Barnes, *The Writer in Australia: A Collection of Literary Documents, 1856 to 1964* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969), 165; P.R. Stephensen, *The Foundations of Culture in Australia: An Essay towards National Self-Respect* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986 edn).

64 Clark, 'Environmental Themes in Australian Literature', 435.

65 Hope, 'Australia', in Wallace-Crabbe (ed.), *The Golden Apples of the Sun*, 42.

66 See Lyn Jacobs, 'Tim Winton and West Australian Writing', in Birns and McNeer (eds), *A Companion to Australian Literature since 1900*, 307-34.

Despite a greater integration of universal and national themes, then, much of Australian literature continues to be focused inwards to the land and the self rather than outwards to the sea and the world. This tendency has not passed unnoticed by foreign literary observers. As the English writer Matthew Parris observed in 2010, the Australian island-continent remains a Prospero's kingdom, 'but a kingdom where the spirits [of the land] have not quite been brought under control'.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the French scholar, Jean-François Vernay, believes that a sense of physical isolation remains central to the Australian psyche. As he puts it:

A key element of the Australian psyche is having the feeling of living on the margin of society, with the geographic centre an unwelcoming desert and the identity centre being somewhere else in some far-away otherness. There is a diffused feeling of belonging without really belonging to a place, a land, a people.<sup>68</sup>

It is this insular national spirit which now contends against the rise of globalisation and its impact on Australia. It is to this interplay and, its potential impact on any development of a future maritime strategic consciousness, that we must now turn our attention.

### **A Third Way: The Requirement for a 21st Century Australian Maritime Strategy**

In 2005, the Chief of the Royal Australian Navy, Vice Admiral Chris Ritchie, observed that Australia had faltered in fulfilling Creswell's 1902 belief that 'in Australia our seamen [will be] our frontiersmen'.<sup>69</sup> Ritchie noted the ambiguous place of the sea in Australian national life and called for a cultural re-examination of Australia's insular, land-based identity:

The 'bush myth' which has ... coloured so much of Australian culture and tradition, is more concerned with looking inwards than outwards. Whatever its former value, such a vision is

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67 Matthew Parris, 'Sleight of Land', *The Weekend Australian Magazine* (27-28 February 2010), 40-1.

68 Jean-François Vernay, *The Great Australian Novel: A Panorama*, trans by Marie Ramsland (Melbourne: Brolga Publishing, 2009), 7.

69 Vice Admiral Chris Ritchie, 'Foreword', in Stevens and Reeve (eds), *The Navy and the Nation*, x.

hardly enough to sustain a modern progressive nation, one which seeks to play a leadership role in its region and actively support the maintenance of a peaceful global community.<sup>70</sup>

Despite Ritchie's lament it is unknown whether, as a people, Australians in the twenty-first century have any greater interest in maritime affairs than in the past. There are, however, some contemporary signs of a greater outward awareness that might signal a potential for a gradual change in national consciousness. The Australia of 2013 is not the polity of dependent colonial self-governments in 1883; nor is it the tentative Federal experiment of 1913—little more than a decade old and on the brink of plunging into a disastrous world war. Still less is Australia the inward-driven, tariff-laden and protectionist country of 1983 agonising over international economic competition and on the cusp of declining into Paul Keating's 'banana republic'.

On the contrary, the Australia of 2013 is a product of over thirty years of profound socio-economic revolution involving an embrace of both globalisation and free market liberalism.<sup>71</sup> In combination, these forces have created a more confident country that increasingly balances universalism against insularity. As Paul Kelly has observed, the struggle to free the Australian economy from the Federation-era 'Australian Settlement' that enshrined protectionism, the White Australia policy and security dependence was at its heart a struggle between contending visions of past and future. Between the 1980s and the first decade of the new century, the 'internationalist rationalists' of free-market reform triumphed over the 'sentimentalist traditionalists' of state-control bringing Australia into a new age of prosperity and economic growth.<sup>72</sup>

Australia's developmental statistics over three decades are certainly impressive. Between 1990 and 2010, the Australian economy tripled in size. Per capita GDP grew by 182 per cent following the reform and internationalisation of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s—a process driven by the combined forces of information technology, the rise of Asia and a domestic minerals boom. Today, with a population of 23 million,

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70 Ibid., ix-x

71 See Ian W. McLean, *Why Australia Prospered: The Shifting Sources of Economic Growth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), chapters 9 and 10.

72 Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, 2; Michael Wesley, *There Goes the Neighbourhood: Australia and the Rise of Asia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011).



Australia possesses the thirteenth largest and, the seventh most developed, economy in the world. The country is a member of the exclusive Group of Twenty (G20), of the East Asia Summit and is a foundation member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. In 2008, the Australian dollar emerged to become the sixth most traded currency on world markets and, on current trends, by 2025 Australia's per average real income is expected to be \$73,000 per person putting the country into the world's top ten country index.<sup>73</sup>

Such global outwardness in economics and trade might be expected to encourage a stronger Australian maritime school of thought. Yet the Australia that is moving into the second decade of twenty-first century remains in its spirit a deeply contradictory country. It is a polity of 'insular internationalists'—wealthy and lucky, but also complacent and incurious about its future status.<sup>74</sup> In a philosophical sense, at least, it is possible to suggest that little has changed in the Australian character since D.H. Lawrence claimed to have detected a 'profound indifference' in the Australian personality. Indeed, in 1997, in an echo of Lawrence, Stephen Fitzgerald wrote of the combination of insularity, mental lassitude and 'prodigal excess' of Australia's materialism in which the 'lazy country' becomes a natural outgrowth of the 'lucky country'.<sup>75</sup>

The Gillard Labor Government's October 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* illustrates the country's continuing insularity of spirit. In a document of over three hundred pages there is an astonishing lack of consideration of the maritime implications of deeper Australian engagement with Asia. However, the White Paper does contain one striking statement: 'As the global centre of gravity shifts to our region, the tyranny of distance is being replaced by the prospects of proximity.'<sup>76</sup>

Although the White Paper fails to investigate the implications of this statement, historically, the 'prospects of proximity' with Asia have never

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73 See John Edwards, *Quiet Boom: How the Long Economic Upswing is Changing Australia and its Role in the World* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, Lowy Institute Paper 14); Wesley, *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, 11-27; and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, October 2012), chapters 4, 5.

74 Wesley, *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, 124, 128-36.

75 Stephen Fitzgerald, *Is Australia an Asian Country? Can Australia Survive in an East Asian Future?* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 10-11.

76 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, 1, 105.

been comfortable for Australia. It is no accident that aspects of an older Jindyworobak-style national insularity remain strong—most strikingly in defence policy—which has struggled to keep abreast of unprecedented socio-economic change between the late 1980s and the first decade of the new millennium.

In a striking paradox, in 1987—even as Australia had begun the process of opening its political economy to the world—an insular and continentalist doctrine of Defence of Australia (DOA) was proclaimed by the Hawke Government. The new policy was an introspective posture which flew in the face of an emerging global era and the waning of the Cold War. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to suggest that, in some respects, the DOA doctrine of the 1980s and 1990s seemed to be a strategic confluence of ideals drawn from Jindyworobak nativism, literary continentalism and the spirit of John ‘Black Jack’ McEwen’s economic protectionism. It is revealing that in 2003, a Chief of the Army referred to DOA strategists as being ‘Henry Lawsons’ who contended against expeditionary advocates who represented ‘Banjo Patersons’.<sup>77</sup> Under DOA doctrine, official strategy adhered to the traditional view of Australia as an Antipodean Eden but one perched uncomfortably close to the edge of an alien Orient. Australian strategy thus became focused on denying the ‘sea-air gap’ to a northern enemy with Suharto’s regime in Indonesia seen as a potential threat to national security.<sup>78</sup>

The ADF’s military’s force projection capacity was stripped away in favour of a geographical ‘porcupine’ defence strategy based on land-based aircraft and submarines. In the course of the 1980s, the last Australian aircraft carrier was decommissioned and amphibious warfare capability all but eliminated—making the Royal Australian Navy less a blue-water than a brown-water force. The focus on creating an inward-looking ADF resulted in an army—previously renowned for its expeditionary skill and valour—coming to resemble a strange cross between a Home Guard and a Long Range Desert Group. Military exercises in the wastes of northern Australia took place against imaginary incursions by thinly-disguised

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77 Personal communication to the author from Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, Chief of the Army, 3 April 2003. This literary allusion is also attributed to Lieutenant General Des Mueller, Vice Chief of the Defence Force, 2000-02.

78 Commonwealth of Australia, *The Defence of Australia 1987* and *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service 1987 and 1994 respectively).

Indonesian forces—who in the late 1980s and early 1990s masqueraded as Musorians and Kamarians—fictions necessary to preserve diplomatic niceties with Jakarta.<sup>79</sup>

None of the adherents of DOA doctrine appeared to have read Lieutenant General Sir Sydney Rowell's perceptive memoir, *Full Circle*, in which the author recalls how, in early 1942, he educated the Americans about the way in which Australia's unforgiving northern geography would deal with potential invaders. Asked by an American general what he would do if the Japanese landed divisions at Broome, Rowell replied laconically that he would send for the Australian Army's Salvage Corps 'to pick up the bones [because] there is no water between Broome and Alice Springs'.<sup>80</sup> Rowell's wisdom was lost on later generations. As a result, the inward-looking DOA doctrine of the 1980s and 1990s was decoupled from foreign policy and represented the antithesis of a maritime strategic outlook. Strategic doctrine insisted on viewing an economically-growing Southeast Asia as a potential military enemy to be feared rather than as a security partner to be embraced. In this way, the combination of moat mentality and fortress defence that prevailed in late twentieth century defence policy recalled the nostalgia of the 'Australian Settlement'—an outdated political edifice that was disappearing like sand through fingers under the impact of economic reforms. As Alan Robertson remarked, 'if Australia is ever to develop an appropriate strategy, it will need to get rid of its unwarranted fears of a bogus invasion and come to terms with its maritime geography'.<sup>81</sup>

Since the turn of the century, as globalisation and the rise of Asia's economies became the economic sinews of a new Australian prosperity, traditional defence policy imperatives have begun to obsolesce. This reality was clearly recognised by John Howard who, between 2001 and 2007 promoted a broader defence outlook and sought to develop the geopolitical concept of Australia inhabiting a 'special intersection' between a European history and an Asian geography in which a 'balanced

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79 See Michael Evans, *The Role of the Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, Working Paper No 101, 1998), and 'Unarmed Prophets: Amphibious Warfare in Australian Military Thought', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute* 25: 1 (January-March 1999), 10-19.

80 S.F. Rowell, *Full Circle* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1974), 101.

81 Robertson, *Centre of the Ocean World*, 5.

alignment of Australia's global and regional engagement [is] a measure of our strategic maturity'. Much of Howard's approach was endorsed by the policy direction adopted by the post-2007 Rudd Government.<sup>82</sup>

The logical extension of such 'strategic maturity' is that traditional forms of strategy based on contending concepts of continental defence and expeditionary warfare require careful integration into a new maritime strategy. This is a process not without inherent tensions. The adherents of the continental 'Defence of Australia' doctrine are often prone to cite the concept of defending the country's northern 'sea-air gap', as evidence of their maritime credentials.<sup>83</sup> Yet, a continental 'moat defence' cannot be equated with a genuine maritime strategic outlook and it is increasingly evident that any form of continental defence is inadequate given the unpredictability and fluidity of contemporary global security conditions.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, expeditionary warfare advocates tend to uphold the maritime character of 'overseas' Australian military operations. Yet, with the exceptions of the South West Pacific campaign and the East Timor intervention, the 'overseas' components of Australia's expeditionary contributions have not been multi-service maritime operations. On the contrary, most operations have been overwhelmingly land-centric in character.<sup>85</sup> While the Australian strategic tradition of expeditionary warfare continues to remain extremely important in upholding a favourable Western international order, it should never be mistaken for an *ersatz* national maritime strategy.

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82 For Howard's approach to defence and security policy see Michael Evans, 'Defending the "Special Intersection"', in Keith Windschuttle, David Martin Jones and Ray Evans (eds), *The Howard Era* (Sydney: Quadrant Books, 2009), 278-306, and Benjamin Schreer, *The Howard Legacy: Australian Military Strategy, 1996-2007* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008), chapters, 4, 6. For the Rudd Government's approach see 'National Security Statement to the Parliament by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Kevin Rudd, MP', 4 December 2009, at [www.pm.au/current.news/index.cfm](http://www.pm.au/current.news/index.cfm).

83 See for example Hugh White, *Beyond the Defence of Australia: Finding a New Balance in Australian Strategic Policy* (Sydney: Lowy Institute Paper 16, 2006), *passim*.

84 Cordner, 'An Australian Perspective: Does Australia Need a Maritime Strategy?', 56-7.

85 In the decade 1990-2000, of 22 operations undertaken by the ADF, land forces predominated in twenty of them. See Michael Evans, *From Deakin to Dibb: The Army and the Making of Australian Strategy in the 20th Century* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre Working Paper No. 113, 2001), 40-1, and 'Overcoming the Creswell-Foster Divide in Australian Strategy: The Challenge for Twenty-First Century Policy Makers', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61: 2 (June 2007), 193-214.

The above problems aside, the main philosophical change in Australian defence policy over the past fifteen years has been the gradual realisation by policy-makers that the nation must seek to come to terms with its maritime strategic environment. The process of how this can best be achieved, however, has been contested and subject to problems of funding and political events. Maritime strategic concepts first began to emerge in the late 1990s and were validated by the experience of East Timor.<sup>86</sup> Yet, despite a major parliamentary inquiry into the subject, their official importance appeared to wane after 2001 in the face of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Only since 2009, in the face of the ongoing rise of Asia and the winding down of major Western operations in the Middle East and South West Asia, have maritime issues once again assumed primacy in Australia's strategic debate.<sup>87</sup>

Since 2011, both the Chiefs of the Navy and the Army have called for the creation of a robust Australian maritime strategy. In August 2012, the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Ray Griggs argued that both of Australia's traditional schools of strategy, continental defence and expeditionary warfare are inadequate since both 'fundamentally ignore the value of the sea to Australia'.<sup>88</sup> He went on to call for an integrated maritime approach:

There is, in my view, a third way—a maritime perspective, or school if you wish, which is rooted in the geo-strategic reality of our national situation. I reiterate that when I say maritime I use the term in its broadest context. It is a view

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86 See Michael Evans, *Developing Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy: Lessons from the Ambon Disaster of 1942* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre Study Paper No. 303, 2000), 70-88.

87 Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia's Maritime Strategy* (Canberra: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, June 2004). For post-2009 developments see the essays in Jones (ed.), *A Maritime School of Thought for Australia: Perspectives*; Jack McCaffrie and Chris Rahman, 'Australia's 2009 Defense White Paper: A Maritime Focus for Uncertain Times', *Naval War College Review* 63: 1 (Winter 2010); Albert Palazzo, Anthony Trentini, Jonathan Hawkins and Malcolm Brailey, *Projecting Force: The Australian Army and Maritime Strategy* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2010); Major General Rick Burr, 'Australia's Future Amphibious Capability', *RUSI Quarterly* 38 (Winter 2012): 30-41; John Blaxland, 'Game-Changer in the Pacific: Surprising Options Open Up with the New Multi-Purpose Maritime Capability', *Security Challenges* 9:3 (2013), 31-41.

88 Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, 'The Navy's Role in the Maritime Century', speech to the Lowy Institute, Sydney, 17 August 2012, at [www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/CN\\_Lowy](http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/CN_Lowy).

which incorporates all the elements of military power—it is a view that integrates all dimensions of national power.<sup>89</sup>

Griggs' view of a third way in Australian strategy has been implicitly endorsed by his colleague, the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison. In a series of important speeches between 2011 and 2013, Morrison called on Australian policy-makers to recognise the intrinsic strategic value of the sea. In one address he stated:

Let me make two definitive statements. Firstly, Australia needs its ADF more than it needs its navy, its army or its air force ... Secondly, the foundation to Australia's national security is a maritime strategy ... But a maritime strategy is not a naval strategy, it's a joint, indeed an inter-agency, and perhaps coalition strategy and Army has an essential role to play if that strategy is to continue to have relevance in the coming decades.<sup>90</sup>

Although the Chief of Army did not renounce the long expeditionary heritage of the land force he was careful to emphasise that force modernisation through the amphibious-oriented Plan Beersheba—a scheme to field three similarly-organised multi role combat brigades—was fully focused on making the Army as an essential component in a maritime strategy. Morrison described Australia as 'a maritime nation with a continental culture' and pondered the 'cognitive failure' of those Australian strategic thinkers who relied on a narrow continental mindset to ensure national security.<sup>91</sup>

The views of Griggs and Morrison reflect the reality that the strategic direction and force structure imperatives of recent defence documents including two Defence White Papers in 2009 and 2013 respectively have been marked by a steady abandonment of DOA principles.<sup>92</sup> In 2013, even

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89 Ibid. See also Griggs, 'A Maritime School of Strategic Thought for Australia' in Jones (ed.), *A Maritime School of Strategic Thought for Australia*, 9-18.

90 Lieutenant General David Morrison, 'Address to the Royal Australian Navy Maritime Conference', Sydney, 31 January 2012 at [www/army.gov.au](http://www/army.gov.au).

91 Lieutenant General David Morrison, 'Address to the Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Conference' 7 October 2013, at [www/army.gov.au](http://www/army.gov.au); and 'The Role of the Army in a Maritime Strategy', speech 26 March 2013, reproduced in *United Service: Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales* 64: 3 (September 2013), 9-14.

92 Commonwealth of Australia, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030 and Defence White Paper 2013* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2009 and 2013 respectively).

the Royal Australian Air Force, long a repository of continental defence thinking, held a symposium sponsored by the Chief of the Air Force exploring the theme, 'Air Power in a National Maritime Strategy'. In the ADF, long-term capability acquisition has concentrated on re-equipping the Navy for a larger blue-water role—including a welcome return to capital shipping in the form of large helicopter carriers. The combination of air warfare destroyers, landing helicopter docks for the RAN and a new combined arms amphibious approach by the Army through Plan Beersheba can be seen as representing the beginnings of generational change towards the use of the sea in Australian strategic thinking.<sup>93</sup>

The Gillard Government's January 2013 national security strategy reaffirmed the need for a maritime perspective, stating, 'we are entering a new national security era in which the economic and strategic change occurring in our region will be the most significant influence on our national security environment and policies'.<sup>94</sup> Following on from the national security statement, the May 2013 Defence White Paper states that 'Australia's geography requires a maritime strategy'. Such a strategy is seen as essential in 'deterring attacks against Australia and contributing to the security of our immediate neighbourhood and the wider region'.<sup>95</sup> These statements seem encouraging but one needs to exercise caution and avoid confusing declaratory aspirations with concrete policy development. After all, the commitment to a maritime strategy is occurring against a bleak background of \$5.5 billion in cuts to the Australian defence budget—the worst since the late 1930s. Consequently, it remains deeply uncertain whether the political economy of defence will match the ADF's strategic ambitions over the next decade.<sup>96</sup>

Funding difficulties, however, have one clear benefit: they reinforce the need for hard-headed thinking on defence priorities. Australia needs

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93 See Michael Evans, 'The Essential Service: The Future of the Australian Army in a Global Age', *Quadrant*, October 2012, 10-19.

94 Commonwealth of Australia, *Strong and Secure: A Strategy for Australia's National Security* (Canberra: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2013), ii.

95 Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2013), 28, 58.

96 For critiques see Harry Gelber, 'Australia's Geo-Political Strategy and the Defence Budget', *Quadrant* (June 2012), 11-19, and Major General Jim Molan, Rtd, 'Why Our Defence Force Faces Terminal Decline', *Quadrant* (March 2013), 8-15; and James Brown and Rory Medcalf, 'Fixing Australia's Incredible Defence Policy', 8 October 2013, at [www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/fixing-australias-incredible-defence-policy](http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/fixing-australias-incredible-defence-policy).

to return to first principles on defence and view itself less as a continental land mass than as a medium maritime power whose area of security stretches far out to seaward. A future Australian maritime strategy needs to aim at using the sea to achieve an acceptable degree of autonomy—not self-reliance—within the framework of the US Alliance. Canberra needs to abandon the pernicious fantasy that self-reliance can be achieved with a defence budget of less than 2 per cent of GDP. In the future, in place of self-reliance, a doctrine of defence sufficiency conditioned by fiscal reality must be adopted. A sufficiency doctrine means that ambitious visions of large numbers of submarines and the notion of a hundred Joint Strike Fighters—both of which are conditioned by exaggerated concerns over defending Australia’s enormous but—à la Rowell—largely inhospitable geography must be pared back. As a medium power Australia needs to keep under its national control sufficient joint forces to uphold its sovereignty, rather than its geography, and ‘to initiate and sustain coercive actions whose outcome will be the preservation of its vital interests’.<sup>97</sup>

Given the requirements of a doctrine of sufficiency for sovereign interests rather than self-reliance for continental defence, the most useful joint force structure for a maritime medium-power concerned is one that emphasises balance, versatility and flexible capability. Accordingly, there should be a premium on possessing a variety of surface vessels, a combined arms land force with enough amphibious manoeuvre expertise for executing limited force projection. The ADF should also seek to possess a powerful high-technology air combat capability and a small but highly effective, as opposed to a large and unaffordable, submarine fleet.<sup>98</sup> Given the combination of Australia’s limited defence resources, the need for a doctrine of sufficiency and the archipelagic realities of its immediate region, it makes eminent sense for the ADF to concentrate on mastering the techniques of littoral warfare—the balanced action of land, sea and air forces. An Australian approach to littoral warfare should emphasise a manoeuvre philosophy and logistical endurance alongside an understanding of how strategic reach across the immediate region will always be conditioned by operational austerity. It is difficult to disagree

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97 Richard Hill, *Medium Power Strategy Revisited* (Canberra, Sea Power Centre Working Paper No. 3, March 2000), 3. Hill concentrated on Australian requirements using approaches first outlined in his important study, *Maritime Strategy for Medium Powers* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

98 *Ibid.*, 17-21.



with the British strategist, Vice Admiral Hill's diagnosis on Australia's defence requirements delivered in 2000:

In the next two decades more emphasis can be foreseen on amphibious work in low intensity operations, and for this reason extra effort on this force and its protection, and de-emphasis on the submarine arm, is indicated. I would not support, for example any increase in submarine numbers beyond six.<sup>99</sup>

In any event, support for an effective Australian maritime strategy needs to be forged not simply by experts in Russell Offices but on the broader anvil of political reality and greater national security awareness. It is ingrained cultural traits and Lawrence's 'profound Australian indifference'—as much as problems in political economy and defence strategy—that loom as barriers to Australia's international future as a sea-conscious, outward-looking nation.

Any 'third way' maritime strategic approach, then, must be meticulously crafted to integrate the nation's fiscal reality, its Western historical identity and its American alliance with the benefits of a geographic location in the world's new Asian economic heartland. Such an outlook will require statesmanship, considerable debate on higher defence spending and a much deeper philosophical reflection on Australia's place in the twenty-first century world. And, unfortunately, the future will not wait for Australia in terms of either its demography or its strategy. Between 2010 and 2012 for the first time in Australia's immigration history, China and India rather than Britain, were the main sources of permanent residents and permanent migrants respectively.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, in 2014, the outlines of an 'Indo-Pacific strategic arc' are beginning to visibly emerge as the Indian Ocean surpasses the Atlantic to become the world's busiest trade corridor. Currently, one third of the world's bulk cargo and two-thirds of its oil passes through the Indonesian archipelago en route to North and South Asia.<sup>101</sup>

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99 Ibid., 22.

100 See Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, 98.

101 See Vijay Sakhuja, *Asian Maritime Power: Strategic Transactions China, India and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2011), x, 20-37.

In geopolitical terms, the shift of global economic power from West to East will make Australia a maritime strategic anchor that is situated adjacent to the vital trading routes from the Indian into the Pacific oceans. As Michael Wesley notes, while Australia has never considered itself a Southeast Asian country—and by extension a genuine maritime state—it may nonetheless become one in the eyes of large Asian countries such as China, Japan and India in the years to come. Such a development would fulfil Saul Bernard Cohen's 1957 prediction that Australia's geopolitical destiny has always been to become the southern anchor of offshore Asia. Revisiting this proposition forty years on in 1999, Cohen stated: 'The question now is not whether Australia *is* Asian but how it can best adjust to *being* Asian.'<sup>102</sup> Such Asian dynamics have been reinforced by the United States strategic 'rebalance' towards Asia—announced by President Barack Obama in the Australian parliament in November 2011—and symbolised by a US Marine Corps presence in Darwin. The American pivot reflects a distinct maritime flavour and future US force dispositions in Southeast Asia may require Australia to host US Navy vessels at HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia; to boost the air-maritime facilities of Cocos Island for allied use; and to pursue still deeper security co-operation with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>103</sup>

In the face of these developments, Australia's intellectual and policy elites have much challenging work to complete. They must begin the process of reconciling the nation's terrestrial cultural identity with a new maritime consciousness and attempt to construct a modern narrative of Australia as an island-continent connected to both globe and region. Given Australia's entrenched continental culture this is likely to be a formidable philosophical and political task indeed, but it is one that the

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102 Saul Bernard Cohen, 'Geography and Strategy: Their Interrelationships', *Naval War College Review* X: 4 (December 1957), 1-31, and 'Geopolitics in the New World Era: A New Perspective on an Old Discipline', in George J. Denko and William B. Wood (eds), *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the Twenty-first Century* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press), 15-48, at 30-1.

103 See David J. Berteau and Michael J. Green et al., *US Force Posture in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment* (Canberra: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, August 2012), 30-3; Jim Thomas, Zack Cooper and Iskander Rehman, *Gateway to the Indo-Pacific: Australian Defense Strategy and the Future of the Australia-US Alliance* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2013), especially chapters 2-3; and Michael Evans, 'American Defence Policy and the Challenge of Austerity: Some Implications for Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Economics* 30: 2 (August 2013), 171-6.

future national interest suggests must be undertaken with intellectual vigour and persistence. As one British historian of landscape, Simon Schama, has argued, a nation's identity is as much 'the work of the mind' as the disposition of natural geography. If this is so, then an enhanced appreciation of the value of the sea must become for a future generation of Australians 'a work of the mind'.<sup>104</sup>

The Australian public needs to appreciate its global maritime dependence and to understand that the European Union is Australia's largest trading partner; that the United States is the nation's largest investment partner as well as its vital military ally; and that Asia is Australia's largest export market. In regional maritime terms, Australians need to understand that their country is not so much separated by a *sea-air gap* as connected by a *sea-air-land bridge* to the Southeast Asian and Pacific archipelagos that encompass the Cocos in the north-west running through Indonesia and Papua New Guinea to the Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia in the north-east. In the future, Australians must learn to view the surrounding seas as highways to a better future not as moats to defend vanished eras; it is within maritime Southeast Asia and not against it, that Australia will find its best guarantee of security and prosperity.

In particular, the 'prospects of proximity' in Asia must be debated in a sophisticated geopolitical context. Australia's political and business leaders must seek to reassure the nation that long-term engagement and co-operation with the economic players of the dynamic Asia-Pacific Rim will be positive, enhancing both national prosperity and physical security in the twenty-first century. In maritime affairs, the challenge for Australians is one of vision: of developing an over-the-horizon perspective; to grasp that the future stability of the regional geopolitical architecture is directly related to sea-going trade and national prosperity. 'The starting point for such a project', writes Paul Battersby, 'is not simply to reconcile Australia's history with its geography but to *re-imagine* them'.<sup>105</sup> As part of any re-imagination of possibilities, the choice of futures before Australians need to be sketched clearly: to engage confidently with the maritime environment that links them to the wider world in order to prosper economically as a new 'greater Australia' or, to shrink inwards, to withhold engagement

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104 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana Press, 1995), 7.

105 Paul Battersby, *To the Islands: White Australians and the Malay Archipelago since 1788* (Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2007), 10. Emphasis added.

and retreat into an old 'little Australia' of insular continental geography. Since the latter choice is a prescription for autarky and national economic decline, some type of enhanced Australian maritime consciousness that embraces foreign policy, trade and security is likely to emerge in the decades ahead from a new synthesis of history, geography and national culture. But the speed of any such change and the philosophical contours of the journey remain impossible to predict.

### **Conclusion**

Australia's ambiguous relationship with its maritime environment dates from the arrival of the first Europeans on the 'fatal shore' of the vast and mysterious Great South Land. A maritime strategic consciousness was inhibited from the outset by dependence on British sea power and by the evolution of a distinctly inward-looking Australian culture focused on the mastery of continental geography. The 'free-spirit of the land' not the 'sea as history' became the tapestry for Australia's ideals and myths culminating in Federation in 1901 with its creed of 'a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation'.

The early Australian Commonwealth attempt to develop a strong Dominion navy rather than an army as the principal arm of its defence was short-lived and perished along with the youth of the Federation generation in the trenches of France. Subsequent generations of Australians have overwhelmingly viewed soldiers and expeditionary missions as the cultural symbols of national defence. At the same time, the tension between European history and Asian geography has seen Australian strategy oscillate between the binary opposites of expeditionary warfare and continental defence. While the Australian armed forces have possessed, and continues to possess, land, air and naval elements, it has taken a century to introduce the concept of maritime strategy into official thinking. There is much merit in Australia's continental and expeditionary warfare traditions being integrated through the agency of a 'third way maritime strategy'. Such a strategic approach is long overdue and would serve as a truly joint device; it would simultaneously capture single service capabilities and convert them into additives for the collective benefit of the ADF.

It is a counsel of despair to believe that the combination of the weight of history, the realities of political economy and public complacency about defence matters will conspire against the evolution of a 'third

way' Australian maritime strategy. To be sure, the task will rigorously test the 'work of the mind' of Australia's present and future political and military leaders. Much will depend on the ability of Australia's Anglo-Celtic democratic political system to absorb changes from being part of a vibrant, multicultural global civilisation and a more powerful Asian regionalism. Such absorption is not a question of abandoning a rich continental culture, but of adaptation to new conditions. Australia must develop a parallel maritime narrative to meet a changing present and an unfolding future – one which encompasses the oceans of Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific.

In the course of the twenty-first century, it is perfectly possible that the larger and more prosperous Australia becomes in terms of population size and material wealth from overseas trade, the greater its strategic awareness of the sea will also have to become—so giving real meaning to the words in the national anthem, 'girt by sea'. Finally, it is worth remembering that, for all the weight of an inland culture, the evolution of a national maritime character was the hope of one of the greatest founding fathers of early Australia, William Charles Wentworth. Writing in 1823, this colonial statesman called on a future Australia to become sea-minded and to develop itself as 'a proud Queen of Isles' and an 'Empress of the southern wave'.<sup>106</sup> In the first half of a twenty-first century marked by accelerating globalisation and the geopolitical rise of Asia, Australians must rediscover Wentworth's vision and become a people more imbued by 'the free-spirit of the sea'.

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106 From Wentworth's poem, *Australasia* in Andrew Tink, *William Charles Wentworth: Australia's Greatest Native Son* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009), 62-3.

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