



CHAPTER 1



THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS AMERICA'S EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN READINESS

Our experiences since September 11, 2001 — at home and abroad, in crisis-response operations and in combat — have earned today's Marines the right to stand proudly in the long and illustrious line of those who have gone before. In Al Anbar Province, we defeated a determined insurgency, proved to the world that Al Qaeda's violent extremism could be beaten, and helped shape a brighter future for the Iraqi people. We then rapidly re-deployed to Afghanistan, where 20,000 Marines continue to fight our Nation's battles in another tough "neighborhood," the Helmand Province. Just as important, is the fact that since September 11, 2001 the Navy-Marine Corps Team has been the Nations primary response force for the world outside Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 1990, the Marine Corps has conducted over 104 amphibious operations for over 122 missions throughout the world. These missions ranged from Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief in such varied places as New Orleans, Haiti and Pakistan; to Crisis Response in Lebanon and the Ivory Coast and Security Cooperation and Counter Terror operations in Latin American, Georgia, the Philippines, Horn of Africa and others. All of these took place while we were also operating in Iraq and Afghanistan. Tomorrow, America's Marines will continue to stand ready to respond to a broad spectrum of challenges and threats to our homeland, our citizens, our interests, and our allies and friends.

In short, we are *America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness*, organized, trained, and equipped to rapidly respond to crisis, yet also able to conduct discrete engagement activities with an expanding set of international partners or to merge with other members of the joint team to conduct major operations and campaigns. While we remain focused on combat operations in Afghanistan, we must consider the likely challenges of the future and how the Corps will meet them. The security environment is different from the world we knew prior to the attacks of September 2001 and through innovation and a willingness to adapt, so is the Marine Corps. As such the Marine Corps has developed certain critical specialized capabilities commonly referred to as "enablers." When provided to a general purpose force in relatively small proportions, enablers provide

that force the ability to execute a mission very different from its original purpose. As an example, providing trained advisors from the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group (MCTAG) to a general purpose force unit, enhances that unit's ability to conduct theater security cooperation on a wider scale. By making good use of our enablers, we increase the aggregate utility of standard Marine units to the geographic combatant commanders because they can be better task-organized for the precise responses required. We will ensure our Marines maintain the counter-insurgency skills they honed in Iraq and Afghanistan, while also staying true to our traditional expeditionary ethos. We will shape the Corps to be our Nation's "middleweight" force, optimized for forward-presence and rapid crisis response. We will be light enough to leverage the flexibility and capacity of amphibious ships, yet heavy enough to accomplish the mission when we get there. Sea-based forces, in particular, will be invaluable for discreet engagement activities, rapid crisis response, and sustainable power projection.

The current fiscal realities of the Nation will drive us to address difficult choices. At the end of the day, however, the Marine Corps will make the necessary adjustments in force structure, procurement objectives, and posture to continue to provide a viable, agile, and lethal fighting force capable across the range of military operations and able to operate in austere environments.

THE FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

As we look ahead, we see a world of instability, crisis, and conflict, characterized by poverty, competition for increasingly scarce resources, urbanization, over-



population, and extremism. Failed states or those that cannot adequately govern their territories can become safe havens for terrorists, insurgents, and criminals that threaten the United States and our allies.

Globalization will continue to increase interdependence among nations and place a premium on access to the global commons — sea, air, space, and cyber. Furthermore, the maritime and land domains converge in the littorals, where a majority of the world's population lives. These densely populated, turbulent urban littorals can, if left unattended, provide sanctuary for our adversaries.

The developing world is trending toward a more youthful demographic. Already pressurized by lack of education and job opportunities, the marked increase of radicalized young men and women in underdeveloped countries may swell the ranks of disaffected groups, generating even greater distinctions between the "haves" and "have-nots." At the same time, increasing competition for scarce natural resources — fossil fuels, food, and clean water — will likely lead to tension, crisis, and conflict.

The rise of new powers and shifting geopolitical relationships will create greater potential for competition and friction. The rapid proliferation of new technologies, cyber warfare and advanced precision weaponry amplify the risks and

empower state and non-state actors as never before.

These trends will influence significantly the future security environment and, in turn, the ever-changing character of warfare, which looks to be a “hybrid” mix of the conventional, unconventional, and irregular threats. The Secretary of Defense has described “hybrid” warfare as the “lethality of state conflict with the

fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular warfare, where Microsoft coexists with machetes, and stealth is met by suicide bombers.” This is the world in which we will live. This is where we will defend our citizens, our interests, and our allies and friends. This is where America’s Marines will operate.

THE ROLE OF THE MARINE CORPS

The Marine Corps is America’s Expeditionary Force in Readiness — a balanced air-ground-logistics team. We are forward deployed and forward engaged: shaping, training, deterring, and responding to all manner of crises and contingencies. We create options and decision space for our Nation’s leaders. Alert and ready, we respond to today’s crisis with today’s force... *Today!* Responsive and scalable, we team with other Services, interagency partners, and allies. We enable and participate in joint and combined operations of any magnitude. A middleweight force, we are light enough to get there quickly, but heavy enough to carry the day upon arrival, and capable of operating independent of local infrastructure. We operate throughout the spectrum of threats — irregular, hybrid, conventional — or the shady areas where they overlap. Marines are ready to respond whenever the Nation calls... wherever the President may direct.

– 35th Commandant’s Planning Guidance

The Marine Corps has long provided the Nation with a force adept at rapidly and effectively solving complex, multifaceted, and seemingly intractable security challenges — so much so that “Send in the Marines” connotes both a demand for action and a presumption of success. While the American public may not be conversant with what exactly the Marine Corps is or does, our fellow citi-

zens display an intuitive understanding that in times of trouble the Marines stand ready to do whatever has to be done. In recent years, their confidence has been reinforced by the performance of Marines in toppling the regime in Iraq, eradicating the ensuing endemic violence within that country’s Al Anbar Province, and in numerous humanitarian-assistance operations worldwide. This flexibility and

dependability has been captured in the expression, “No better friend, and no worse enemy.” While Marine Corps forces perform a variety of missions across the range of military operations, two stand at the forefront of what we do.

First, as part of the naval team we are partnered with the joint community to **assure littoral access** by bridging the difficult seam between operations at sea and on land. This is accomplished through a combination of activities ranging from military engagement, crisis response, and power projection — both “soft” and “hard.” This capability contributes to overcoming diplomatic, geographic, and military challenges to access and assists the Nation in achieving the strategic objectives of preventing conflict, protecting national interests, assuring access to engage partners, and defeating aggression.

Second, we **respond to crisis**, which includes fighting what have historically been called “small wars.” Responding to crisis — whether humanitarian assistance at one end of the spectrum or small wars at the other — has traditionally required a high degree of adaptability along with versatile, comprehensive skills. We have a long track record of success spanning the Barbary Wars and suppression of the slave trade in the early 19th century to the Al Anbar and Helmand provinces in the early 21st. These are complex problems for which purely military solutions will not suffice — because the fundamental causes of the conflict are often a complicated combination of security, economic, political, cultural, and social issues. Additionally, the USMC is tasked in several contingency plans to execute high-end conventional missions.

CONCEPTUAL BASIS FOR CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT



In meeting those missions, numerous strategy, policy, and concept documents guide future capability development. Within the framework provided by national strategy and Department of Defense publications — and consistent with the role articulated by the 35th Commandant — three key documents guide Marine Corps capability development. The first of these, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (the maritime strategy), was co-signed by the Chief of Naval Operations, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Commandant of the Coast Guard in 2007. The others include another tri-Service publication, *Naval Operations Concept 2010: Implementing the Maritime Strategy* (NOC), and our concurrently published *Marine Corps Operating Concepts* (MOC) Third Edition.

The maritime strategy notes that while the Sea Services perform many missions, six comprise our **core capabilities**. The NOC elaborates on these missions in a sequence designed to describe how globally dispersed naval forces con-

ducting an array of steady state activities designed to prevent war will, when required, come together to prevail in crisis response or combat operations. **Forward presence** enables building partner capacity while facilitating our ability to perform all other missions. **Maritime security** involves partnering with others to promote safety, economic security, and homeland defense in depth. **Humanitarian assistance and disaster response** applies naval power to mitigate human suffering. The ability to establish sea control and conduct **power projection** is essential to conducting expeditionary operations, which may take place under conditions ranging from permissive, to uncertain, to openly hostile. The ability of naval forces to perform all of these missions contributes to an expanded concept of **deterrence**.

The *Marine Corps Operating Concepts* provides our Service-specific conceptual basis for force development. It calls for embracing our enduring characteristics while evolving the capabilities necessary to ensuring the Marine Corps is relevant to the current and future security environment. Five major, inter-related Marine Corps tasks can be distilled from the content of the MOC.

- **Conduct military engagement.** The routine contact and interaction between individuals or elements of the Armed Forces of the United States and those of another nation's armed forces, or foreign and domestic civilian authorities or agencies builds trust and confidence, shares information, coordi-

nates mutual activities, and maintains influence. Our ability to conduct military engagement is essential to building partner capability and capacity, forging solid relationships across cultural barriers, and promoting diplomatic access. Sea-based military engagement also facilitates interaction while treading lightly on partner-nation sensibilities. Our forward posture is critical to providing effective engagement, as well as ensuring responsiveness.

- **Respond to crises**, whether natural or man-made. Crisis-response operations are conducted to alleviate or mitigate the impact of an incident or situation that threatens a nation, its territories, citizens, military forces, possessions or vital interests. Crises usually develop rapidly and create a condition of such diplomatic, economic, political, or military importance that the commitment of military forces and resources is warranted to achieve national objectives. In addition to those forces postured forward, a high state of expeditionary readiness is essential to rapidly project additional Marine Corps capabilities in response to crises.
- **Project power**, either "soft" or "hard" as the situation requires. Power projection comprises the ability of a nation to apply all or some of its elements of national power — political, economic, informational, or military — to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain forces in and from multiple dispersed locations to respond to crises, contrib-

ute to deterrence, and enhance regional stability. The Marine Corps leverages and contributes to a larger, “whole-of-government” system of power projection to support the range of military operations.

- **Conduct littoral maneuver**, the ability to transition ready-to-fight combat forces from the sea to the shore in order to achieve a position of advantage over the enemy. It can be applied to deny adversaries such as terrorists sanctuary, seize or destroy critical enemy capabilities, recover personnel or sensitive equipment, safeguard weapons of mass destruction or associated materials, seize infrastructure or lodgments for the introduction of additional joint or combined forces, or to pose a continuous coastal threat which causes an adversary to dissipate his forces.
- **Counter irregular threats**, the modern manifestation of our “small wars” legacy. These **military** operations are undertaken under executive authority — usually in combination with the other elements of power — in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such other interests as are determined by the foreign policy of the Nation. The application of purely military measures might not, by itself, restore peace and orderly government because the fundamental causes of the condition of unrest may be economic, political, cultural or social. Often these operations occur in response to crisis and are carried out in austere

conditions, conditions that frequently result in the direction to “send in the Marines!”

THE WAY FORWARD

From our historic assault 400 miles into land-locked Afghanistan from six amphibious ships in response to the terrorist attacks of September 2001, to the rapid attack north to Baghdad in March 2003; from successful counter-insurgency operations in Al Anbar, to ongoing operations in Helmand; from Hurricane Katrina, to earthquake relief in Haiti; and from humanitarian-aid operations in monsoon-flooded Pakistan to the recapture of the pirated ship *Magellan Star*...by partnering with our Navy brethren we have stayed true to our naval heritage roots and answered the Nation’s call...we have met every challenge. Our past is prologue for our future.

Looking ahead, our *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025* is clear. “To remain the Nation’s force in readiness,” our Vision states, “the Marine Corps must continuously innovate. This requires that we look across the entire institution and identify areas that need improvement and effect positive change.”

Indeed, new challenges, requiring spirited innovation and institutional flexibility, await us. To meet these challenges and to continue to engage with success across the range of military operations in an ambiguous yet dangerous future require us to focus on key priorities that will guide all that we do.

Priorities of the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps:

- We will continue to provide the best-trained and -equipped Marine units to Afghanistan. This will not change. This remains our top priority!
- We will rebalance our Corps, posture it for the future and aggressively experiment with and implement new capabilities and organizations.
- We will better educate and train our Marines to succeed in distributed operations and increasingly complex environments.
- We will keep faith with our Marines, our Sailors, and our families.

Provide the Best-Trained and -Equipped Marines

Our top priority is to ensure that the Marine units that deploy to Afghanistan are the best-trained and -equipped units in the Corps. We have made great progress in Afghanistan during the past year. Our fellow citizens expect no less of us for the duration of the war. We will ensure that every Marine and Sailor are prepared to succeed in the many types of missions we are conducting in this complex, dynamic, and dangerous operating environment.

The Marine Corps is resourcing its best-trained and most-ready forces to

meet global combatant commander requirements. Consequently, deployed units report the highest levels of readiness for their assigned missions. However, high-deployed unit readiness has come at the expense of non-deployed units, which have resourced unstructured equipment and personnel requirements to meet the needs of our deployed forces. Many non-deployed units thus have reported degraded or non-deployable levels of readiness. The largest contributing factor to decreased readiness in non-deployed units is a shortage of equipment supply. This lack of equipment constrains the ability of non-deployed forces to respond to other potential contingencies and to train to its mission-essential tasks. The impact of nine years of war has been significant, and the wear and tear on our equipment has taken a toll. The Marine Corps will require additional funding for several years after the end of operations in Afghanistan to reset our equipment.

That said, we will continue to ensure that our Marines deployed in harm's way have everything they need to fight and win. This means looking to their welfare and providing them the absolute best training, equipment, and support.

Rebalance the Corps and Posture for the Future

The U.S. *National Security Strategy* underscores the need for rebalancing the force and preparing for the future: "We will continue to rebalance our military capabilities to excel at counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, stability operations, and meeting increasingly sophisticated

security threats, while ensuring our force is ready to address the full range of military operations. This includes preparing for increasingly sophisticated adversaries, deterring and defeating aggression in anti-access environments, and defending the United States....”

To meet combatant commander needs and to satisfy strategic objectives, we have conducted a comprehensive force structure review. Our purpose was to develop the organization, posture, and capabilities that will preserve and enhance America’s Expeditionary Force in Readiness in a post- Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan and fiscally-constrained environment. The entire Marine Corps — active, reserve, and civilian — was examined in this evaluation which incorporated recent lessons learned in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and addressed evolving threats and their impact on the future force. This will provide us with the “ammunition” needed to improve our ability to function as a lead element of a joint force, to execute distributed operations, to provide command and control, and to conduct persistent engagement missions throughout the world.

The demand for military forces with irregular warfare capabilities will continue to expand. To help meet this demand, we will better resource organizations like the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group (MCTAG) and consolidate others to improve their synergies and reduce redundancies. We will also further institutionalize the Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group (MCTOG) to enhance its contribution and relevance to the training of our Ground Combat Element. We will fully embrace the Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC)

and capitalize on its unique capabilities, while we strengthen the relationships between our operating forces and all U.S. special operations forces. We will increase our capability and capacity to conduct cyber warfare and meet joint and Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) demands.

We will further organize and deploy forces in a manner that better promotes development of the partnerships required for effective engagement. This will include expanding forward-presence force operations, exploiting all forms of lift (organic, theater and strategic), developing a regional focus within each major command and establishing habitual relationships with other members of the joint team, especially our Navy and special operations forces counterparts.

The future security environment also requires a mindset geared toward increased energy efficiency and reduced consumption. The Marine Corps recognizes that a central enhancement across all elements of the MAGTF is reducing



operational energy requirements. Reduced dependence on traditional sources of energy will allow the MAGTF to travel lighter and faster in a distributed manner under austere conditions. It will also save lives by getting Marines out of harm's way when transporting fuel and water across main supply routes. The Marine Corps will aggressively continue its pioneering efforts in energy efficiencies through the Expeditionary Energy Office, with goals of reduced demand in our platforms and systems, self-sufficiency in our battlefield sustainment, and a reduced expeditionary footprint on the battlefield.

Lessons learned during the past decade in Afghanistan and Iraq confirm the importance of unit cohesion. Combat effectiveness and the lives of our Marines and Sailors depend on it. There is no substitute for having the right people, particularly key leaders, in deploying units at the right time. Accordingly, we will change our manpower management, education and training processes to achieve this goal. Having the right equipment, systems and technologies is critical to operational success, as well.

Procuring new aircraft, vehicles, systems, and equipment, while maintaining current readiness, is a continual and long-term process of balancing demands on resources to man, train, and equip the Marine Corps. The eventual reset of equipment from Afghanistan, coupled with required procurement to replace equipment destroyed or damaged beyond economical repair, will help increase our home-station readiness levels. Within that reset effort, we will prioritize equipment that will allow us to quickly fill

our updated equipment requirements for a “middleweight” capability. Lightening the MAGTF is imperative to remaining an expeditionary, middleweight force. To better coordinate our procurement and modernization efforts, the Marine Corps is pursuing several functional strategies to achieve rebalancing and posturing of the force for the future. These strategies and their associated programs are highlighted in Chapter 3.

Enhance Education and Training



The conflicts of the 21st Century place tremendous burdens on Marines and Sailors, but these are not the only sources of great stress on our men and women. To improve their resilience, we will work aggressively and creatively to build a training continuum that better prepares them for the inevitable stress of combat operations and to equip them with the necessary skills required to deal with the widely varying challenges of life as a Marine. Instruction founded and focused on our core values helps provide some of this resilience and enables effective operations, especially in a complex irregular or hybrid warfare environment. Our Values-Based-Training thus will be central to a Marine's professional development and expanded beyond its current entry-level focus. We will infuse

it throughout our training and education system, ensuring our core values remain central throughout our service.

We will better educate and train our Marines to succeed in distributed operations and increasingly complex, dynamic and fluid environments. We will invest more in the education of our non-commissioned officers and junior officers, as they have assumed vastly greater responsibilities in both combat and garrison. We will markedly increase opportunities for Marines to attend resident Professional Military Education, civilian fellowships, and advanced education programs, as well as to serve in Foreign Area Officer, Regional Area Officer and other joint and interagency assignments. We will also develop the Marine Corps University into a world-class institution.

Keep Faith with Marines, Sailors, and Families

We will keep faith with our Marines, our Sailors, and our families. The strains of war require robust, effective support for the needs of our families and Marines. These efforts will not be reduced when combat operations in Afghanistan conclude. They will require sustained support to ensure that we honor the sacred trust the Nation has with those who serve, but particularly those who pay the heaviest price.

The essential elements impacting the quality of life for our Marines, Sailors, and families are deployment-to-dwell time, housing, schools, medical care, and community services. Our quality-of-life goals are to ensure that our people and their families have availability and access to quality facilities and family-support programs and resources and benefits that

afford a respectable, decent and healthy standard of living.

We must ensure that we maintain a deployment-to-dwell ratio of about 1:2 for our force while fighting a war. Below this level increases the stress on our people and their families and limits our ability to be ready for the broad range of threats and challenges the Nation will face. Despite high operational tempo and multiple combat operations, retention of active duty and reserve Marines has not been adversely affected. We are meeting our retention goals across the Marine Corps, and some of our highest retention rates come from units that have deployed, including some that have experienced multiple deployments. Although our goal during peace is a 1:3 deployment-to-dwell ratio, as long as we maintain a deployment-to-dwell ratio of about 1:2 we do not foresee adverse impacts on retention or quality of life.

Our approach to caring for Marines, Marine families, and relatives of our fallen Marines is based on our unwavering loyalty; this will not change. For example, we will enhance the capabilities of the highly successful Wounded Warrior Regiment to provide added care and support to our wounded, injured and ill. The Wounded Warrior Regiment provides non-medical care management services to wounded, ill, and injured Marines and their families throughout the phases of recovery. Additionally, our assessments have shown positive satisfaction levels in important care areas, such as our Recovery Care Coordination Program — executed by the Regiment's Recovery Care Coordinators — and our family-support staff. We will

also advocate for better diagnostic and increased treatment options for Marines with severe injuries, including Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury.

We will ensure that Marines, Sailors, and their families have availability and access to quality facilities and support programs, as well as resources and benefits that provide a quality standard of living. This same effort will be applied equally to our single Marines, who comprise half of our Corps. We will focus on the sustainability of vital Marine Corps Community Services programs and expansion of newer programs showing promising signs of success, particularly programs supporting our single Marines.

To ensure continued effectiveness and efficiency, however, we will evaluate all Marine and family support programs to determine where they require expansion to assist more effectively our families and where they can be streamlined to reduce redundancy. We will make concerted efforts at attracting, mentoring and retaining the most talented men and women who bring a diversity of background, culture and skill in service to the United States. Finally, we are focusing efforts to more fully integrate Behavioral Health programs to protect and strengthen the health and well being of Marines and their families. We are also conducting a thorough “bottom up” assessment of our Transition Assistance Program to ensure we are providing the right educational and occupational assistance to Marines leaving our active-duty ranks, thus fulfilling our commitment to return better citizens to communities throughout the Nation.

THE NATION’S EXPEDITIONARY FORCE OF CHOICE

The major challenges we face today center on continuing to provide America’s Marines fighting in Afghanistan the very best training, equipment, and support possible while ensuring the Marine Corps is ready for the uncertain threats of the future, all during what will be a very challenging fiscal climate at home.

We are at war and that must be our highest priority. At the same time, we must balance our capabilities to do what the nation will likely ask of its Marines in the coming decades. As the Nation’s Expeditionary Force of Choice, the Marine Corps must always be ready to answer the President’s call to “Send in the Marines!”