

Shaping the Single Naval Battle: Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead



Second Line of Defense

June 2013

<http://www.sldinfo.com>

Table of Contents

CRAFTING A 21ST CENTURY INSERTION FORCE	2
PREPARING FOR BOLD ALLIGATOR 2013	8
INITIAL GUIDANCE	8
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF DISTRIBUTED OPERATIONS	9
INTERVIEWS WITH KEY PARTICIPANTS	13
SHAPING A COMBAT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: THE ROLE OF SYNTHETIC TRAINING	13
SHAPING C2 FOR THE SINGLE NAVAL BATTLE	15
RESHAPING THE COMBAT FORCE WITH EXPEDITIONARY LOGISTICS	17
AUSTRALIA PREPARES FOR ITS NEW AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT SHIP: AN AUSSIE PERSPECTIVE FOR BOLD ALLIGATOR 2013	18
ENGAGING THE FUTURE: YOUNGER NAVY AND MARINE CORPS WARRIORS PREPARE	21
RE-VISITING THE USS ARLINGTON	24
BOLD ALLIGATOR 2013 DRAWS TO AN END: THE WRAP UP	27
BOLD ALLIGATOR DRAWS TO AN END	27
LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD: FROM BOLD ALLIGATOR 2013 TO 2014	28
BUILDING TOWARDS THE FUTURE: KEY BUILDING BLOCKS IN SHAPING DISTRIBUTED OPERATIONS	30
THE WAY AHEAD WITH THE F-35B: A DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR AVIATION	31
THE USS FORD IN THE U.S. NAVY'S FUTURE: ENABLING THE DISTRIBUTED FORCE	34
THE IMPACT OF THE USS AMERICA: "A MAGTF ACE ON STEROIDS"	38
ADMIRAL BUZBY ON THE EVOLVING CAPABILITIES OF A USN-USMC MSC ENABLED FLEET	41

Crafting a 21st Century Insertion Force

2013-05-08 In a wrap-up interview with regard to Bold Alligator 2013, Rear Admiral Phillips, the 2nd ESG Commander, and Brigadier General Love, the 2nd MEB Commander, described the nature and impact of the USN-USMC and Coalition approach to shaping more effective and flexible sea base capabilities.

According to [one source](#): This year's exercise scenario involved coalition forces working to rid the fictional country of Amber from the invading aggressor country of Garnet. During the scenario participants' simulated ship-to-shore landings, coordinated continuous air support, and conducted maritime security operations while aggressively fighting their way through the fictional enemy forces on land.

Clearly, one interesting aspect of the effort was starting with a significant anti-access, area denial capability and then working through that challenge to put forces ashore.

The forces ashore were then supported by an expeditionary logistics approach which was designed to provide support targeted for the at shore forces, rather than building a mobile WALMART which would then itself have to be protected.

[Rear Admiral Ann Phillips](#) is a Black Shoe or a surface warfare officer. She is currently the Commander of Expeditionary Strike Group TWO in Little Creek, VA and recently moved from the Pentagon where she served on the Chief of Naval Operations Staff as deputy director of Surface Warfare (N86B) and, then, director of Surface Warfare (N86). Not surprisingly, she has significant Aegis experience.

[Brigadier General John Love](#) is the Deputy Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force and Commanding General, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade at Camp Lejeune, NC. Upon promotion to Brigadier General he served from 2010 to 2012 as the Chief of Staff, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO in Naples, Italy. During March to August 2011 he participated in NATO's Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR, the enforcement of UN Security Council Resolutions in Libya.

SLD: What has been the role of the surface fleet within the Bold Alligator 2013 in support of the ground insertion force?

Rear Admiral Ann Phillips: It actually has a key role. Historically, when one thinks about the traditional role, say in World War II, one focuses upon naval surface fire support and the role of naval guns. But in this day and age, we have a lot more options and alternatives with other weapons, and with our ability to respond, in time, to cyber activities and other challenges.

Today's surface force has a greater capacity, and we'll have even more capacity in the future with capabilities like Navy's Integrated Fire Control – Counter Air to support forces ashore. We can influence the battle space to support the maneuver of Marine forces on the ground with a number of capabilities

For example, when talking about a significant air and missile defense threat, you've got to remove that threat. Maritime forces, including Carrier Aviation and long-range TOMAHAWK Strike missiles strategically roll the threat back to gain entry and to gain space for operations.

The Amphibious Task Force with augmented with Cruiser and Destroyers for defense and power projection then provides the support and capability to the ground force to enter the battlespace and then continues that support once forcible entry is achieved.

What we did here over the past several weeks in the Bold Alligator 2013 exercise was to work on combining the capabilities inherent in the Amphibious Task Force with the ground forces to shape a more effective force able to be inserted and withdrawn as needed.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

The fleet provides the ground force with support from a close in sea base that's taking care of Intel, logistics, fire support, Command and Control, and close air support. All of this is managed from the sea base and projected forward in support of maneuver ashore.

In the future, with improved capabilities such as the [DDG1000](#) –which we now are about to ready the field– [capabilities will continue to grow](#).



Figure 1 Rear Adm. Kevin J. Kovacich, commander of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12 and Rear Adm. Ann C. Phillips, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 2, discuss operational details during a rehearsal of concept drill at the Camp Allen gym during Bold Alligator 2013. Credit Photo: USN.

Also, the Aegis radar over time has improved considerably. It has a much better capability and capacity over land now than it ever has. And radars of the future, such as the new Air and Missile Defense Radar will go even beyond that.

SLD: The Admiral has described the key role, which the surface fleet played in the exercise in both the shaping and support functions. How did the MEB shape its operational approach within the exercise?

Brigadier General John Love: The exercise featured an anti-access and area denial threat which was dealt with primarily by carrier strike groups, but with the assistance of forward-deployed Marine forces.. We placed two of our Marine Expeditionary Units, embarked upon amphibious ships, under the tactical control of the carrier strike groups and they played an important role in rolling back the threat.

Once we moved into the amphibious objective area, we knew the capabilities that were provided by the fleet. We knew what the carriers provided and we knew what the ESG provided. And as a consequence of that, we were able to craft a ground scheme of maneuver that took some calculated risks, knowing the capabilities inherent in the fleet.

We conducted operational maneuver on the sea prior to conducting operational maneuver from the sea. In other words, we used the littorals as maneuver space, which allowed us to pick and choose the time and location of our landing, and also to use littorals as part of the deception plan.

Simultaneous with our landing, we were actually using another amphibious ready group further south as part of our deception plan. We were able to disguise the location of our landing.

When we went ashore, because of the sea base, we did not need to establish a large logistics build-up, and I didn't need to worry about establishing a mature command and control apparatus ashore. I could rely on all

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

those things coming from the Naval force and from my command post afloat.

This allowed me to be light and agile ashore, and it allowed me to keep my lines of communication very narrow, thereby reducing unnecessary risks.

I was able to reduce the force's exposure to risk ashore from either violent extremist organization or the conventional threat. And it allowed me to deal as well with an obvious political requirement of not coming in with a heavy force perceived as an occupation force. Politically, it will often be the case that a very light footprint will be required to send a message of non-occupation, and it will also allow the force to withdraw rapidly should situations politically or militarily dictate.

In the Marine Corps, we've built our Marine air/ground taskforce specifically so that we can provide our own fire support. And that's why we have such a balanced aviation element in our MAGTFs. It is also dependent upon ashore based fire support, artillery and capabilities like the HIMARS system.

In this case, we were able to put very little of this capability ashore because we knew we had the Marine aviation assets afloat and that we had two carrier striker groups that could provide that support for us.

SLD: As the afloat force moves from the initial task of providing the shaping function, and supporting the initial insertion of force, a major challenge then becomes managing maritime and air security, notably from the various commercial ships and planes in the battlespace.

How do you handle the maritime domain awareness, maritime and air security part of remaining on station to support forces ashore?

Rear Admiral Ann Phillips: The issue you raise is an important one, which does affect our planning and operational thinking.

The way you manage that is through attentiveness and careful understanding of pattern of life. We have the capacity to put things into categories of traditional paths for shipping, for air, and for local commercial traffic. Then, we look for discrepancies. For example, we know where the air corridors are, so if you're in a Boeing 737 or American Airlines flight number 632, we know where you're supposed to be and if you're not where you are supposed to be.

That's just one way of breaking this down. And that takes a lot of time and training. From there, it's just a matter of force protection and remaining alert to changes in those patterns.

In a very limited battle space, such as the case in the Bold Alligator scenario, we had very little time to respond to the asymmetric threat since we were operating so close to the shore. Therefore, we worked diligently to make sure that we were postured, that our weapon systems are postured, and that our people are trained to react through a series of procedures, and preplanned responses, which differ to meet the threat and the operating environment.

Concurrently, we took an offensive posture by employing tactics, techniques, and procedures to project ourselves as hard targets because in those circumstances, extremist organizations and conventional adversaries look for and engage weak targets in an effort to make a statement.

That's part of the risk that you have to analyze as you're making your decisions about how you're going to operate and where you're going to operate. It is certainly a challenge and it is a greater risk to operate in a confined battle space.

SLD: Could you describe the approach to shifting from being a supported to a supporting command in this situation?

Brigadier General John Love: The Marine expeditionary brigade was the landing force for the operation. And in any amphibious operation, it is the landing force scheme of maneuver ashore upon

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

which the other activity is based in terms of picking the landing locations, determining where you then have to roll back the A2AD (Anti-Access and Area Denial) to allow access to those locations.

From the very beginning, taking the ground scheme of maneuver into account, there was seamless integration across the carrier strike group, the expeditionary strike group and the MEB.

As we closed into the joint operational area, the carrier strike group, as the supported commander in that phase, had the job of rolling back the A2AD as Admiral Phillips said.

both the ESG and the MEB's elements played a key role in that with the use of the Marine expeditionary units and amphibious ready groups conducting long-range raids that helped roll back the ground based coastal defense systems. The carrier strike group created the conditions that allowed the expeditionary strike group, to then close into the amphibious objective area, using the littorals as maneuver space. The expeditionary strike group then delivered the landing force to the shore. And in that phase, the expeditionary strike group was the supported commander. Once the landing force was ashore and had achieved sufficient combat power and command-and-control capabilities ashore, the landing force became the supported command.

In other words, the objective is to have a seamless shifting of supported/supporting relationships across all three of these major commands.



Figure 2 Vice Adm. Michelle Howard, deputy commander, United States Fleet Forces Command, (left) is welcomed aboard the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) by Brig. Gen. John K. Love, commanding general, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB), (right) and Rear Adm. Ann Phillips, commander, Expeditionary Strike Group Two (ESG-2), (center) during her visit to observe simulated "D-Day" operations during Bold Alligator 2013. Credit Photo: USN.

SLD: How would you describe the importance of having such a highly flexible force to operate in a variety of settings?

Brigadier General John Love: I think the Navy and Marine expeditionary force like this is probably the best suited of all the combinations in the armed forces to arrive on the scene, and be ready to respond to a full range of missions. We can operate literally from the very low end of the range of military operations, all the way up to an enabling force for the high end of military operations.

This allows you to arrive on the scene, conduct an estimate of the situation – all the political factors, all the

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

military factors, the mission, – and then customize the force. And you can put just the force that is required ashore and then you can build on that force as the situation escalates, or you may choose to conduct distributed operations in in multiple locations from the sea base.

Because we are uniquely well suited for ship-to-shore movement our flexibility is enhanced as well. The MV-22s and the LCACs are especially important tools that enable this flexibility. This allows you to aggregate the force at sea and then disaggregate the force ashore as the situation dictates. And that's just very unique, I think, to this type of force.

SLD: The logistics part of this is crucial. The approach allows the Commander to reduce the footprint ashore, and to reduce the demand for the provision of force for shore-based logistics. This allows as well the opportunity to rethink how to calibrate force.

Brigadier General John Love: I think it is the ultimate economy of force model in terms of light, small forces. One could start with single ship, a special purpose MAGTF, like we do now with the Africa Partnership Station and conduct Phase 0 activities. You can aggregate onto that force with the Marine expeditionary unit and the amphibious ready group should the situation arise.

And just that presence alone is a crisis deterrent. And if crisis continues to escalate, one can continue to aggregate larger forces. The next larger force would be an ESG and a MEB. Or if the crisis doesn't escalate, you just dissipate the forces. And you've done this without any footprint, without any ground basing.

Rear Admiral Ann Phillips: And you have the ability to tailor it completely. We can configure the force to meet our needs. We can tailor what aspects of the MEU we want on a certain ship and what capabilities we want to bring ashore. From the seabase, we provide medical support, combat systems support, logistics, ISR, and command-and-control. We can scale it up or scale it down.

It's highly flexible, it's reconfigurable, it can go anywhere. We can achieve the objective and then move on, leaving no footprints ashore.

Brigadier General John Love: There was a recent situation where one of the combatant commanders requested a Marine Special Purpose MAGTF for a crisis response. And the secretary of defense approved it, pending host nation approval for basing, even though it's temporary. And it took six weeks to acquire the host nation approval for us to base.

If that's what we want to be dependent upon to satisfy our combatant commanders requirements for a hastily deployable crisis response force, we should probably reconsider. It sure would be nice if that force was able to just deploy in international waters without the requirement for host nation approval.

SLD: Bold Alligator, this year and last year has demonstrated a flexibility the Navy and Marine Corps is now practicing to influence events ashore but with flexible means. Could you talk more about the importance of the inherent flexibility you've demonstrated?

Rear Admiral Ann Phillips: The real advantage is having a scalable capability — a force that you can maneuver as you need to, based on the situation that you're dealing with. You have an opportunity to work independently as an ARG/MEU, or as an ESG/MEB. This ability allows us to appropriately respond to put the enemy in an uncomfortable position.

We've also been able to demonstrate that we can operate from the sea in a sea-basing capacity where forces ashore are able to maneuver with support from the sea-based amphibious architecture that allows a smaller footprint ashore, greater ability to maneuver, and greater flexibility with the support being provided directly from ships.

As we've discussed, we can support offshore with Marine Aviation, with fires, with intelligence, with command-and-control, and with ISR.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

We've been able to demonstrate a number of different capabilities and considerable flexibility with this infrastructure. In this case, using forces up to and including a full MEB, and we have also operated a large number of amphibians using their unique abilities to influence battle space, at sea and in the air to support maneuver forces ashore.

As a part of the Bold Alligator 2013 scenario this year, we had an opportunity to really demonstrate the full range of amphibious capabilities in a medium threat environment from initial entry and anti-access and area denial rollback, with the carrier strike group in the lead as well as the supported commander, to reduce or roll back the threat to allow the ARG/MEU to enter and then to allow the amphibious task force to enter.

In addition, we were successful in using the ARG/MEU team in a different venue — providing a distraction through an amphibious demonstration, which gave the enemy pause and confused their picture a little bit. We were able to land forces ashore as well as conduct a simultaneous demonstration because of our unique ability to place naval forces in different locations and still influence what's going on ashore.

SLD: General, could you provide a final comment on how to view an ESG-enabled MEB force from the perspective of this exercise?

Brigadier General John Love: Once ashore, the landing force was able to conduct maneuver ashore fully supported from the sea. When I developed my concept of operations, I took a lot of matters into account. I included the mission, as well as the troops and fire support available in our planning process. I knew that I could rely on the Navy, from the sea base, to provide support in the form of logistics, command-and-control, fires, and intelligence.

Consequently, I was able to establish a lighter footprint, I was able to be more maneuverable, and I was able to comply with some of the host nation and political considerations. I would not appear as an invading force.

The result was my ability to then maneuver and accomplish the mission ashore with much more ease than had I been required to develop a heavier footprint.

And so, the way I see it was that the operation wasn't just a lodgment, it was a sustained operation. And five days into the operation, I'm still very light, I have just the minimum amount of logistics ashore that I need for two or three days of operations because I know that I can depend on the continued sea base to provide that type of support.

I think the flexibility is phenomenal. I have still have an operational reserve on the sea base so that I can insert that force, supported by the ESG, at any other location inside the amphibious operational area to either compliment my main effort, to distract, to be a supporting effort, or should some other crisis arise in the AOA, I can respond appropriately.

That's the flexibility you get from a sea base and that's the flexibility you get from the support to the landing force by both the expeditionary strike group and the carrier strike group.

Preparing for Bold Alligator 2013

Initial Guidance

2013-2-21 According to Col Bradley Weisz, Deputy ESG 2, BA 13 is designed to continue the revitalization of amphibious warfare expertise at the Expeditionary Strike Group/Marine Expeditionary Brigade level of command & control.

Of particular emphasis during BA 13 is the critical integration of a carrier strike group in support of Expeditionary Strike Group/Marine Expeditionary Brigade level amphibious operations.

This integration includes all the capabilities of a carrier strike group – it's aviation, surface & undersea capabilities.

And according to the guidance (excerpts follow):

BOLD ALLIGATOR 13 (BA 13) will be a synthetic, scenario-driven exercise designed to improve naval amphibious core competency through focusing on the single naval battle concept & refining Expeditionary Strike Group TWO (ESG 2), 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB), & Carrier Strike Group TWELVE (CSG 12) staffs' ability to plan, coordinate & execute MEB-sized amphibious operations from a sea-base operating in a medium threat anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) environment.

Critical focus areas for BA 13 will include but are not limited to: (1) command & control (C2) relationships throughout all phases of amphibious operations; (2) naval staff integration; (3) force apportionment & employment; (4) examination of current command, control, communications, computers, combat systems & intelligence (C5I) capabilities; (5) load planning & coordination & (6) assessment of naval amphibious capabilities, doctrine, tactics, techniques & procedures (TTPs).

The end state for BA 13 will be an improved set of naval amphibious capabilities within the context of the single naval battle construct.

The following key exercise objectives have been established in support of BA 13:

(1) continue to enhance the relationship between II MEF & the Atlantic Fleet to maintain an optimal naval operational capability;

(2) demonstrate effective command, control, integration & interoperability with joint, multi-national and interagency elements in large-scale amphibious operations;

(3) demonstrate capabilities & potential for naval & joint force projection & sustainment from a sea-base while identifying associated doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership & education, personnel & facilities deficiencies & implications these deficiencies pose to naval forces;

(4) continue to refine supported/supporting command relationships & composite warfare commander (CWC) doctrine for amphibious operations within a joint campaign;

& (5) integrate complementary experimentation & other initiatives to enhance future naval force capabilities with minimal impact to training.

The primary training audience for BA 13 will consist of ESG 2, 2d MEB, and CSG 12. The secondary training audience will consist of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) and the Theater Anti-Submarine Warfare Task Force.

A total of twenty (20) coalition countries, partner nations & organizations have been invited to participate in BA 13. Nineteen (19) of these countries & organizations have committed to participating in BA 13 to include:

(1) Canada & Mexico from USNORTHCOM;

(2) Brazil, Chile, Colombia & Peru from USSOUTHCOM;

(3) United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Italy & Turkey from USEUCOM;

(4) STRIKFORNATO HQs from NATO &

(5) Australia & New Zealand from USPACOM.

The fleet synthetic training (FST) execution dates will be from 22 Apr-1 May 2013. The FST will be conducted from numerous locations in Virginia & North Carolina to include pier-side from Naval Station Norfolk aboard the USS BATAAN (LHD 5), USS ARLINGTON (LPD 24) and USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD 44).

Per USFFC & MarForCom Commander's guidance & direction, the BOLD ALLIGATOR exercise series is meant to continue revitalization of amphibious warfare expertise by validating current doctrine; demonstrating the capability & flexibility of naval forces; & preparing the primary training audience to meet current & future Combatant Commander requirements.

Continuous commitment to meet exercise & training objectives for the primary training audience will ensure BA 13 builds on the success of BA 11/12 & validates the operational design of the BOLD ALLIGATOR training continuum.

Shaping the Future of Distributed Operations

2013-04-08 The USN-USMC team is continuing its work on the insertion of force from the sea.

The team is working on better integration of the overall maritime force in support of the projection of power from the sea.

With significant participation of allies, the goal is better joint and coalition capability to project power.

Clearly, the USN-USMC team is thinking through ways to better integrate precision fires with ground forces into a power projection effort.

The ability to combine the sensor power of new systems with the mobility of an insertion force with much better capacity to leverage strike is a core element of the evolving USN-USMC team's approach.

Second Line of Defense participated in BOLD ALLIGATOR 12 and will do so in 2013. As we did with the 2012 exercise, we had a chance to talk with Col. Bradley Weisz, Deputy Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group TWO prior to the exercise.

SLD: What is the purpose of BOLD ALLIGATOR 13?

Col. Weisz: The fundamental purpose of BOLD ALLIGATOR 13 is to revitalize our amphibious warfare expertise at the Expeditionary Strike Group/Marine Expeditionary Brigade level of command and control in the planning, coordination and execution of large scale amphibious operations.

Our primary focus has been on the intricate command and staff procedures that are required when you conduct power projection and forcible entry operations from the sea.

I think it is fair to say that the BOLD ALLIGATOR exercise series has brought the blue-green team back to where we were prior to the beginning of our sustained operations ashore in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Horn of Africa. The training, educational and learning opportunities have been that valuable for everyone involved and actively participating in the process.

In fact, I would say it has been a win/win for the Navy, a win/win for the Marine Corps, so a win/win for the blue-green amphibious/expeditionary team.

A direct result from the firm commitment to the BOLD ALLIGATOR exercise series has been that a strong

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

partnership has developed and flourished between ESG 2 and 2d MEB.

This has been extraordinary, remarkable to be a part of; you probably could not ask for more. It has taken a lot of hard work, dedication and perseverance, but the blue-green team has made it work. And I firmly believe both organizations are committed to maintaining and nurturing that great relationship in the future.

Another significant part of BOLD ALLIGATOR 13 has been the close coordination and integration of a Carrier Strike Group (CSG) in support of ESG/MEB level operations.

This has enabled the ESG/MEB team to better understand what capabilities as well as limitations that the CSGs bring to the table in support of large scale amphibious operations. It has definitely opened the eyes and ears of the CSG community to just how complex and difficult ESG/MEB level amphibious operations can be. CAPT George Lang (Acting CSG 12 Commander) and his staff have done a superb job of planning, integrating and working together with the ESG/MEB team.

The opportunities to discuss and learn the ins and outs of the aviation, surface and anti-submarine warfare capabilities that the CSG team brings to the littoral fight has been truly rewarding. We have learned that we definitely need to establish and conduct more training engagements and opportunities between the Carrier Strike Group and amphibious force communities in the future.

In addition to the great CSG integration, we have also established an outstanding alliance with our coalition partners. Seventeen (17) coalition countries, partner nations & organizations are participating in BOLD ALLIGATOR 13, including Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, STRIKFORNATO HQs & CJOS COE. This includes staff augments, liaison officers and observers to the CFMCC, ESG 2 and 2d MEB staffs. This is absolutely phenomenal.

SLD: The integration of the aviation assets with the ground insertion force, getting that complex ballet coordinated is central and having appropriate command and control to actually do that is challenging as well.

Col. Weisz: Precisely, you are spot on, it is very challenging and we need to get better at it. However, once you get the correct command and control relationships established and understood by all, everything else just falls right in place.

So that integration piece, that necessary aviation command and control piece that you talk about, has to be a joint effort that utilizes all the services aviation command and control capabilities; from the Air Force to the Army to the Navy to Marine Corps, all the joint services must be constantly involved and participating in the process.

A flexible, redundant and tightly integrated aviation command and control plan has been a high priority for the ESG/MEB/CSG commanders since the very beginning of BOLD ALLIGATOR 13 planning.

In regards to the detailed integration of aviation support, the majority of MEB aviation assets would directly support the ground forces maneuvering ashore.

The MAGTF (that is the MEB) has developed and maintained close habitual relationships over the years between its ground combat and aviation combat units that we want to maintain throughout all phases of our amphibious operations; from the ship-to-shore movement piece to our sustained operations ashore, it is that critical.

You do not want to break those relationships up, you do not want to lose those close habitual relationships between your combat forces; they are just too important, too essential to have due to the complex and difficult situations that you will encounter during amphibious operations.



Figure 3 Col. Bradley E. Weisz, afloat deputy commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 2, addresses Marines and sailors during a rehearsal of concept drill at the Camp Allen gym during Bold Alligator 2013. Credit Photo: USN.

As far as the robust aviation capabilities that the CSG brings to the fight with its Carrier Air Wing, we would want to utilize (maximize) as much of their C2, ISR, electronic warfare and strike warfare assets that we possibly could. Their E-2Cs (Hawkeyes) provide critical airborne command and control capabilities, their F/A-18s (Hornets and Super Hornets) provide lethal, precision strike capabilities while their EA-18Gs (Growlers) and EA-6Bs (Intruders) provide unrivalled electronic warfare (EW) capabilities to the ground combat element of the landing forces.

From a surface warfare perspective supporting the ground forces ashore, the Cruiser/ Destroyer (CruDes) assets of the CSG provide crucial naval surface fire support (NSFS) with their 5-inch guns and Tomahawk Land Attack Cruise Missiles (TLAMs).

Again, all of these assets, platforms, capabilities and services are highly desired and valued by the ground combat forces, but must be properly coordinated and integrated into the overarching command and control plan.

SLD: When you have the F-35Bs coming off of your amphibious ships, the ability to use strike assets from the surface fleet will become even more significant and will provide an expanded role in support don't you believe?

Col. Weisz: As we add the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter to the fleet, our blue-green team will be able to significantly enhance the integration of our surface fleet with both our aviation forces and ground combat maneuver forces. The sensors and link capabilities on the F-35Bs will be crucial for conducting and fusing the necessary C2, ISR, electronic warfare and strike warfare missions needed in support of amphibious operations. So yes, the F-35Bs advanced C2 capabilities will provide us with the necessary means to effectively integrate our surface fleet, aviation forces and ground forces.

It will be an instant game changer.

SLD: In other words, the template that you're evolving is better collaboration with the various Navy resources rather than simply having specialized amphibious assault assets isolated from the rest of the fleet. You are working to give yourself a much greater capability to leverage the sea base in inserting force.

Col. Weisz: That's exactly the direction we are heading to, what we are doing and are focused upon. We are getting away from the legacy stove-pipe systems and moving to better collaboration, more integration with our entire fleet force. This is absolutely essential in today's complex and constantly evolving operating

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

environment; especially when you start talking about the increased anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) threats that we will face and encounter in the littoral regions. Yes, we are developing and shaping some innovative approaches to deal with these emerging threats.

As far as leveraging our sea basing capabilities in direct support of our amphibious forces, we will aggressively employ and utilize nine military sealift command ships, MSC ships, as part of our logistics task force. We will have three fleet oilers (T-AOs) that can hold and carry a sizable amount of class I (subsistence) and class III (POL). We will also have two highly capable dry cargo/ammunition ships (T-AKEs) that can haul and deliver substantial amounts of class III (POL) and class V (ground/aviation ammunition) products.

Along with the T-AOs and T-AKEs, we will have one fast combat support ship (T-AOE) that can provide significant class I (subsistence), class III (POL) and class V (ground/aviation ammunition) capabilities in support of our CSG and ATF forces. Additionally, we will employ and utilize one Aviation Logistics Support Ship (T-AVB) that will provide crucial aviation intermediate maintenance support and repair services to all of our landing force aircraft afloat. This includes all fixed wing, rotary wing, and tilt rotor aircraft afloat.

We will also have a joint high-speed vessel (JHSV) involved in the exercise, and that is the first time we have done that for a BOLD ALLIGATOR exercise.

The JHSV is Spartan, is NASCAR, so it does not have a lot of self-protection, but you know when you can go 35 plus knots, carry about 600 tons of cargo/equipment and about 300 motivated Marines, that's a pretty darn good capability when you think about it. So the exercise will provide a great learning curve for the Navy/Marine Corps team with regards to the employment options of the JHSV.

It would not surprise me in the future if you start seeing the joint high-speed vessel fully integrated into the Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) deployment cycle.

The JHSV offers such a great capability, especially for theater security cooperation and engagement type events.

SLD: What are the dates of the exercise?

Col. Weisz: The exercise will be conducted from 22 April to 1 May 2013; here in Norfolk with the ESG 2/2d MEB command team aboard the USS BATAAN (LHD 5).

The BATAAN is an amphibious assault ship, commonly referred to as a big deck amphib. We conducted BOLD ALLIGATOR 11 aboard the USS BATAAN, so she is familiar with the exercise objectives and training objectives we are trying to accomplish. BOLD ALLIGATOR 13 is officially designated as a FST, meaning Fleet Synthetic Training exercise, so it is all synthetic and done primarily pier side, in-port.

That is good because FSTs enable us to provide a wider range of complex and demanding simulations than possible at sea or in the field, ultimately reducing and saving on our exercise costs.

Interviews with Key Participants

In the final stages of the exercise, several of the participants in the exercise were interviewed. This provided a broad look at various aspects of the exercise and provided further granularity to conclusions reached by the ESG and MEB commanders.

In the first interview, two key players shaping the synthetic environment discuss the role of such training in shaping a combat learning environment. In the second interview, two key officers working the C2 aspect of the exercise discuss the role of C2 in the evolving capabilities for a single naval battle approach. In the third interview, a key officer in the MEB discusses the evolving role of expeditionary logistics in shaping new combat capabilities. In the fourth interview, an Aussie officer participating in the exercise discusses the role of new amphibious capabilities in shaping Army reform. And finally, the perspective of younger officers in the Green-Blue team discuss their perspectives on the tool sets needed for the success of the force insertion approach exemplified in Bold Alligator 2013.

Shaping a Combat Learning Environment: The Role of Synthetic Training

Bold Alligator 2013 was a synthetic training exercise. This meant that the key combat assets were networked and operated together interactively in response to “events” generated by the scenarios and challenges set by the exercise.

Bold Alligator 2012 was a live exercise as will be Bold Alligator 2014, and the live exercises draw upon the synthetic and vice versa in shaping a continuous combat learning process.

Second Line of Defense had a chance to talk with two key participants in the exercise who were key to the “synthetic” part of the synthetic exercise. The first was Michael “Odie” Ogden, Assistant Chief of Staff (N9) for Synthetic Training and Technologies. Ogden is the “guru” for Commander Strike Force Training Atlantic on “synthetic exercises.”

The second was CDR Keith “Keebler” Holihan, Director of Operational Plans (N53) for Strike Force Training Atlantic. While Ogden discussed the broad approach of synthetic exercises, Holihan provided some comments with regard to where the training was headed which drew upon such training.

The broad strategic direction for “synthetic” training is from operating much like Pong to now operating like X Box. Whereas a decade ago, such training was based on computer screen and simulations now warriors are at their posts, and use their weapon systems and communication systems to work with the assets of the force to simulate operations. It is a shift from simulated activity to synthetic interactive operations. This means that the approach allows significant interactive or fleet wide operational training, rather than simply testing skills by single purpose operators.

The potential for such an approach to shape procurement could well be significant. Platforms will continue to be purchased as the enablers of systems, but determining the interactive capabilities (for no platform fights alones) can clearly be shaped by anticipated effects from the insertion of projected new platforms or systems. For example, in this exercise they inserted Scan Eagle to see what difference it what make it in different situations.

SLD: What would say the main benefit of synthetic training is?

Ogden: It clearly allows a more cost effective way to train in fleet processes and procedures. Obviously, there are several key things one needs to do live training for and there is no substitute synthetically, such as landing on carrier decks.

As for process and procedures in training in a number of warfare areas, whether combined or individually, synthetic training works very well. For staff training, it works very well; for you have no weather limitations and you have no asset limitations, which means that you can provide solid training time to work out better staff working procedures and processes fleet wide.

One of the advantages we have is that by getting into the shipboard systems, were able to use the radar and sonar systems, use the C5ISR systems, generate message system “chat” and use the real world SATCM and UHV line of site just as if they were at sea. For all intents and purposes, the warriors are operating as if they were in the real world.

This means that we can plug in distance-deployed assets to plug into the exercise and work with the ships, which

are operating dockside in the exercise. We can link Atlantic and Pacific fleets, for example. This allows us to plug in allies who operate on their ships overseas but can plug into the integrated training network.

This gives us great flexibility and an ability to expand the exercise beyond local participants.

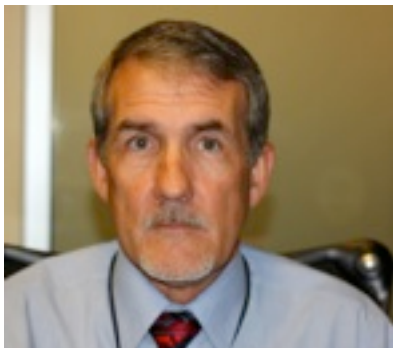


Figure 4 Michael “Odie” Ogden, Assistant Chief of Staff (N9) for Synthetic Training and Technologies

SLD: We have a younger generation very comfortable with a computer based learning process. It also allows different cultures to interact and to shape interactive learning processes as well. How much interactivity do we see in the shaping function?

Ogden: When you bring in the coalition partners, they often bring a different way of war fighting or different processes. This environment allows us to smooth the working relationship and gives us the opportunity in a very controlled environment to sort out convergence of operational styles to enhance overall performance of the coalition.

SLD: You have been doing this for a while. How is it different in 2013 than a decade ago?

Ogden: It's night and day. Instead of sitting in a room with a fake display that's being fed by a simulation, we've got people onboard the ship in front of the real systems connected worldwide. The difference is between Pong and Xbox, that's a comparison I use because that's really what we're doing a dozen years ago was Pong. And right now, it's about real as we can possibly make it.

SLD: CDR Holihan, what is role in the exercise and in Strike Force Training Atlantic?

Holihan: I've been on the staff here for about two years, and was actually the lead planner for Bold Alligator 2012. I have had the opportunity to see our live and synthetic exercise. In last year's exercise which was live had a synthetic component overlaid on top of it, which I think is another interesting area to explore as time goes on.

And this year's exercise is predominately synthetic. We have our live assets time in at the appropriate places.

In other words, the last two years have been dedicated to Bold Alligator for the planning from the initiation of the concept for the exercise itself, what training objectives we were trying to accomplish, any specific integration pieces, whether it be developmental, innovative pieces, initiatives. We worked on the whole planning process up to execution.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

And during the execution phase, I'm the deputy director for the blue side, for the Navy. I focus on working the coordination among the different simulation centers for the training audience shapes the training opportunities.

SLD: You have done this for two years. What do you see is the overall objective?

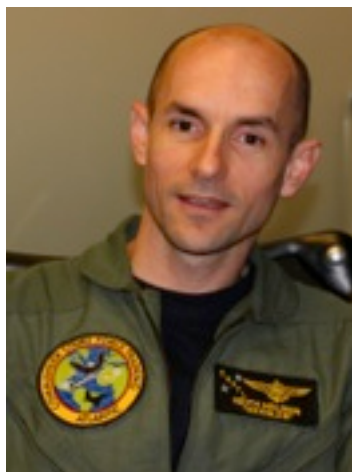


Figure 5 CDR Keith "Keebler" Holihan, Director of Operational Plans (N53) for Strike Force Training Atlantic.

Holihan: Put in its simplest formulation it is to create the conditions in the Blue-Green team can work more effectively to shape a single naval battle capability. This is an aspiration, and not yet a reality. Getting the strike and amphibious fleets to work more effectively is a clear goal.

We've really focused on the planning and the development of the exercise to identify gaps or seams that may exist between CSG operations, ESG operations with the MEB.

SLD: A core challenge for the single naval battle in the kind of scenario you tested this year is operating in a commercial operational environment as well. The impact of operating close to commercial air and maritime space poses additional challenges.

Holihan: It clearly does and is a concern, which we are addressing. We've got some high traffic commercial areas that are running in the background for the whole simulation. Our forces are challenged commercial surface ships and commercial air that zips across through the area, too. So, the exercise replicates actually fairly well in the real world, and those considerations.

SLD: Are you seeing more creativity and more focus from the surface fleet on their ability to support the Amphibious Strike Group?

Holihan: We are. And that clearly is one of the goals of these exercises, to get better integration of the strike force assets with the amphibious assets. We have tended to rely on separate areas of operation.

If we were really a fully integrated Naval force, then why do we have to have separate distinct areas? We are clearly working on new ways to bring these forces together in a more integrated fashion. Single battle group is the aspiration, but we clearly need to move more towards the reality of that concept.

And the exercise allows the different naval elements to learn more effectively what the different assets can contribute beyond whatever their primary task has been.

Shaping C2 for the Single Naval Battle

2013-05-20 Coordinating an amphibious task force is complex and challenging.

When the amphibious task force expands to become an expeditionary strike group supported by USAF, USMC Aviation, USN fires and C5ISR it becomes even more complex.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

The Bold Alligator 2013 exercise is the latest effort to refine the tools working together to shape a coordinated outcome, or effect.

The USAF provided significant support elements to the maritime amphibious force, and the large deck carriers along with the aviation and strike elements (including ground insertion “special forces”) worked together to shape the environment to allow for larger scale insertion of the landing forces.

And the operation of the ground forces then became a key element in allowing for more effective strike operations by the various air-breathing assets – airplanes and missiles – to ensure mission success.

In an interview with two members of the Bold Alligator Blue-Green team, the nature of the effort and the challenges to be met were discussed.



Figure 6 Lt. Col. Brad Pennella. Credit Photo: SLD.

Lt. Col. Brad Pennella and Commander Lloyd Mack worked together in the exercise on the aviation and fire functions for the Blue-Green team. In the interview they did the same – operated as a team – so we will refer to their comments as the BG Team.

As the officers described the effort, fires were coordinated throughout the task force, with tomahawk cruise missiles used in both an initial strike and shaping role and then in a support role to the deployed forces. The USAF played a key support role in terms of C5ISR and tanking with its lift role for the 82nd Airborne, both to insert and then support by flying in High Mobility Artillery Rockets Systems (HIMARS) and Counter Battery Radars by C17 on D+1 to augment the landing force air dropping supplies.

The process was explained as follows in managing the command and control effort:

The CSG12 commander was the supported commander during the shaping phase.

Support shifted to the ESG2 commander on D-1 until D+2.

It then shifted to the MEB Commander on D+2.

Command always stayed with their respective commanders and only support and supporting relationship shifted during phases of the operation.

The MEB Commander retained throughout the command of Marine Corps Aviation. MEB was supporting commander.

ESG2 was supported commander until D+1.

They further described the challenge as follows:

In effect, we were exercising the single battle concept whereby the flow of forces from the carrier and the amphib was being coordinated in an integrated manner.



Figure 7 Commander Lloyd Mack. Credit Photo: SLD.

They added: Seabasing of fire support, logistics and command and control as well as the persistent Anti Access Area Denial (A2AD) threat created the need for one single naval battle concept.

A key line of development for the force is to craft over time greater capability to transfer the deconfliction of air tasks to integrated data systems. Strike and air de-confliction requires significant coordination, and more automation of the data generated will over time assist in the improved flow of force through the deployed ships.

And clearly what BA 13 was highlighting was the need for the surface warfare community to integrate ground forces in a way that has not been done since World War II or in the Korean War.

But here, the ground forces and strike forces are seen as an integrated whole, rather than simply

disembarking the ground troops.

You have to have forces on the ground to confirm everything that we're doing. Systems are fooled all the time.

Until you get a ground force inserted that can confirm or deny what's going on.

Plus, the enemy can bury himself in the ground. The enemy above the ground is one thing, but he can easily go underground, too, especially in a well-developed, long-term country that has had time to build underground.

The ground maneuver force on the ground allows your supporting strike forces to be much more effective.

Reshaping the Combat Force With Expeditionary Logistics

A key element of shaping a 21st century approach to military operations is the reconfiguration of the force to incorporate expeditionary logistics.

Rather than putting a WALMART in place, designing a Kracken defense force for the WALMART, and then moving against the objective area, there is a key trend afoot to insert force rapidly with decisive effect and incorporate the logistics within the drive forward. The classic distinction between the front and the rear is being redefined.

We have seen that in the recent French operation in Mali, and we have seen it in the past decade of USMC evolution of their approach to logistics.

This trend is at the center of the Bold Alligator 2013 exercise and is a core competence, which the Blue-Green team wishes to evolve, improve and enhance over time.

In a discussion with Col. Marc Riccio, II Marine Expeditionary Force Assistance Chief of Staff, G-3 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade Chief of Staff the centrality of the impact of expeditionary logistics was highlighted.



Figure 8 Col. Marc Riccio Credit Photo: SLD

Col. Riccio: We specifically wanted to exercise the sea base concept, both command-and-control from the sea base and logistics from the sea base. And we focused on how best to minimize the footprint ashore as much as possible. And I think we've done that in the exercise.

SLD: In effect you are shaping a combat bubble from the seabase to the insertion force and back again. The key is to have the proper C2 to ensure the flow of forces, which means support as well.

Col. Riccio: I think that's an accurate statement. We specifically didn't want to put a large footprint ashore. We have a 15-16,000 man MEB involved. Of that force, we have about 7,300 Marines ashore. And most

of that is the ground combat element. The trigger pullers are the majority of the force ashore.

We've done a seabase version of just in time logistics, if you will, with our beach support area where we're pushing in logistics from the amphib, from the sea, and directly supporting the ground combat element.

We're not building that steel mountain, if you will, ashore and that's really a big change.

SLD: You are shaping a core competence here with regard to logs and ops which requires close coordination of the Blue-Green team. I would imagine this is a competence that has to be re-fashioned?

Col. Riccio: It's been a long time since the Marine Corps and the Navy have done detailed load plans and how best to plan to do this as a normal combat activity.

And now with the new information technology systems we can do loading differently. We now know much better than before what is on the seabase and where it can be found. This then allows us to move the specific needed items ashore rather than comprehensively offloading.

We now can know more effectively: What's the first thing that's come off? What's the last thing that's got to come off? I think we've made a lot of progress in this area of inventory knowledge and capacity to move selectively support ashore.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

SLD: The other part of this is that you're not just going ashore to set up a Wal-Mart for an indefinite stay.

Col. Riccio: Exactly. I think another great thing about maintaining a small footprint ashore is our focus is on the Ground Combat Element (GCE), that's down fighting the fight. We don't have a huge, large rear area ashore that we've got to protect and secure and put a lot of forces to secure the rear area.

SLD: There is a obviously a risk management aspect of the decision making process as well as you sort out what needs to go ashore and what stays on the seabase.

Col. Riccio: That is true. There's always risk involved. What is the commander willing to accept with regards to logistics support? For example, we had an issue the other day about fuel. Did we think we had enough fuel ashore for the Regimental Loading Team (RLT), and that was a conversation between the MEB commander and the RLT commander and the logistics commander. Do you have enough fuel to kick this off tomorrow? And if you don't, then you need to roll another day to get that fuel in place. Those conversations happen and are a key part of the support process for a force.

SLD: Let us shift to another subject. The exercise emphasized a force to operate in a broad spectrum of ops. Could you discuss the approach to dealing with anti-access and area denial threats?

Col. Riccio: The scenario emphasized a range of threats for a force that is somewhere between what and ARG-MEU would do and a full MEB-ESG would do. And we tested our approach to dealing with A2AD as well. We did some amphibious raids on a couple of islands off the "Treasure Coast" where we knew the enemy had some missile sites.

We put Marines forward, on the ground to take those missile sites out, and to help rollback the A2AD threat. And I think that's something we want to work more in the future, too, because now we have capability with the MV22s to reach deep and fast with a strike force.

From our perspective, the littoral domain is not really different from fighting a force in the desert on the ground. If we're going to move a ground force into the assault, we're going to do deep shaping fires, take out the IADs, it is pretty much the same in both domains in terms of the equipment and approach we are going to use.

SLD: In other words, from the Blue-Green team perspective A2AD is another target set.

Col. Riccio: That is a good way to put it. It is an obstacle to be dealt with. That is what Marines do.

Australia Prepares for its New Amphibious Assault Ship: An Aussie Perspective for Bold Alligator 2013

Australia is re-shaping its forces as it deals with the dynamics of change in the Pacific and its roles and tasks post-Afghanistan. Part of the future approach will be provided by the delivery of a new capability in the Aussie force structure, namely a large LHD or Amphibious Assault Ship.

As reported by the Royal Australian Navy (<http://www.navy.gov.au/fleet/ships-boats-craft/lhd>),

The Canberra Class Amphibious Assault Ship (LHD), also known as a Landing Helicopter Dock, project will provide the Australian Defence Force with one of the most capable and sophisticated air-land-sea amphibious deployment systems in the world.

These 27,000 tonne ships will be able to land a force of over 2,000 personnel by helicopter and water craft, along with all their weapons, ammunition, vehicles and stores.

The ships are being bought to support Amphibious operations, but will also have a key role in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR). The ships are large enough to accommodate the changes in aviation which will see personnel able to operate from the sea platforms in the years to come. The innovations, which the French have shown with a smaller ship, the Mistral, suggest that a larger amphibious ship could evolve with the times, quite nicely. During the Libyan operations, the French used their premier armed helicopter, the Tiger, for the first time at sea. The Australians are also developing their armed reconnaissance helicopter capability, using the Tiger, so may seek to employ it from a sea platform similar to the French.

<http://www.sldinfo.com/an-update-on-australias-tiger-helicopters/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/french-army-light-aviation-alat-during-the-libyan-operations/>

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

In a good overview of Aussie thinking, an Australian defense analyst wrote a piece entitled “in war and peace, an amphibious capability is apt.” According to John Blaxland, a senior fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University:

Australia is in the process of acquiring two amphibious landing helicopter dock ships (LHDs) built by Spain’s Navantia and BAE Systems Australia following the design of the Spanish navy (Armada de Espana) LHD. The first semi-completed one arrived in Australia on October 17, 2012.

On this occasion it is worth reflecting on the parallels of the Spanish and Australian amphibious capabilities. Interestingly, Spain maintains an amphibious fleet of an LHD, two landing platform docking ships (LPDs) and a landing ship tank (LST), sister of former HMA ships Manoora and Kanimbla. This is a configuration not unlike the one the Royal Australian Navy will have once the new LHDs come into operation. Spain lost its Latin American empire two centuries ago; so why does the Spanish navy need a four-ship amphibious capability?

As it turns out, the Spaniards place big emphasis on maintaining an amphibious warfighting capability, with an embarked force drawn from the world’s oldest marine corps, predating the US Marines by more than two centuries (it was created in 1537). The force also includes its own integral onboard air power to operate against adversaries in contested situations. Spain recognises that developing and maintaining its amphibious capability is of the highest order of difficulty. Spain places high priority on ensuring the three armed services work together intimately to make the capability work properly in an opposed setting. But Spain also recognises that this capability enables it at short notice to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.....

The utility of this approach has strong echoes in Australia’s region. With its four-ship amphibious flotilla, Spain was able to act promptly and play a prominent role in disaster relief after the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, much as they had done after a hurricane in Central America in 1998-99. When port facilities were destroyed and inoperable, Spain’s amphibious ships were able to operate off Haiti’s coast, providing a range of capabilities in support of the international relief efforts, reaching the shore with its amphibious craft and helicopters.....

Australia’s strategic circumstances, with the vast expanse of the Asia-Pacific region vulnerable to significant natural, environmental and other disasters, have pointed to the enduring utility of maintaining robust amphibious capabilities, not only for high-end war fighting, but for all the other assorted challenging tasks the armed forces are often called upon to assist with that might not necessarily be described as war-related. Indeed, experience in recent years has repeatedly demonstrated the utility of Australia maintaining afloat emergency response capabilities. In December 1974 Australia’s last aircraft carrier, HMAS Melbourne, was sent to Darwin to assist with the recovery operations after cyclone Tracy.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/opinion/in-war-and-peace-an-amphibious-capability-is-apt-20121021-27znj.html#ixzz2TWgQUNmu>

Not surprisingly, a very good USMC-Australian working relationship is being fashioned with the new Marine Rotation Force – Darwin operating in Australia’s north. This will be a good way for the Aussies to work through ways to employ their new capability.

As the Commanding Officer of the 31st MEU has put it:

VMM 265 will be chopped to us later this month. We are going to ease into the deployment much as was done with the East Coast MEUs to ensure that we execute wisely with the Ospreys.

They will be part of our training with the Australians when we participate in Talisman Saber this summer. We will be training with them as well at Bradshaw Field, which is a training area, and part of the rotational involvement of the Marines with the Australians. The training will contribute to the Australian effort to get ready to use their own forthcoming amphibious capability as well.

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-osprey-comes-to-the-pacific-the-case-of-the-31st-meu/>

Second Line of Defense learned more about the Aussie transition with an opportunity to discuss the effort with an Aussie Army officer involved in Bold Alligator 2013. LtCol Bonavita is currently the Australian Army liaison officer with the USMC and is based at Quantico. He is finishing the final year of his three-year tour of duty in the United States. He participated last year in Bold Alligator 2012 with two other Aussie officers and in this year’s exercise with one other officer.

Throughout his interview, he emphasized that the Aussies have been preparing for the introduction of their new ships, in part by working with the USMC. LtCol Bonavita said “as far as we [Australia] are concerned, the Marines are the experts on amphibious operations.” Australia will look to share much information with the USMC as its Amphibious capability emerges. This is already occurring with a program of personnel exchanges and combined training.

LtCol Bonavita believes his posting to Quantico has been at the perfect time, because “as the Marines are

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

returning to their amphibious roots, we are rediscovering ours with the introduction of our large amphibious vessels. Simultaneously, the Marines are establishing a presence in Darwin. These two issues have made for a busy assignment in the USA.”

He also described how the working relationship with the USMC was an important part of the development of the Australian Army itself. “We have done a lot of work with the Marines, including our officers attending USMC courses like the Expeditionary Warfare School, through to participating in exercises like Tailsman Saber, RIMPAC and Expeditionary Warrior, and exchanges with 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) in San Diego.” The relationships have been enduring. LTCOL Bonavita remarked that “When I was a platoon commander, a USMC company joined our battalion in Townsville as its MEU was deployed. In my current role I have found myself working with some of the very same officers from that Marine Company who are now USMC Colonels. It’s been very positive!”



Figure 9 *USS Bataan (April 25, 2013)–Sailors and Marines attached to the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 2, and the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB), joined together with coalition partners for a sunrise ceremony in commemoration of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Day on the ship’s hangar bay as a part of Bold Alligator 2013. The ceremony was held in honor of a national day of remembrance in Australia that marks the anniversary of military actions during World War I. Credit Photo: USN*

LtCol Bonavita suggested that continual work with the Marines would help shape the Australian thinking about the new ships and its approach to amphibious operations. “We have a USMC Colonel attached to the Australian Army’s Deployable Joint Force Headquarters within the 1st Division, which is one of the organizations leading our amphibious capability development.”

He also felt that his time at the two Bold Alligator exercises, which he attended, were important in shaping his own understanding of the evolving amphibious operational capabilities.

He was asked about what he thought about the Osprey and he commented that his only negative comment about the aircraft was the limited space inside, but felt it was perfect for amphibious operations. “I was surprised by the ability of the wings to fold on deck allowing a greater number of these aircraft to deploy aboard the ship. I was impressed with the redundancy of systems aboard the aircraft, which make it a very robust aircraft. I was also impressed by its speed and range as well as its ability to land just about everywhere. It really is a capable aircraft.”

He was asked about what he thought was the impact of the Marines exercising in the Northern Territory.

“The decision by the Australian government to invite the Marines to operate in the Northern Territory speaks volumes about the strength and good order of the relationship between Australia and the United States.”

Editor’s Note: The Australian Army approach to amphibious operations and having a force structured to support them is incorporated in their transformation is called Plan BEERSHEBA.

According to the Australian Army:

The ability to deploy offshore is crucial and Plan BEERSHEBA will tie in with existing programs to improve the Australian Defence Force's amphibious capability.

Plan BEERSHEBA introduces the Australia Defence Force's new amphibious capabilities such as the new Landing Helicopter Docks (LHD) ships which represent a fundamental shift in how Army will deploy land forces and conduct operations in response to the full spectrum of conflict scenarios in the future.

The Army's Deployable Joint Force Headquarters will foster and develop an amphibious culture across Army. To reinforce Army's commitment, the Chief of Army has designated the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (2 RAR) to form the core of Army's contribution to a future amphibious force as this development work is done. During an interview with Army News, the Chief of Army explained that with new amphibious ships already in the pipeline, it's time for Army to 'make a very significant buy in.'

"What Beersheba is doing is giving the government and the ADF a wider range of options when they look at the Army. Everything from humanitarian assistance through to warfighting, the Army can do it. The Army can get to that operational area with the right capabilities in the right timeframe and do something about the situation when they get there," Lieutenant General Morrison said.

<http://www.army.gov.au/Our-future/Plan-BEERSHEBA/Amphibious-capability>

Engaging the Future: Younger Navy and Marine Corps Warriors Prepare

2013-05-22 The USN-USMC team learns in the context of a joint and combined exercise Bold Alligator – the largest annual, amphibious exercise conducted.

It is also a great opportunity for an outsider to learn many things, and probably none more interesting than to learn from the young warfighters concerning their perspectives and their approach to conducting their jobs now and in the future.

In this piece, I will highlight three sets of conversations I had during my visit to Bold Alligator 2013.

In each of these conversations, it was very clear that the skills of Sailors and Marines are leaning forward to engage in 21st century operations, by building upon proven techniques of the 20th century and discarding obsolete processes in order to effectively respond in today's environment and prepare for tomorrow's.

This means honing the ability to work in coalitions from the ground up; integrating air, sea and ground operations; in addition to honing IT skills across a joint and combined force.

Bold Alligator is a foundational plank for this younger generation to lean forward.

My generation lived in service stove pipes and fought endlessly to preserve each service's fox hole; this generation gets the importance of joint operations rooted in core service competencies.

Lt Colin Fox

The first conversation was with 31 year old LT Collin Fox.

Fox, who trained as an ASW SH-60F pilot, began his career with a tour of duty aboard USS Harry S. Truman Strike Group. At the time of our conversation, he had recently shifted his assignment to Expeditionary Strike Group 2, where he has served as the Staff Readiness Planner since March 2013.

In this capacity at ESG-2, he has the opportunity to expand his expertise to include amphibious operations. He noted that "compared with Truman, the amphib mission set is certainly different but they complement each other well. I had never been on an amphib prior to Bold Alligator but was able to see the impact of amphibious operations and the integration of CSGs and ESGs first hand."

Fox noted that he was concerned his ASW expertise might not be as valuable as in past years because the SH-60F community of which he had been part had transitioned to a new aircraft which was "more of a utility aircraft with no anti-submarine capability."

However, after reporting to ESG-2, he learned ASW is a major concern for the amphibious warfare community as highlighted in Bold Alligator. He was pleasantly surprised to realize his skillsets and

expertise translated to the amphibious world.

He also gained an appreciation of the complexity of amphibious warfare.



Figure 10 Lt. Colin Fox Credit Photo: SLD

"It is very coordination intensive, which is easy to get wrong." The complexity of amphibious operations reminded him of the complexity of ASW operations. "It parallels ASW in the sense of the number of different assets that have to work together — in the right way, in the right roles — to accomplish the mission. Amphibious operations have an additional layer of planning preceding that complexity."

He noted a major difference with the carrier strike group concept as well. "With the carrier strike group, you deploy together and you come back together. With the amphibious ready group, the force is tailorable — assets are added if required, enhancing the flexibility of the force and ensuring it is the right size to address challenges in dynamic environments. That is the heart of the expeditionary strike group concept."

He also contrasted the carrier strike group concept with the challenges of evolving the new expeditionary strike group concept.

"The carrier strike group concept is a well understood mechanism of how it's supposed to work and there's a lot of corporate knowledge on who does what, what everyone's role is. It's a concept that's been practiced for a long time."

With the expeditionary strike group you are creating "capabilities around an amphibious readiness group by adding a flag staff on top and other assets as required by the mission set. It's a tailor-made strike group built around an ARG, and exercises like Bold Alligator help refine the details."

Fox also noted that the allied aspect would be highlighted in his next effort which the staff will travel to Kiel, Germany to participate in the Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) exercise.

In this exercise, assets will get underway, and rely heavily on coalition participation. "The majority of ships involved are foreign — French, Dutch, German, and a several others," said Fox. "Learning each other capabilities and processes in Bold Alligator is invaluable step to inform future operations and exercises."

Lastly, Fox expanded on the importance of a synthetic exercise, such as Bold Alligator to his training.

"Shortly after reporting to ESG-2, I attended school house training to bring me up to speed on amphibious operations. Then, I was able to merge academics and real-world processes while standing Battle Watch Caption in a simulated environment during Bold Alligator. Next month I will use both experiences to participate in a live exercise. My skills have grown a great deal in just a few months because of this process."

So is the story of Collin Fox, an entrant into the brave new world of the evolution of the expeditionary strike group and coalition warfare which boasts integration and flexibility.

Major Sean Dynan

In the second case, Maj. Sean Dynan, a dynamic USMC officer who enthusiastically worked on managing the littoral battlespace presented in Bold Alligator 2013.

The exercise presented a significant, air, maritime and land area challenge. And unlike some Army officers who think that land power is what you do when you are on the ground, Marines understand it really is about combined arms and the ability to operate with expeditionary logistics.

The command and control piece of this is significant and a work in progress.

Clearly for the ESG construct to be successful in inserting and supporting forces ashore, C2 needs to work effectively. There is little question that a good capability was demonstrated here, and the annual Bold

Alligator exercise allows it room to continue to grow.

For this Marine Corps leader, “it’s a wicked problem to have to handle that complex of a situation. Especially when you start talking about A2AD, and all the innovations on the enemy side and their ability to reach out and touch what’s at sea.



Figure 11 Gunnery Sgt. Anderson Credit Photo: SLD

The challenge from the Navy side is normally when the Navy is the supported commander, it means they are at sea and deal with the threat at sea. But with the ESG approach, now the Navy is primarily concerned with setting the conditions to safely deliver forces ashore. It also means the seabase is now an extended supply depot with C2, ISR, and firepower to support a maneuvering force. This is tough C2 problem to solve.”

Basically, the ESG commander ensures the A2AD threat has been neutralized in order move ships close enough to shore to provide supplies in support of forces ashore. Now, add in sea basing as a continuous support element and the problem becomes further complicated.”

The C2 piece is a crucial part of the ability to flow forces ashore effectively. For Dynan, the problem was discussed as a puzzle to be solved, a challenge to be met, not a permanent removal of US forces from the sea because the challenge was too tough. We can be thankful for young leaders like this!

Gunnery Sgt. Anderson

The two final interviewees illustrated the skill sets required to satisfy the increasing demand for communications in 21st century operations.

The first was Marine Corps, Gunnery Sgt. Anderson, who described himself as an expert in wired communications. Anderson described how sorting out the communications challenge was a core effort which required evolving capability driven by the communications industry.

As you know, the communications industry does not stand still. It can change in the blinking of the eye. Systems can become obsolete overnight. Not everything we can do on land, can be done on a ship. It is fine line we have to drive where we can bring the shipboard communications (blue side) and then transition ashore (the green side). We need to understand both and bring them together into a comprehensive capability.



He also commented what most interested him was the working relationship with the Blue side, to better understand how to get the Blue-Green team working realistically with regard to shaping a phased approach to identify and manage the communications needed for the exercise and comparable operations.

Figure 12 IT Specialist Kayshonda London

And finally, the conversation with Information Technology Specialist Kayshonda London highlighted the close relationship between what happens in the synthetic exercise and the real world. From the IT point of view, synthetic exercises provide a valuable forum to validate processes and maximize proven technology for real-world application.

During a synthetic exercise, communication is extremely important. Operators and support staff were dispersed across the battlespace, across various commands and states on the East Coast – a similar construct as if we were underway. In addition, we are in need of the same lines of communication to coordinate force movements that were simulated in this case but would actually be conducted in a live exercise or a future operation.”

Figure 12 *IT Specialist Kayshonda London Credit Photo: SLD*

As a result, we managed video-teleconferencing, voice lines, email, watchstander chat accounts...and the list goes on.

Additionally, Bold Alligator gives operators the opportunity to become more familiar with communications processes in the area of requirements and security. In an age where every member of a crew or staff has requirements for, and access to classified and unclassified networks, it is vital they understand capabilities, limitations and vulnerabilities. Bold Alligator allows that learning to occur in an environment largely free of variables.

So our collaboration occurs across warfare areas, services and nations to make communication possible – inport and at sea. We continually align processes, the environment and technology to support execution.

In short, in an exercise like Bold Alligator 2013 is not just about developing operational concepts but putting in play the evolution and integration of the skill sets to realize those concepts as well.

As we highlighted in our recent Jane's Navy International piece on the USMC-USN team in the Pivot to the Pacific, a much overlooked but central piece for shaping a 21st century strategy is the evolution of the skill sets of the Marines and sailors in executing a 21st century strategy. Strategy can be drawn up in briefing slides; mission success is delivered by effective tools in the hands of skilled and powerful warriors.

It is not enough to have just "things." Elemental accounting of quantitative differences can often overlook qualitative differences such as the intangibles of C2, training and tactics and logistic support.... The United States' and allies' innovation in understanding the evolving 21st-century "information revolution" and making that technology combat effective is crucial....

http://www.sldinfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Pivot_point_final.pdf

Re-Visiting the USS Arlington

2013-05-14 By Robbin Laird

When I last visited the USS Arlington it was for its christening. I visited the ship with my colleague Ed Timperlake and we were able to participate in the ceremony honoring those who died on 9/11 at the Pentagon.

I was at the Pentagon on that fateful day, and the plane, which hit the building, flew over my house in Arlington. This is [a day](#) I certainly will never forget.

It was also a pleasure to visit the ship when it was a good point in the process of building the San Antonio fleet. As is often the case, the amount of print on the early problems or teething efforts, far exceeds what the operators have to say when they get their hands on a ship and make it work for the USN-USMC team.

When we visited, we had a chance to talk with one of the key shipbuilders for the ship, who indicated that, indeed, the ship was doing well and production was making significant improvements in the ship.

As [the shipbuilder](#) commented:

Unfortunately, we're getting into that sweet spot now with these ships where we've ironed out a lot of the issues.

We're on a good learning curve.

If we could keep going on these things, there's no telling where we could take these ships relative to reductions in vessel labor, and overall improvements in operational excellence.

Hence, it was a real pleasure to see the LPD-24 dockside as it was participating in the Bold Alligator 2013 and to get a briefing from some senior members of the crew and to walk the ship.

The crew highlights the capabilities of the ship and reminds us why ships should be built with the evolution

of aviation capabilities in mind.

The XO

The first interview was with the executive officer of the USS Arlington, Lieutenant Commander Eric H. Lull. The XO highlighted the evolution of the amphibious fleet from simply carrying troops to becoming key combat assets for multi-mission efforts.

According to Lull, “we are certainly able to do the transport task better, for we have more space. But we also bring new aviation capabilities, which have not been seen before, on small deck amphibbs. We can land the MV-22; we can land Harriers. In the past, we have not been able to do that on the smaller amphibbs. Because we have good helo hanger space, we have the ability to do more effective maintenance on them as well. We can fit the MV-22 inside the hangers, for example.

We have as I said earlier, enormous amounts of storage space; we’ve also got a very advanced medical treatment facility onboard so that we can provide our own medical support for Marine landings. We can bring combat casualties back out here, and we’ll take you through that in a few minutes, but we’ve got a six-bed intensive care unit, 24-bed ward—we can expand that out to about 70 or 80 long-term patient care.

We’ve got improved self-defense capabilities over the other small decks because we have two 30-millimeter Bushmaster guns built into the ship.



Figure 13 *The three key persons interviewed aboard the USS Arlington: the executive officer, the cargo officer and the fuel officer. Credit Photo: SLD*

Our radar signature is reduced by the way the various systems have been consolidated onboard. We don’t have a lot of the radar reflective issues that some of the older ships have, which also makes us—even though we’re 684 feet long, 24,000 tons worth of ship — a lot better at hiding than the previous amphibbs had been.

SLD: What is the status of the ship currently?

Lull: We are in a period of completing our shakedown cruise. We are working to finish the construction phase and will then do our final contract trials this Fall. We will then begin the official training cycle for the ship.

The Combat Cargo Officer

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

Next up was a discussion with the combat cargo officer. Captain Darren Flint discussed how the cargo space and its configuration affected his job.

SLD: How would you describe your job?

Flint: I am the liaison onboard with the ship's company and I am responsible to make sure the equipment is loaded correctly onboard and prepare to offload the equipment as they disembark. We work closely with modern IT systems to make sure that we know where the equipment is located on the ship and get the right supplies to the Marines moving ashore.

The ship is more user friendly than ships on which I served before. The ship grades cargo space for vehicles space. We have added more than 20,000 square feet of vehicle space compared to earlier ships. We can bring more trucks, more Humvees, more tanks, more AVs.

The Aviation Fuels Officer

Finally, there was a discussion with the aviation fuels officer, Lt. Scott Marsh. The aviation fuels officer does what the title suggests, managing the jet fuel aboard the ship.

SLD: How does this ship affect your job compared to your experience on previous ships?

Marsh: As far as my job is concerned, we have a tremendous flight deck and support for that flight deck. We have fueling stations, we have electricity that we can supply to the flight deck that can start the aircraft, plus have forklifts and tow bars that we can use to tow aircraft around and bring them in the hangar, out of the hangar.

And the communication systems that we have set up overlooking the flight deck allows us to talk to anybody on the ship internally as well as a couple of radios outside the ship as well.

So as far as our ability to do our job on the ship, this is a pretty sweet set up aboard the ship.

To visit the USS Arlington Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/USSARLINGTON>

For earlier pieces on the LPD-17 class and the LPD-24

<http://www.sldinfo.com/uss-arlington-lpd24-commissioning/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/remembering-september-11th-the-usn-usmc-way/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/a-missed-opportunity/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-lpd-17-enhances-the-usn-usmc-capabilities-the-prospective-commander-of-lpd-24-discuss-the-future/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/remembering-911-christening-the-uss-arlington/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/at-the-christening-of-the-uss-arlington/>

Bold Alligator 2013 Draws to an End: The Wrap Up

Bold Alligator Draws to an End

2013-05-01 by Cpl. S.T. Stewart

ABOARD USS BATAAN, NAVAL STATION NORFOLK, Va

The international amphibious exercise, Bold Alligator 2013, concluded May 2.

Bold Alligator 13 was a Navy and Marine Corps-led synthetic exercise involving more than 3,500 personnel from 16 countries and Strike force NATO. The exercise simulated a force of 16,000 Marines and Sailors embarked aboard 17 naval vessels. The 11-day exercise was designed to improve the Navy and Marine Corps' fundamental ability to integrate and execute large-scale operations from the sea. The Bold Alligator exercise series is an annual event, which began in 2011, that alternates between live and synthetic exercises. In 2012 the exercise was live, with ships and embarked Marines and Sailors operating off the coast of North Carolina and Virginia. This year's exercise focused on integrating and streamlining staff planning, and command and control procedures of the Navy and Marine Corps teams from Expeditionary Strike Group 2, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and Carrier Strike Group 12.

"I think the big advantage (of conducting a synthetic exercise) is that we have the opportunity to change the synthetic environment on a daily basis," said Col. Bradley E. Weisz, deputy afloat commander of ESG 2. "You have the ability to play back the opportunity to do the things you're doing well, as well as the things you do not do so well. When you do it live, you get one shot and that's it."

The Marine Corps-Navy team normally conducts amphibious exercises at the Marine Expeditionary Unit and Amphibious Ready Group level. The scale of this operation dwarfed the standard MEU-ARG team, which includes three amphibious assault ships with approximately 2,300 Marines and 2,000 Sailors embarked. "This exercise was a way to improve the relationship between ESG-2 and 2d MEB," said Weisz. "It's also a way to improve the east coast's relationship between Fleet Forces Command and (Marine Forces Command)."



Figure 14 Mexican navy Rear Adm. Ruben Ceballos-Guevara departs the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) after touring the ship during Bold Alligator 2013. Credit Photo: USN.

Military units at Marine Corps Bases Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton, Naval Air Station Oceana, and Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads all participated in different simulation centers. Working closely with their Marine and Sailor counterparts aboard USS Bataan was an international team consisting of personnel from

Australia, New Zealand, Canada, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Brazil, Mexico, and Portugal and other countries.

"I feel BA 13 is important for the forces of Mexico and the United States to help with relations and gain experience," said Jose Luis Santos Mujica, an officer in the Mexican Naval Infantry who participated as part of the coalition aboard USS Bataan. "This exercise is really important to us because we get to learn skills that we can use in future exercises with our country. We are very grateful for getting to be a part of BA 13, because it expands the bond between the U.S. and Mexico." This year's exercise scenario involved coalition forces working to rid the fictional country of Amber from the invading aggressor country of Garnet. During

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

the scenario participants simulated ship-to-shore landings, coordinated continuous air support, and conducted maritime security operations while aggressively fighting their way through the fictional enemy forces on land.

While the participating ships remained in port during the exercise and no Marines were actually put ashore, there were multiple benefits and lessons learned from conducting the training. “There are a lot of advantages to doing it here pier side,” said Weisz. “You can try new experiments, new initiatives and not have to waste a lot of the money and funds that you would have to use to get all the ships underway.”

Exercises such as Bold Alligator help prepare the Navy and Marine Corps team for future warfare conflicts, overseas contingency and crisis response operations. A big take-away from the exercise was the ability to try new methods in such a complex situation while addressing a challenge of getting the MEB/ESG command to think and operate as one team in the maneuver area. “Conducting an operation of this magnitude in a real-life scenario takes a lot of coordination,” said Brig. Gen. John K. Love, commanding general of 2d MEB. “We participate in these (synthetic) exercises so when it comes to the real thing, we are proficient enough to accomplish our goal. Combining the synthetic events with live events is part of a training continuum that is essential in preparing us as an expeditionary crisis response force. We must be prepared when the call comes for us to head out.”

The Navy-Marine Corps team will implement the lessons learned from this year when they participate in the live exercise, Bold Alligator 2014.

<http://www.dvidshub.net/news/106165/bold-alligator-2013-draws-end#.UYWVOV5V9kto%23ixzz2SMmWdhKT>

Looking Back and Looking Ahead: From Bold Alligator 2013 to 2014

2013-06-05 After the conclusion of the BOLD ALLIGATOR 2013 exercise, we had a chance to talk with Col Bradley Weisz, Deputy Commander for the ESG TWO, about the exercise and the way ahead.

Col Weisz provided some insights with regard to a number of activities in BOLD ALLIGATOR 2013, which had been either touched on lightly or not at all by participants interviewed earlier.

This helped round out the picture.

He also provided some thoughts on the way ahead for the next BOLD ALLIGATOR exercise.

SLD: One part of the innovations in BA 13 was the use of some new assets. One of these assets was the Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV). Could you talk about how JHSV was used in the exercise?

Col Weisz: Sure, for starters, the Joint High Speed Vessel provides some great capabilities to the Navy-Marine Corps team. With the ability to go thirty-five plus (35+) knots, carry approximately three-hundred (300) Marines and Sailors as well as six-hundred (600) short-tons of cargo and equipment, we, the blue-green team, are very excited about this ship. It has a flight deck for rotary-wing operations and a very capable off-load ramp that will allow vehicles to quickly drive on and off the ship. Its shallow draft enhances littoral operations and port access. It is good to go!

For BOLD ALLIGATOR 13, we started with three primary uses for the Joint High Speed Vessel.

The first use was to quickly embark and transport some of the landing force’s personnel, equipment and cargo that would be supporting maritime operations throughout all of the littorals. We wanted to find a niche capability with the landing force and be able to fully exploit it in support of anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) neutralization or roll-back operations.

Secondly, was the potential use of the JHSV as a medical evacuation platform. If we encountered significant casualties, these personnel would be brought aboard the Joint High-Speed Vessel and rapidly transported out to our sea base medical capabilities aboard our amphibious assault ships, the LHDs, or possibly even transported to a land based medical facility further in the rear area and completely out of harm’s way.

The third primary use was to stage critical amphibious task force supplies for future use in and around the

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

amphibious objective area. Again, with the ability to steam at thirty-five plus (35+) knots, if you had a shortage of class 1 (food and water), class 3 (fuel) or class 5 (ammunition), the JHSV gives you the capability of getting those supplies and sustainment into the operation, into the fight, very quickly and efficiently.

Additionally, both the amphibious task force and the landing force were prepared to utilize the JHSV in support of humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) and non-combatant evacuation (NEO) operations, whatever those missions would have called for. Again, the intent was to develop a small but capable niche in support of the operation and exploit it rapidly and decisively.

But as the operation unfolded, a fifth use emerged for the Joint High Speed Vessel. The Navy expeditionary combat command, the NECC, requested it and utilized it to reposition some of their security forces and equipment within the operational area, utilizing several small ports to embark and debark their forces. As a result, these NECC assets helped protect the amphibious task force as well as provide security for the landing force when they came ashore.

So, as you can see, the Joint High Speed Vessel is an extremely flexible asset for supporting a wide range of operations including maneuver and sustainment, relief operations in small or damaged ports, flexible logistics support or as key enablers for rapid transport.

SLD: There is a key development, which can easily be missed in the evolution of the seabased logistics system, namely the role of RFID, and IT systems, which facilitate selective offloading. Could you talk about the importance of this capability in shaping expeditionary logistics capabilities?

Col Weisz: Sure can. You have to know exactly what gear and equipment is on your ship at all times and exactly where it is staged, where it is positioned at all times so you can conduct a rapid and organized off-load when required. It is called organization and you must have it aboard your ships.

Off-loading an entire ship just for a few items makes absolutely no sense at all. Trying to figure out where some gear and equipment is staged, where it is positioned aboard the ship can be very time consuming and ultimately delay operations ashore, not what the commander wants to do.

We use those RFID tags and IT systems to properly stage, position, track and off-load all gear, equipment and supplies aboard our ships, especially the T-AKEs. Those systems are critical for the rapid build-up of combat forces ashore in support of amphibious operations.

When you have all your gear, equipment and supplies completely organized and ready to go, it makes it that much easier to deliver the landing force ashore rapidly. Yes, the RFID tags and IT systems are critical enablers for the landing force team. They are a must have.

SLD: The T-AKE ship has elevators, unlike its predecessor. This coupled with the new IT systems allows, the logistics team to be able to push forward the equipment and supplies demanded by the ashore force.

Col Weisz: That is a great point, you are exactly right. Elevators and IT systems may not seem essential, but when properly combined with an evolving and time sensitive CONOPS they become significant enablers. They truly enhance your rapid build-up of combat power ashore; they are also a must have.

SLD: Could you talk about the centrality of C2? In a world where acronyms abound, and folks now talk about C5ISR, the reality is that C2 is the central piece for an insertion force, especially coming from the sea and being air dropped. What are the challenges going forward with single naval battle in shaping appropriate C2?

Col Weisz: For me, if you get the C2 piece correct, everything else will just fall into place. It all boils down to establishing and maintaining personal relationships, continuously engaging your partners, your subordinates and holding them accountable for their actions and support. The blue-green team in support of the single naval battle will only get better by continuing to train regularly with each other, trying to develop and improve our habitual relationships with each other. Effectively integrating the Expeditionary Strike Group, the Marine Expeditionary Brigade and the Carrier Strike Group can be easily accomplished; we just need to train, to engage each other more frequently than we have in the past.

SLD: Col Riccio spoke of the challenge of risk management with regard to ensuring that there are adequate supplies ashore to support the forces. When you are supporting from the seabase or using air dropping, it is a challenge to get it exactly right in terms of logistics support, and the negative consequences of not getting it right can be significant. What is your take on the risk management challenge?

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

Col Weisz: Well, the risk management challenge comes with all operations. The commanders and their staffs definitely saw that there was a certain amount of risk out there. We tried to mitigate that risk by deploying ashore only the minimum force necessary to accomplish the mission, no more. So, in essence, we limited our footprint ashore and utilized our unique sea-basing capabilities to the maximum extent in supporting the forces ashore. The intent was to develop and maintain a robust and redundant sea-based logistics and sustainment system that could respond and deliver the goods, the requirements on a moment's notice to the warfighter ashore. Basically, meet his requirements ashore just as he was requesting them.

SLD: The exercise provided a mix and match set of threats facing the force, which mirrors reality quite well, in that, the diversity of challenges is what makes operations difficult. Could you talk about the diversity of challenges issue in the exercise?

Col Weisz: You're right, it does mirror our current operating environment quite well.

The very first threat that we dealt with was an anti-access/area-denial threat. We had to concentrate and focus heavily on how to quickly neutralize, to take out that A2/AD threat in order for us just to get into the operational area. We had to neutralize his coastal defense cruise missile (CDCM), anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM), surface-to-air (SAM) and sea mine capabilities very quickly.

Once we started operating in the amphibious objective area, we had to deal with more conventional threats from the air, surface and sub-surface domains. Fast movers, surface action groups and diesel submarines had to be dealt with by the blue-green team. Finally, once the landing forces went ashore, they faced both conventional and asymmetric threats from violent extremist organizations, that created numerous challenges for the Marines and Sailors. While all this was taking place, the amphibious task force and landing force was also fully prepared to provide humanitarian assistance/disaster relief and non-combatant evacuation support if needed by the maritime component commander.

SLD: It is the 21st century version of the three-block war!

Col Weisz: You are exactly right. It is the 21st Century version of a three-block war. A2/AD, followed by conventional warfare with asymmetric warfare also thrown in, while being fully prepared and ready to provide HA/DR support.

SLD: What are some of the things going forward that will play out in BA-14?

Col Weisz: We clearly want to keep the partnership between ESG 2 and 2nd MEB strong. Without a doubt, this year's exercise cemented that close partnership even more.

We want to continue integrating the carrier strike group in support of amphibious and expeditionary operations. This is critical for the single naval battle concept. This year there was a great working relationship that existed between the ESG, the MEB and the CSG.

We need to continue integrating coalition forces and capabilities into the exercise; this is an absolute must. Our coalition partners provide outstanding leadership and experience in amphibious and expeditionary operations. We must continue to learn from them as much as we possibly can.

Finally, we need to continue working on and refining our communications strategy. It is clear that in this type of operation, the littoral version of the three-block war, communications strategy is absolutely crucial for the success of the force. We need to do much more in this key area of influence.

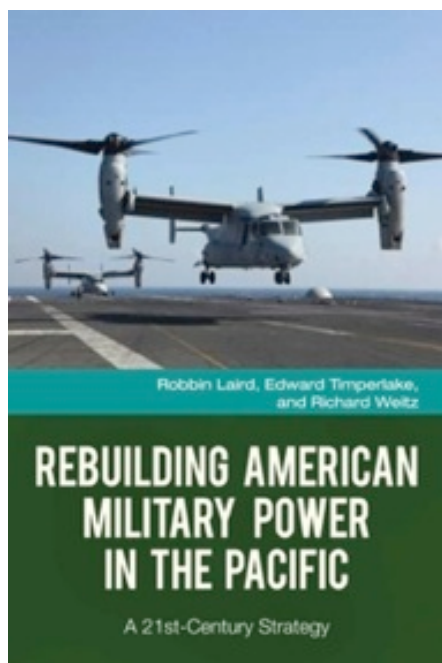
Building Towards the Future: Key Building Blocks in Shaping Distributed Operations

In this section, we have included some interviews with key USN and USMC leaders about emerging capabilities, which build upon the distributed operations template. Distributed operations is a key way ahead for the US forces and a cornerstone for building an effective 21st century military strategy.

In our forthcoming book *The Rebuilding of American Military Power: Shaping a 21st Century Pacific Strategy* (to be published by Praeger Publishers), we argue that forging a distributed operations approach, which combines presence, scalability and reachback with the US and allied forces is essential to deal with the

Pacific challenges of the 21st century.

We argue that: “The new approach can be built around several core capabilities, which can allow U.S. forces to operate in a more decentralized manner and to shape a distributed operational approach. This approach joined with a re-working of joint capabilities with allies can provide for the kind of reach and depth needed to deal with threats to the region as well as to shape forces – like Lego blocks – fitted together to deal with the broad spectrum of challenges.”



The Bold Alligator series of exercises clearly is providing the kind of training and focus upon the distributed operational approach appropriate to 21st century operations. We will conclude this Special Report with a look at several key building blocks for shaping such an approach and that as they emerge will be folded into the Bold Alligator exercises and become part of the 21st century fleet.

The first piece is an interview with the Deputy Commandant of Aviation, Lt. General Schmidle, who discusses the role of the F-35B. The second piece is an interview with Rear Admiral Moran, head of Air Warfare on the Navy staff who discusses the impact of the Ford and the F-35C in shaping capabilities for the single naval battle. The third is an interview with Major General Walsh, Deputy Commanding General of the USMC Combat Development Command, who focuses on the coming role of the new large deck amphibious ship, the USS America. The final piece is an interview with Rear Admiral Buzby, then head of the Military Sealift Command, about innovations in the MSC to support the kinds of operations being tested in the Bold Alligator series of exercises.

The Way Ahead with the F-35B: A Discussion with the Deputy Commandant for Aviation

2013-04-11 In a discussion in late March 2013, Lieutenant General Robert E. Schmidle Jr., the Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Aviation (DCA), discussed the F-35B and the evolving Marine Corps approach to the aircraft.

The DCA highlighted a number of key changes associated with the introduction of the F-35B into the USMC which will be part of the evolution of its concepts of operations and capabilities.

SLD: We have talked to many F-35 pilots, including one experienced F-22 pilot who is a Marine Corps F-35 squadron commander. When you spend time with the practitioners, you can see what this plane brings to force structure integration and the joint fight.

How do you get people to better understand the innovation associated with the plane, and the CONOPS innovations, which the USMC is now shaping, from the Osprey to the F-35B?

Lt. General Schmidle: It starts by understanding that this is not simply a tactical aircraft replacement.

Recently, I discussed the transition with General Hostage, the ACC commander. He mentioned that until he flew the F-22 he thought of the aircraft as an F-15 on steroids. After flying the aircraft, he appreciated how different a fifth generation aircraft really was in terms of operations and capabilities.

The F-35 has capabilities the Raptor does not, notably in terms of its integration capabilities. We are operating the aircraft in a limited capacity currently, but that will expand as we roll it out.

SLD: In other words, you are highlighting a mini-fleet in operation?

Lt. General Schmidle: That is right. We need to get people away from talking about this as a replacement for an F/A-18, for an AV-8; to get a better understanding at the senior officer level about exactly what the airplane can do. We are going to put together a general officer / flag officer familiarization event at Fort

Worth, of two day duration.

The role of the simulator in training of pilots provides a very realistic sense of what the plane can deliver with the software we will have in our initial deployed airplanes.

I have asked the F-35 team to link several simulators together to begin to understand what an integrated fleet can bring to the combat team.

We are also in the throes of setting up a ten-day immersion event for the field grade officers associated with the F-35 program who will go through the immersion event and fly the plane via the simulators and begin to understand the realities and impacts of sensor fusion on combat operations. The situational awareness, which the plane and fleet can provide, will be game-changing, and unless you are in the cockpit and operating in a fleet you will not understand that.

We're going to immerse them in the systems of the airplane for a half a day, and then spend the rest of the time in the simulators doing tactical employment of the airplane so they can actually see what it means. What does it mean when we tell you it can generate this kind of information or it can fuse this kind of information?

Again we have seen some of this with the Raptor. When Raptors take off that is the last time they will see one another until they land. The Raptor uses airspace multiple times greater than that of an F-15. They train over hundreds of miles and that is mind-boggling.

Putting people into the simulators can get them acclimated to the changes on the way. You put a Harrier pilot in the simulator, he presses the STOVL button, and the airplane lands easily.

SLD: The F-35B is taking his job away!

Lt. General Schmidle: Exactly. What we've now done is we've taken that ten dollars' worth of focus that every pilot has, and instead of spending eight dollars of it on flying the airplane, I'm only spending two dollars flying the airplane and I've got the rest of that time to focus on the systems and burying myself into that system.

This then allows us to focus on the leveraging of the information, which the plane, as a fleet, will provide.

The Marine Corps is going to be building and developing an architecture that's going to allow us to share and off-board that information from outside of the F-35 world. We know how to share it amongst the F-35 pilots and then amongst other people that have certain link capabilities.

But where we are going is to shape information sharing across the MAGTF, not just the command and control, but the intel community and everybody else that has an interest in what that information is and what it could do.

SLD: The plane will enable a significant change in how information is shared and decisions made. The Raptor is a different animal completely, and was never designed as an information-sharing engine; the F-35 is.

That is why having the Marines as key lead element in deploying the F-35 is important to getting the broader joint community to understand its impact, don't you think?



Figure 15 The 8 F-35Bs involved in the multi-ship training exercise are shown. All the plane captains [crew chiefs] are seen standing by their jets. The pilots are in the cockpits. The jets are running. Credit Photo: by Lt Col "Steve" Gillette, F-35B IP and executive officer at the VMFAT-501 on April 26, 2013.

Lt. General Schmidle: The ability to generate the information is one thing, but we are interested in enhanced decision making in combat situations. What I really want

to do is inform that decision making process. Because the decision maker – and it's not one guy or one gal,

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

there's many of them in a command post – they're the people that I want to get this information to.

And a key element is get people to understand that the pilot is not the diffuser of the information, but rather the machines in his aircraft.

The notion that I have to do anything in that cockpit to pass that information to him...is so 1990s. There ought to be an automatic algorithm in there that identifies that thing and spits it out to everybody that's on the net.

SLD: In other words, the goal is to push the information to appropriate level of decision-making?

Lt. General Schmidle: Exactly. Because if they're relying on me to look at my display, see the SAM site down there, realize it's not a threat to me, but now you're going to pass that information, that's not, in my mind, an efficient architecture appropriate to an F-35 fleet.

It needs to be automatic because the old way was pilots talking to each other and passing the information.

That's old school; we don't want to do that.

You want that information to go to the folks who need it, and his airplane will know whether or not that SAM site is a threat to another asset because it's got the algorithms built into it to begin with to identify the threat and pass the information around in the battlespace.

SLD: And the reduction of (types of) USMC aircraft from three to one will also allow you to focus on building a common architecture for information sharing from the aircraft to the MAGTF?

Lt. General Schmidle: The Marine Corps being the most frugal of all services, we like to find the Swiss Army knife in the world that's out there that we can do everything with. We've talked about the fact that there are three type / model / series airplanes that we're going to neck down to one.

We have the capability inside this one platform to do what we previously did with three different jets: Harrier, EA-6 and F/A-18. In my mind, that is a good place to start, but it is still a limiting vision in terms of timeline.

What are you going to do with this airplane after the third day of the war?

You are going to do a lot with the airplane because what it will allow you to do now is the airplane itself can transform itself, it is capable of being both a deliverer of kinetic effects and a deliverer of electronic effects, as well as a sensor that pulls all those things in, fuses them, and then feeds them to the rest of the MAGTF.

You have a platform that is capable of not only doing ISR, not only doing kinetic ordinance delivery, but of fusing that delivery and then disseminating it. The dissemination architecture is something that is still problematic today but the plane enables the crafting of such an architecture, and because of the three variants and the global partners for the plane, investment will be shared and the results global.

This gives us potentially a more streamlined architecture from which to build the information requirements.

SLD: Another aspect of the plane, which is often ignored, is that it is a software upgradeable aircraft, which allows it to evolve with the threat environment. How do you view the impact of having a software upgradeable aircraft as a baseline capability from which to work from towards the future?

Lt. General Schmidle: If you go back into the '50s when we were designing airplanes, like the A-4 and the F-4 and the F-111, if you wanted to change something in the weapon system of an F-4, you took a black box out that was this long, this wide and weighed thirty pounds. And you found a different black box and you stuffed it in there, and it was about this big.

When we evolved into the F/A-18, we had boxes that were much smaller, and they were capable of some reprogramming because we would put new tapes, et cetera, et cetera into them.

But now we're evolving to what you just described, which is an airplane that is software reprogrammable.

It's a big server, if you will, in many ways.

And it allows us to continue to reprogram it in ways that will hopefully keep us either ahead of the threat or that will allow us to get the higher levels of integration and fusion. And when – and that won't be soon – we begin to hit up against the extent of the computing power, or the analytics in the airplane, that we've got the links available that we can off-board some of those analytics to other places that they might be able to more efficiently operate.

If you're in the net and the net is going to look more and more, in my mind, like a cloud in the future, that kind of architecture, then it will look like a conventional database where queries have to come from individual parts of that database, whereas a cloud can query across the database.

And that's something that we are just discovering now in the IT world: the power of cloud. The architecture of this airplane will allow it to evolve into that kind of architecture as it matures.

SLD: The impact of the F-35 as a fleet also means that, from the combatant commander's point of view, the power of the combat cloud from various US services planes plus allies is the reality he will consider, not Harriers versus F/A-18s versus F-16s. What is your sense of this possibility?

Lt. General Schmidle: I think that we're going to find ourselves in a situation where we, the Marine Corps, are going to be able to offer much more to the joint force in terms of capability. And as General Hostage put it to me, Marine Corps assets will be considered an integrated part of the joint force, in a way he has not thought of it before. The Air Force commander will look at USMC or USN F-35s as part of his F-35 fleet from the perspective of the joint fight.

SLD: Another key aspect of the deployment of the aircraft with your other transformation aircraft – the Osprey – is that you can generate significant CONOPS innovations. What are some of the early thinking about such innovations?

Lt. General Schmidle: We are looking at a sixteen-ship F-35B formation flying with a four-ship Osprey formation.

The Ospreys could fly with the Bs to provide fuel and munitions for rearming wherever the F-35Bs can land. As you know, the F-35B can land in a wide variety of areas and as a result this gives us a very mobile strike force to operate throughout the battlespace. This kind of flexibility will be crucial in the years ahead.

The USS Ford in the U.S. Navy's Future: Enabling the Distributed Force

In an April 30, 2013 interview with Rear Admiral Bill Moran, Director of Air Warfare (OPNAV N98), the approach of the US Navy in combining several naval air transitions with the introduction of the USS Ford was the focus of conversation.

In a recent co-authored article, the Admiral had looked at the GERALD R. FORD class carrier as a new naval platform. In this conversation, the focus was on the evolving context and how the FORD class would fit with the fleet and the transition in the air wing aboard the carrier.

Rather than seeing the new carrier as the centerpiece of an island of concentrated force within which the carrier was the centerpiece, Moran emphasized that the FORD class could play this role, but its design and the evolving nature of the air wing and other capabilities will allow it to play a much more flexible or distributed role.

The Transition

SLD: When we visited San Diego a couple of years ago, the naval aviators we talked to were focused on the across the board transitions which were underway. For example, Captain Whalen, now the Commander of the USS Carl Vinson underscored that the Navy was facing an across the board transition.

How do you view the transition?

Rear Admiral Moran: We are the midst of a significant transition in Naval aviation. We are working it hard inside the building and in concert with the fleet and that is one reason why we've had our heads down and not as vocal as one might expect.

We largely took a procurement holiday with regard to naval air platforms in the mid 1990s. When one is buying aircraft, typically you are looking at a 20-25 year service life. If you are buying in peaks, you are then going to have valleys.

Because of the mid-1990s procurement holiday, we are now in the midst of replacing several legacy platforms across the fleet.

We will be done with all our helicopter transitions by 2016. We will be done with the F-18 Es, Fs and G's along with the P-8 by the end of the decade. We will be on a steady ramp on E2D because it is not a volume aircraft. In effect, in the foreseeable future, we will only be buying the F-35C as our advanced aircraft system. These are the aircraft that will make up the carrier airwing for the next 20 plus years.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

This means that in 20 years we will face a new build cycle to add replacement aircraft or air systems to replace current capability.

This means that the air wing that will go onto the Ford, for example, will provide a key foundation to shape an understanding of what comes next.

Shaping Innovation

SLD: Your focus on cycles of innovation can be misunderstood. When you are talking about where you might wish to be in 2030, some might see this as an unhappiness with the trend lines which you are already have set in place. Could you give us your thoughts on this challenge of presentation of future technologies with current evolutions?

Rear Admiral Moran: We are looking at a number of evolving technological developments and options to shape the naval air wing after next. Unfortunately, some people misunderstand this approach and think we are looking at future technologies to displace what we are buying now, including the F-35 in the near term. In fact it is just the opposite.

We are going to operationally shape our understanding of the evolving air wing, notably as the F-35 enters the fleet, and build from that to the air wing after next.

The CNO has highlighted the role of payloads in shaping the kinds of platforms we are buying and likely to develop and buy.

We think that in Naval aviation we are building out in that manner with the new GERALD R. FORD class of carriers (future platform) married with evolving air wing capabilities (payloads).

Another good example is the new P-8 Poseidon, which was design built from a commercial airframe. We then put architecture in the airplane to allow growth in terms of what capability will fit into that airplane in the future. This kind of “truck” and “payload” construct buys us time to evolve capability, whether it’s weapons or sensors or communications gear that are more easily integrated into the backbone of that airplane.

When we think of strike fighters for the carrier wing after next, shaping a combat truck in effect will play a role. It might be a truck that has a common architecture, a backbone to it that you can plug and play different capability sensors, weapons, comms, and that will drive design and it will drive propulsion.

It will also have the reach and reach back to operate in multiple environments.

And will have payloads on it that will enable future weapons that we see that are smarter, more precise, and will be a bit unpredictable for potential adversaries, whoever they might be.

The Coming of the F-35

SLD: You will also have the opportunity from the standpoint of 2030 to take advantage of understanding what the impact of the F-35 will be on the fleet.



Figure 16 In this photo, CDR John Allison with the VFA-101 (Grim Reapers), one of the initial cadre of the F-35C pilots at VFA-101 is seen in front of a USMC F-35B. The B is in the Navy hanger for routine maintenance. The Navy is slated to get their first two production jets at Eglin by the end of May 2013. The photo is credited to Maj Karen Roganov, the 33rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs Officer.

Rear Admiral Moran: Absolutely. That is a good point.

Joint strike fighter in my view is a revolutionary change to how we're going to operate.

And we will evolve joint strike fighter once we get it in our hands and we learn to operate with it, and we truly understand its full potential. Once we get it out there and we start operating, we're going to find out that we're going to want to evolve this capability.

And the F-35 may be its own successor.

Point being, we do not need to make a decision on the future as of yet, because much will depend on the operational experience we gain with the new air wing as well as a close look at the evolution of technologies, such as propulsion.

The mix of aircraft and capability is a key part of our discussion going forward in the future, especially on what the air wing after next might look like.

The Future of UAVs

SLD: There are frequent comments to the effect that it is the end of the manned aircraft era and we will see the dominance of the unmanned. But one could note that UAVs really are simply data links in space and are extremely vulnerable in many ways. But clearly robotics is a key part of the evolution of what will shape the future of what is on the carrier deck.

Rear Admiral Moran: They are called unmanned systems, but clearly they are not today. There is significant support necessary to operate the systems, and the man in the loop is crucial to execute an effective mission. Where you would like to go is to launch a system so it could operate autonomously within the rules of operation and engagement you have pre-set.

We clearly are not there yet. What we get for now from so-called unmanned systems is persistence. There is a clear value in the persistent capability for the ISR mission of UAVs. Information security and control is crucial as well.

If I launch it, can I turn it back? Can I prevent it from doing something when the information changes between the time I launch it and the time it arrives?

That's the judgment piece, that's the autonomous piece that is crucial to a commander. So I think the man in the loop, whether it's the truck, the man in the truck that operates that capability, whether it's the carrier or the airplane is still relevant for a long, long time.

The Coming of the USS Ford

SLD: You have been talking about the evolution of the air wing, but you clearly have in mind that the new large deck carrier will be part of the re-shaping of what that air wing can be used for. Could you talk about your understanding of the Ford and its capabilities?

Rear Admiral Moran: Because it's an "electrified" platform — it's no longer predominantly steam and hydraulics and all of the things that are traditional parts of the Nimitz class carriers — we've replaced a lot of that with electrical capability because of improved power generation coming out of a newly designed nuclear power plant.

It's a generational leap in capability in terms of generated power.

FORD will generate three times the electrical power of a NIMITZ class carrier. And with that you can electrify the ship and you can automate the ship, add the most powerful and advanced radar system in the Navy and then when you want to put things on the ship, new capabilities in the future that we can't even think of today, whether it's a hypersonic capability that's unmanned, directed energy weapons or whatever it is, we do know it's got to be able to plug in. It's got to fit in somehow. And, it's going to need power.

With a ship that is in effect a 21st century infrastructure for 21st century systems, we will be able to do that.

Whatever we invent, whatever we want to put on this truck in the future, it is going to be able to incorporate it in a way that the current configuration cannot.

We have also reduced the crew size and designed the ship for reduced maintenance, thereby reducing operational costs over its lifetime by four billion dollars.

The FORD Class, will introduce significant design improvements in flight deck sortie generation capability.

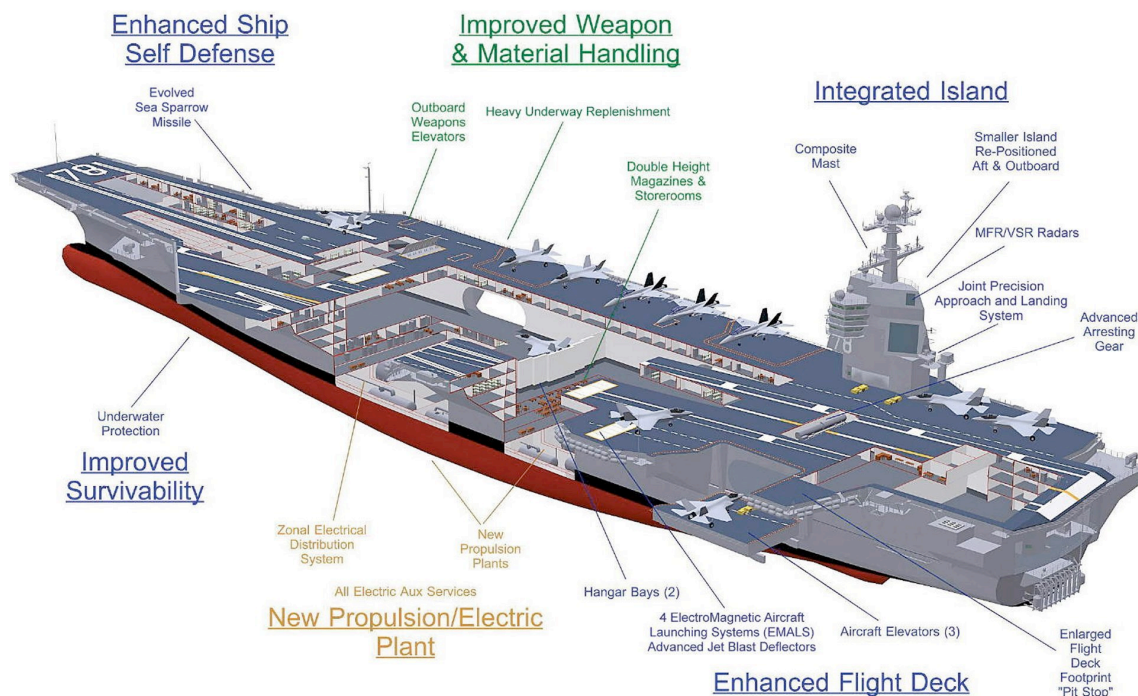


Figure 17 A conceptual rendering of CVN-78. US Navy Illustration (# 060630-N-0000X-003) courtesy Northrop Grumman Newport News Shipbuilding now Huntington-Ingalls Shipyards.

It's cleaned up significantly. We've developed in effect a pit crew concept where there's enough room when an airplane lands that you can pull it off into the pit and reconfigure it, whether it's sensors or weapons, and gas it, and put it right back out on the deck and launch it.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

SLD: You are describing a carrier which can operate much more flexibly than a traditional carrier, and one which can become a central piece in a combat spider web, rather than operating at the center of a concentrated force. Could you talk to the con-ops piece of this?

Rear Admiral Moran: The Ford will be very flexible and can support force concentration or distribution. And it can operate as a flagship for a distributed force as well and tailored to the mission set.

When combined with the potential of the F35, FORD will be able to handle information and communications at a level much greater than the Nimitz class carriers.

People will be able to share information across nations, and this is crucial. We call it maritime domain awareness, but now you've included the air space that's part of that maritime domain.

There is another aspect of the FORD, which is important to handling the information systems as part of the evolution of the fleet. We've never really talked about the cooling aspects. But if you go down to Newport News and take a tour of the FORD right now, one of the things they really like to brag about is innovations in the cooling system. All of us know the processing power takes its heat.

And so, you've got to be able to cool it. FORD more than doubles the cooling system capacity of a NIMTZ class carrier.

But let me close by circling back to the future of the airwing for the next 20 years and the value we see in the F-35C.

We are buying all production aircraft currently. We see the coming of the FORD and the coming of the F-35 as highly synergistic for the fleet and its operation as a sea base. And with the F-35C must come Block 3F capability, which has a fully enabled set to operate the weapons we use at sea, multi-ship integration and a host of other very important capabilities important to how we expect to operate in the future. We are not going to accelerate the number of production airplanes until we get to Block 3F which will give us the capability that we need to operate off the carrier.

Once we marry up F35C with key capability investments in the Super Hornet, E2D, Growlers and a mix of unmanned capabilities, we will continue to have an airwing that can dominate in any environment.

The Impact of the USS America: "A MAGTF ACE on Steroids"

2012-11-21 In a four-part follow up set of interviews, Second Line of Defense is looking at the role and impact of the USS America. In this interview with Major General Walsh, Deputy Commanding General of the USMC Combat Development Command, we focused on how the ship provides an important impulse to the USMC approach to the future.

Walsh attended the christening of the USS America and with his background in Aviation as former background working at both HQs Marine Corps, in Iraq and at 2nd MAW is well qualified to discuss its impact on USMC operations.

But his current position as Deputy Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command means that he charged with the responsibility of working for the Corps on thinking through the evolution of expeditionary operations in the period ahead.

The USS America is a new type of large deck amphibious ship. As Captain Hall, the CO of the ship has put it:

We are a large deck amphibious ship, just as the Kearsarge. But we are an aviation-centric large deck amphibious ship and we've been designed specifically without a well deck so we can support the next generation of aircraft.

We can get out there with a much larger hanger bay with two high-hat areas to support maintenance on the much larger MV-22s. The maintenance requirements for the F-35 are met and we have the capability to expand when required for future development. With our added fuel, maintenance, supply, support, we can sustain the aviation capability much greater on station.

SLD: How is the USMC planning to leverage this new capability?

Major General Walsh: The Marines focus operationally on being a scalable and tailorable force. We tend to look at a deck as an opportunity to maximize scalability and tailorability for the mission that will be assigned.

We want to be able to disaggregate our assets, and having this capability truly allows us to do that, but it

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

also allows us to aggregate and come together dependent upon the mission.

We will be able to use the new aviation assets combined with greater operational support to those aircraft to expand the scope and range of our ability to support scalable and tailorable forces.

SLD: When we talked just after you got back from Iraq, it was clear that the newest aircraft in the USMC operational kit – the Osprey – was a game changer. The F-35 will be as well. But it will take some time to figure how to use it and how operations will change as a consequence. Don't you see a direct parallel to marrying the Osprey with the USS America and the future inclusion of the F-35 B onto the America deck?

Major General Walsh: I do. With the CH-46s in Iraq, I had to put out Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARPs) to support them. This meant sending convoys, equipment, and Marines out to operate and secure the FARPs. This also required protecting the FARPs after they were in place.

With the Osprey, I could simply leap past all of that. The Osprey completely changed how we operated. The demand became to use the Ospreys throughout Iraq because it could go through Iraq in one day easily, and just run around the battle space. It changed completely how we used our heliborne assets. I expect we will have the same experience with the F-35 B, only more so. When I went from flying F-4s to F-18s that was a shift.

With the F-35 it is a leap of multiple generations of technology all at once. It's more of exponential curve than we did when we went from third generation to fourth generation aircraft. It will not only bring in stealth and precision strike but all electronic attack and C5ISR to the USS America as a presence asset. This will be revolutionary.

SLD: The ship will have a significant upgrade in C5ISR over the USS Kearsarge, for example. And as the F-35B brings its C5ISR capability to the ship, the interaction between the ship and the aircraft, will also shape how the ship can be integrated into the surface and subsurface fleet. What is your perspective on this dynamic?

Major General Walsh: One of the things I participate in is what we are calling the air/sea battle area. I am on the senior steering group as the Marine Corps representative. One focus area is what we are calling network integrated attack. From a USMC perspective, we are working on integrating such an approach into our presence mission.

We look at the USS America from this perspective. We are looking to integrate the ship, the aviation assets and the fleet into a single scalable and tailorable operational force.

The ship's got to be integrated too. It has tremendous capabilities from a mechanical standpoint, the size of it, the structure, hanger base, cranes, and an ability to be able connect and do the things that we need from a command and control standpoint. But if it can't connect in this network integrated world, it's not going to be effective.

It's got to be plugging in just as with our other platforms are so we can talk to Aegis Cruisers, it can talk to subs, we can talk to the AWACS and it can be plugged into the carrier's network.



Figure 18 *he USS America under construction. USS America is part of a cluster of innovation involving the Opsrey, the F-35B and the CH-53K. Credit Photo: Huntington Ingalls*

All of this needs to be integrated into one single-joint force.

The Marines focus on going to go where the enemy isn't, and finding the gaps and seams to insert force. It is not just about precision warfare. It is about presence, engagement, and pushing information around the battlespace and sustained operations when necessary.

SLD: From your perspective, the integration of C5ISR from the ship to the aircraft to the ground force and to the fleet is really a central piece of the equation?

Major General Walsh: From a USMC operational perspective, it is central.

We are not going to be doing be able to do all the innovative things that we're developing with our platforms, our aircraft and what our Marines are going to do ashore if we can't work an integrated force.

And all the capabilities that we're developing, like G/ATOR and plugging it in with things like the common aviation command and control system (CAC2S) is central to our effort.

We need to put the glue together to tie the Marine air ground taskforce (MAGTF), with our brothers and sisters out at sea to be able to project power from the sea.

SLD: From the USMC perspective, the F-35 B is a Swiss army navy enabling expeditionary operations. How will it interact with the operational approach of the USS America?

Major General Walsh: Everything we try to do is to buy something that's going to fit into the toolbox, and provides capabilities for many uses. With the Harriers they were good for one thing—precision attack. They were attack aircraft to really be Marine's airborne artillery from the sea or move ashore to be that airborne artillery, so we could start getting some more fire support capabilities early in the operation while we phased our artillery ashore.

With the F-35, fire support is just one element. Preparing to insert force and then provide support for that force ashore, the F-35 will provide C5ISR, electronic strike, and guidance to where to maneuver and support the force.

But I'll tell you, the young guys are hungry to get on with this because they understand that they will be able to support in a 360-degree manner the entire MAGTF. They can not do this with Harriers or F-18s, or the support we get from Navy Growlers.

The F-35 will provide the Air Combat Element (ACE) and the MAGTF the complete package. This will be an entirely new capability with the F-35 as the combat Swiss army knife connected to the capabilities of the USS America and its power projection assets. The term gamechanger tends to be over used but I truly believe the Litening II will be that set of capabilities.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

But my operational experience in Iraq demonstrated that the Osprey was just that.

And the package of USS America, with the Osprey, the C-53K, AH-1Z, UH-1Y and the F-35 Bravo on board will be that in spades.

It will be a MAGTF ACE on steroids.

Admiral Buzby on the Evolving Capabilities of a USN-USMC MSC Enabled Fleet

2013-04-16 Second Line of Defense had a chance to continue our discussions with Rear Admiral Buzby, Military Sealift Command Commander, in early April 2013.

Day in and day on the oceans of the world, operating in the support of the Navy fleet in all weather, climate and sea states it is a command of truly capable mariners.

Admiral Buzby who will soon have his change-of-command on a Joint High Speed vessel, and has lead MSC in a period of extremely important new ship designs and con-op innovations.

We thank him for being gracious with his time to share with our readers his insights and vision.

During this interview, we discussed two new assets, which are being added to the fleet and how these assets might evolve over time.

The first is the planned evolution of the Mobile Landing Platform and the second is the addition of the Joint High Speed Vessel, the integration of which is being tested within the fleet during the upcoming Bold Alligator 2013 exercise.

The Evolution of the MLP

SLD: When we last met, you were part of the christening event for the newest MSC ship, the USNS Montford Point. The ship we saw that day is a big ship, which is built for modular inputs. Could you talk about the modular package envisaged for the third ship in the series, the aviation-enabled Mobile Landing Platform?

Admiral Buzby: With the MLP-Afloat Forward Staging Base (MLP-AFSB) or AFSB variant of the ship, you are seeing the versatility built into the ship. The main capability of the ship is its versatility. The AFSB will be the latest incarnation of what one can fit into that 800 feet of empty space that fills a need, fills a requirement without having to go out and purpose build at great expense, and at great length of design, a capability to serve the war fighter.

With the AFSB, you will see a fairly robust aviation capability; a fairly robust boat capability to support a whole host of different missions. I think it's a very strong, and very positive step forward in this ship's future.

You could very easily, given the dimensions that we are currently envisioning in the design of AFSB, hanger space, deck space, we're designing it on the big side for CH-53s and that kind of asset.

But you could conceivably have an ACE aboard that ship, supporting a reinforced MEU or something like that because you could probably carry Cobras on it, UAVs, and could envisage putting some joint strike fighters on there in small numbers if you really needed to, or MV 22s. One could be very creative in mixing the aviation assets on that ship.

SLD: Modularity can be a confusing term.

The kind of modules one is talking about with this ship are really tools for altering what the ship delivers in terms of capability. The last time we met, you spoke of the module on the ship, which can provide the ability to carry and launch three LCACs for a landing or assault force. Here you are talking about modules to enable air support to the force.

Admiral Buzby: The ship is an incarnation of what the CNO discussed last year as the need to enable payloads rather than thinking of special purpose platforms. This is a totally different payload that's going on the same baseline platform.

You'll have one baseline of this platform that's doing sea-basing support, offloading of sealift ships and supporting the insertion of forces and the flow of material ashore.



Figure 19 *The USNS Montford Point viewed seaside prior to its christening ceremony in San Diego as seen March 1, 2013. Credit Photo: Second Line of Defense.*

And with the AFSB, one is highlighting another payload on this same type of hull performing a much different, and much more tactical sort of mission, supporting an entirely different warfare area, and doing it very, very inexpensively, relatively speaking.

And in a way that it can be modified further should practice dictate it or a new requirement arrives that can then be used to fill that 800-foot platform with a new capability.

Originally, we were designing a special purpose ship, but we ended up with a modular enabled ship.

The original design would not be quite as eloquent in its application as we are able to do with the current design because we've unconstrained ourselves by just having it as the empty space; the original variant of this ship much more expensive, much more intricate, if you will.

The JHSV and Bold Alligator 2013

SLD: Let us talk now about another modular ship, the Joint High Speed Vessel, which Col. Weisz, Deputy Commander of 2nd ESG, tells us is going to be included in the latest Bold Alligator exercise.

Admiral Buzby: It's great to see the Bold Alligator series being reinvigorated and polishing up the great capability that the Navy/Marine Corps team has had for a very, very long time. But maybe we haven't through world events been able to exercise and keep honed as sharply as we may have wanted to in the past, so it's great to see us getting back to that.

And at a time when we're seeing new technology infused into our operations, so I think it's really important that we exercise that, either virtually or actually. And there probably needs to be the correct mix of both in successive years.

But command-and-controlling, all of that technology and that size of force is not an easy challenge and it absolutely needs to be exercised and worked on.

Just because you are deploying a large force doesn't mean that you know how to really use it. And with the insertion of new capabilities we need to understand how it all comes together.

There's the tactical level of actually using the gear itself, the user of it and how far it can steam and everything else. But the bigger challenge is to command and control it well so that you get the most utility out of it, so you get the effect that you're looking for.

If you don't employ them correctly, they're not worth a damn, and you end up losing them, you end up underutilizing them, and leaving yourself open to damage.

The Bold Alligator series also highlights the role of the MSC. MSC forces are the enablers.

Bold Alligator 2013 and the Way Ahead

We're the ones these ships keep the force able to go off and do its mission; to stay forward, to keep the sea base operating, to sustain the forward location where they're operating.

It's the elegant application of that logistics train, it has to flow and keep flowing material to make it all happen.

And we understand our role in the process and we're very pleased to be recognized and even in an exercise role to play in it.

In many people's minds, the logistics force and the support forces are relegated to the rear area. And that's not really the case anymore. We're very much the key enabler and in a forward area.

SLD: Could you speak to the role of the JHSV in your view?

Admiral Buzby: When a MEU goes forward, deploys, it has an ACE attached to it. And part of that ACE is a KC-130 that obviously doesn't float with the ARG-MEU, but it's attached and it's there to do that intra-theater lift into the supporting an area.

I think in many ways, Joint High-Speed Vessel is a maritime version of a C-130.

It's there in support of the ARG. It's going to be available potentially to run missions, to pull stuff forward, and it's like a Humvee, supporting the heavier maneuver units.

It's very reconfigurable; you can assemble it in many different ways.

It's a utility vehicle potentially for the MEU or for a carrier strike group depending on when they get into an area and they're operating. You have to be mindful of its capabilities and its limitations. It's not a heavy armored vessel; it's not meant to go in harm's way, particularly.

But it uses its speed for survivability, its ability to move very quickly. And it could carry 600 tons over 1200 miles at 35 knots using its 20,000 square feet of mission bay – whatever you want, plus about 300 marines to wherever you need to go in a hurry.

Once you kind of establish yourself in an area, it's that maritime C-130 that can move a good chunk of material pretty quickly and pretty flexibly. In this sense, I think it's got a great future to deploy in that sort of scenario in support of a ARG-MEU or carrier strike group in the future.

One of the reasons why I'm having my change of command aboard the ship is I want to show it off to people. I want people to come see the ship. I want people to crawl around and touch it, feel the ship; we're going to hold the ceremony in the mission bay.

People are going to walk up the vehicle ramp and go into the mission bay and behold what 20,000 square feet looks like. And my way of thinking is it's yet one more mission that it could be reconfigured to do. It could host a large gathering of personnel.

I'm expecting people to come aboard and say "hey, we could do this," or "oh, this could be used for that." I want leadership and young thinkers to say that and see that because you can't help but think about it when you walk aboard. You can't help but think about it when you walk up on that flight deck. You can't help but think about it when you walk into the troop area. It just jumps out at you.