

## **An Update on the USS America: A Discussion with Captain Robert Hall, February 2015**

*02/10/2015 – In this February 2015 interview, Captain Robert Hall, the CO of the USS America looks back at the past few months with the ship and the period ahead.*

*The USS America is a large deck amphibious ship that can deliver a Marine Corps assault force with unprecedented capability able to operate in the dangerous waters of the 21st century environment. .*

<http://www.sldinfo.com/an-update-on-the-uss-america-a-discussion-with-captain-robert-hall-february-2015/>

2015-02-10 By Robbin Laird

I first met Captain Hall at the christening ceremony for the USS America in Pascagoula, Mississippi, on October 20, 2012.

A lot has happened since then with the ship, and its arriving combat capabilities.

The ship moved out of the yard last year and began a tour around South America and arrived in San Diego on September 15, 2014.

It then moved to San Francisco for its Commissioning ceremony on October 11, 2014 and then returned to San Diego for its further preparation to go to sea for its initial deployment in 2016.

**I had a chance to discuss recent events with Captain Hall on February 5, 2015 in a telephone interview.**

When the ship moved from its yard around South America to its home port, normally there would not have been as much aviation activity aboard the ship as the America experienced.

**But because the ship was a launch point for four port visits and several foreign leadership engagement visits, aviation was a key part of the transit.**

And the coming onboard of VMX-22 allowed the Marines to already begin to become familiar with the ship from a maintenance and operational point of view.

In an earlier interview with the Commanding Officer of VMX-22, [Col. Rauenhorst](#), noted that the early Marine Corps experience with the ship was very positive.

*Maintenance wise, the hangar bay provided two dedicated spots to perform maintenance with the wings spread, as compared to legacy amphib ships with only one dedicated spot in the hangar bay.*

*Additionally, when we encountered heavy sea states, freezing rain and snow in and around the Straits of Magellan, we were able to hangar all 11 aircraft, including four CH-46s from HMM-364 and three SH-60s from HSC-21, to protect them from the elements.*

*Once clear of the weather, the Air Boss was able to quickly return the aircraft to the flight deck and resume normal flight operations, that otherwise would have been delayed in de-icing the aircraft.*

*The Marines onboard were really impressed with the size of the hangar bay and being able to do maintenance in protected spaces, rather than having to do it on the flight deck as before on legacy large-deck amphib.*

**This perspective was also emphasized by Captain Hall.**

*“Although normally, we would not have had aviation assets aboard during a ship shakedown, we were able to sail with Navy MH-60s and Marine Ospreys and CH-46s.*

*This gave the respective air detachments a great opportunity to start familiarizing themselves with the spaces aboard the ship for the maintenance and operation of their aircraft.*

*This was also an incredible training bonus for my crew driven by the desires of SOUTHCOM and 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet to highlight the ship and the Navy/Marine Corps team during our transit around South America.*

*And, although we were able to flex some of the capability AMERICA will bring to the Fleet, we didn't have the full complement of Marines or their aircraft onboard to fully flex our capability.*

*Of note, the two high bays, with one near the aft end of the hangar, will clearly allow for an Osprey, or other aircraft, to go into long term maintenance without interrupting the flow through the hanger deck and up to the flight deck.”*

**Question: Secretary Hagel decided to visit USS America in his final days as Secretary of Defense.**

**What was the reaction of the crew to this honor?**

Captain Hall: The crew was very excited about the visit and listened attentively to the Secretary's message.

He highlighted his support for the USN-USMC team and the kind of integration we are doing aboard this ship.

He went out of his way to praise the crew for their dedication, sacrifice and technological competence in bringing this new class of ship to life.

**Question: You went around the Straits of Magellan, and you were able to put your aircraft inside. This will be a nice maintenance bonus due to having an enlarged hangar bay, won't it?**

Captain Hall: It will. The size of the hangar definitely improves our capacity to get more aircraft out of the weather if necessary.

**During our transit through the Straits of Magellan we actually sheltered our three MH-60S and four MV-22 Ospreys in the hangar due to icing conditions on deck.**

**Question: How did the Osprey enhance your ability to do missions on the voyage around South America?**

Captain Hall: The speed and range of the Osprey meant we could bring foreign leaders aboard the ship from some distance.

**We had four principle port visits – Colombia, Brazil, Chile and Peru – but we were also able to fly out and do key leadership engagements with dignitaries from Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and El Salvador because of the Ospreys.**

During each engagement, the key leaders were interested in our significant humanitarian assistance and disaster response capabilities and their reaction to the Osprey was very positive.

For some South American leaders, they saw the utility of the aircraft for their own fight against narco-terrorism and to provide for security over the large distances some countries need to cover.

**Question: You were speaking of it being unusual to fly aircraft aboard a ship on its shakedown cruise. When did you get aircraft operational aboard the ship?**

Captain Hall: Almost immediately.

**Aircraft arrived on the first day and we launched Marines during the first week.**

You have to realize that half the crew had never been to sea before, so the experience they were able to gain quickly was invaluable.

**Question: What is next?**

Captain Hall: Between now and March, we will do some additional ship tests including operating in the range off of southern California to test the C2 and combat systems.

At the end of March we have our final contract trials scheduled.

In late Spring we move into a post-shakedown availability (PSA), where the ship receives some final modifications prior to moving into our training phase in early 2016 and eventual deployment.

Some of the modifications we'll receive during PSA are the result of lessons learned from the F-35B operations and testing aboard the USS WASP.

**So by 2016, the largest and most powerful assault ship ever built will be ready to answer the nation's call.**

And do the dedication of the officers and crew of the USS America and the hard work of NAVSEA and the men and women working in the yards, the United States will have a unique combat capability.

A large deck amphibious ship that can deliver a Marine Corps assault force with unprecedented capability able to operate in the dangerous waters of the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment.

Earlier, Col. Raenhorst provided his own evaluation of the tour seen from the Marine Corps perspective.

*The crew was super motivated to get the aircraft onboard the ship and to operate it.*

*We did a crawl, walk and run set of phases as we were settling into the flight operations, starting off with day and night Carrier Qualifications (CQ) off the coast of Pensacola.*

*And then by the end of the deployment, Captain Hall had a very seasoned crew there that were doing both tilt rotor and rotary-wing day and night operations without a flaw, from launch and recovery of aircraft that included air traffic control in international airspace throughout the Caribbean, Central, and South America.*

**Below are the comments made by Secretary Hagel during his visit to the USS America on January 14, 2015:**

*Well, it's good to be out at sea. They don't let old infantry guys do much of this, as you probably know for good reason. We cause problems: fall and stumble. But this is pretty exciting to be out here this morning on this particular ship with you. And this is a pretty special crew, as you I think*

*all know, because of what you have done already, what you represent, and what you will do here in the future.*

*First, I want to thank — thank you for your service, your sacrifice, what you do for our country. I want to thank your families. I know it was not easy to make that move across country from the east to the west for your families and for all of you, there were tremendous additional pressure put on all of you.*

*That very, very acclaimed and successful trip around South America, where you received a tremendous amount of attention and positive response: I was in Peru and Chile a couple of months ago, and heard about what you all accomplished on that swing around South America. Not only how impressed everyone was with you, with the ship, with the capabilities, but you represent the best of America. And it's, I think, appropriate that you've lived up to the name of this ship in every way, so thank you. And again, please thank your families for their sacrifice.*

*I'm on about a three day tour around the country visiting with the Marines and the Navy, Army, Air Force to thank each of the services for their service, thank them for the privilege I've had to serve as secretary of defense and be part of your team, which has been a great honor for me, and it's an honor that I will always, always appreciate, and the privilege I had to be part of this enterprise. I will always appreciate it.*

*I thought I'd make a couple of comments about you, about your ship, about the future, at least from my perspective, and then we'll talk about whatever you want to talk about.*

*First, we were talking with the admiral and captain, and some of us say we came on to the ship here a few minutes ago about three essential priorities that I have focused on since I have been secretary of defense, that I think capture the future of our country, the future of our military. And the future in every respect of opportunities of our security, and it is first people, second, capability, and third, partnerships. And you probably represent and this ship represents those three foundational elements of our future as well as any one group of people.*

*And I say that because this is a very select crew, as you all know, for the reasons you know why you were selected for this crew. This is a particularly important skillset that's required. You are on-board and you run, maintain, and sail one of the most sophisticated Navy platforms we have with more capabilities than almost anything else. That's first.*

*Second, capabilities, as I've just — capabilities represented on this ship and the amphibious possibilities that our Marines are getting back to after 13 years of long war: two long wars. What you're doing here, represent that in every way.*

*And third, partnerships. The reference I made to your tour around South America. Those partnerships that we are building, partnerships to assist our partners in their capacity and their*

*capability, and their ability to not just defend themselves, but partner with us in a world that is now completely interconnected, as we all know. And so the threats are global. Opportunities are global. Relationships are all now more global than ever before. And that won't decrease. That will only increase.*

*And what you do and what that trip represented, very much was a clear not just optic, but partnership building and capacity building, but in fact it went deeper and in more depth than just an optic.*

*I say that too, because you all are thinking about your futures. If you're married, your husbands and your wives are thinking about your future. What is the future of this business? I know because of the last two years, especially because of sequestration and because of budget issues, we've been through a down-time, because of that. And that has created a tremendous amount of uncertainty in your families, and I suspect you, what kind of future you have. Is it a career that I can build on? What are the plans for the future?*

*Well, plans for the future are to continue to stay technologically ahead of every country in the world. We must. That technological edge has given us an important position in our own capabilities, but also in the assistance that we can provide our partners. And it's clearly in our interest.*

*Also, as you look ahead, for the future of our defense enterprise, it is becoming more skill oriented than maybe ever before, even though today we have the best led, best trained, best educated, best motivated, best equipped force the world's ever known. That won't always be that way, just because it is that way today. It requires tremendous investment and leadership and thinking of future challenges and future opportunities. And that's why I say those three components of our future, the people, the capacity, and the partnerships all come together in a critical way that represents our future.*

*We can talk about any more of these things or additional issues here once we get into questions, but I wanted to just at least give you a top line sense of my thinking, and I think it's not just my thinking, but I think as we evolve and in our own geopolitical strategies and our thinking in the world, and how do we protect our interests, and you know, just in the last couple of weeks, what's happened in the world in the cyber world, cyber has changed everything.*

*The Internet has changed everything. It's given non-state actors, individuals capacities, capabilities empowered them in ways 10 years ago we'd never seen anything like this. All that is shifting and changing at these unprecedented historic rates, but they also represent opportunities.*

*One of the most significant accomplishments of the military establishment, certainly since World War II, certainly is keeping this country safe and securing this country, which is our principal responsibility.*

*But that cannot come divorced from other areas of social responsibility, whether it's sexual assault or not paying attention to the human requirements and the individual needs of our sailors, our soldiers, our marines, our airmen and their families.*

*The military has done a better job of that than any institution. One reason is that is that we're more cohesive, we're more of a united community. So we have more opportunities to do that. But also, when you look at the cutting edge social changes that we've seen in the United States since World War II, all have begun here in the military.*

*And I know when you're sitting out here and running through new trials at sea with this magnificent ship with the kind of capabilities and the clear mission you have, and the deadly responsibilities that you have, it becomes easy to maybe overlook or discontinue or disconnect some of the social, human responsibilities that we each have for each other.*

*But I want to tell you and assure you and reassure you that we will not do that. We are not doing that. And all the leaders that will come in behind me and the admiral and the captains and you represent leadership classes in every aspect of your profession, because you are leaders or you wouldn't be on this mission, you wouldn't be on this crew.*

*We won't disconnect the individual and the human part of who we are. Because in the end, as advanced as our technologies are and as good as they will become, even better, without quality people it won't matter. It won't matter. And leadership does matter. Because one of the factors of leadership, and again, why you were chosen for this crew, is judgment. You can't teach judgment. Skillsets, experience, motivation, all of that helps you form judgment, but in the end you all have to make tough choices and make judgments.*

*And that's what leadership is about. And that's what quality individuals are about. Can you make the right judgments at the right time, the right way?*

*So, I tell you these things not because you haven't heard them and you don't know them and you're not living them, but I think it's important that you hear from your leadership every now and then that these are fundamental aspects of who we are and what we represent, and why we're so good is that we haven't forgotten those and we're not going to forget those parts of this institution.*

*And I particularly wanted to say that because I hope that's some reassurance for your families. We're going to continue to keep and must prioritize a cycle of bringing good people, the best people, into this business.*

*That just doesn't always happen. Every day is a new day: new challenges, new opportunities. There's no such thing as status quo. The world doesn't stand still. Dangers, challenges, opportunities, they change. They evolve. And look at the world we're in. So do quality people.*

*Quality people have options. So, we want to keep the quality at the level and increase that as we go forward.*

*So, thank you again for what you do and your service and your sacrifices. I am very proud of you. Our president is. This country is. All America is.*

*So, we know that sometimes it gets a little lonely, and maybe sometimes you wonder if anyone's paying attention. We are. And we are grateful. And you make us a better country in every way, so thank you.*

**The significance of the visit was enhanced by the fact that Secretary Hagel chose to go out of his way to highlight the importance of what we have called insertion forces in shaping a way ahead for U.S. military power.**

An article in *Stars and Stripes* highlighted the importance of the visit by the Secretary to the USS America.

In a piece published on January 14, 2015, [Jon Harper](#) underscored that Hagel highlighted the Marine's high tech future.

*ABOARD THE USS AMERICA — The Marine Corps' future will be high-tech and amphibious, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said Wednesday while visiting the Navy's newest amphibious assault ship.*

*For more than a decade, the Marines have been slogging through counterinsurgency wars and essentially serving as a second land army. Now that they are out of Afghanistan and pivoting to the Pacific, the service is transitioning back to an emergency response force that operates from the sea.*

*As Marines return to their roots, their tools will be cutting-edge, Hagel said on what is expected to be his last trip as Pentagon leader. He visited the USS America to discuss what lies ahead for the military.*

*"You run, maintain and sail one the most sophisticated Navy platforms we have, with more capabilities than almost anything else," he told troops aboard the ship, which is undergoing sea trials off the California coast. "Capabilities represented on this ship [showcase] the amphibious possibilities that our Marines are getting back to after 13 years of long war ... What you're doing here represents that in every way."*

*The America, commissioned in October, is designed to carry Marines and their most technologically advanced aircraft, including the F-35B Lightning II fighter jet and the MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor troop transport. Both can take off and land vertically.*



*The America's design is different from previous amphibious assault ships. It has an enlarged hangar deck and no well deck, which frees up space for aircraft. It is as large as the aircraft carriers of some nations.*

*The realignment and expansion of aviation maintenance facilities provides a significant increase in available stowage for parts, support equipment and aviation fuel. Having two hangar bay areas with overhead cranes instead of just one greatly speeds up and facilitates aircraft maintenance, according to Navy Chief Petty Officer Leandro Suarez.*

*Capt. Michael Baze, the ship's executive officer, said the America is optimized for aviation and "being able to deliver Marines very fast over great distance."*

*He said the Osprey in particular "allows you the flexibility and maneuverability that you might not have with ... a traditional landing force on the beach."*

*The America can hold up to 31 aircraft, depending on the types in the mix, according to Baze.*

*"It's awesome. I've got to pinch myself every once in a while," he said.*

*He noted that, when deployed, the America will likely be the flagship of an amphibious ready group, which would include ships that could put Marines ashore using traditional sea-to-land connector vessels.*

**For earlier stories on the USS America see the following:**

<http://www.sldinfo.com/vmx-22-aboard-uss-america-an-interview-with-the-co-of-vmx-22/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/maintenance-of-usmc-aviation-aboard-the-uss-america/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/naval-tradition-matters-uss-arizona-survivor-visits-uss-america/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/marines-sailors-man-rails-of-uss-america/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-commissioning-of-the-uss-america-october-11-2014/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-uss-america-redefining-amphibious-assault/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/uss-america-arrives-in-san-diego/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/uss-america-arrives-in-san-diego-enabling-the-tiltrotar-assault-force/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-uss-america-remembers-911/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/uss-america-arrives-in-peru/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/uss-america-in-transit-from-chile-to-the-pacific/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-uss-america-visits-chile/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-many-faces-of-the-uss-america-shaping-a-crew-at-sea-2/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-many-faces-of-the-uss-america-shaping-a-crew-at-sea/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-uss-america-visits-the-americas-stopping-by-uruguay/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-uss-america-and-a-cluster-of-innovation/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/uss-america-en-route-to-san-diego/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/viewing-the-uss-america-from-the-bridge/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/shaping-a-21st-century-presence-and-assault-force-visiting-the-uss-america-military-sealift-command-and-second-marine-air-wing/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-uss-america-from-niche-to-sledgehammer/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-skipper-discusses-the-uss-america-shaping-an-innovative-path-to-21st-century-operations/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/captain-hall-of-the-uss-america-discusses-the-new-21st-century-assault-ship/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-impact-of-the-uss-america-on-usmc-operations-a-magtf-ace-on-steroids-usmc-operations-a-magtf-on-steroids/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-coming-of-the-uss-america-to-an-expeditionary-strike-group-esg/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/ship-design-and-innovation-captain-mercator-discusses-the-uss-america/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/captain-hall-discusses-the-uss-america-looking-towards-the-future/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/building-the-uss-america-factory-methods-shape-possible-uptick-in-production/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-challenge-to-naval-aviation-the-uss-america-answers-the-call/>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/the-uss-america-an-lha-which-isnt/>

**And for two articles published in other publications which address the capabilities being delivered by the ship and the USN-USMC team see the following:**

<http://www.sldinfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/USS-America.pdf>

<http://www.sldinfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/USS-America-Ops-22-Fall-2014.pdf>

The first slideshow shows technicians working to maintain USMC aircraft onboard the USS America.

The photos were supplied by VMX-22 and shows their maintenance work aboard the USS America.

The ship has a hanger deck below the flight deck where maintenance is performed, unlike legacy large deck amphibians where it is done on the flight deck.

This means among other things, when the weather gets dicey, the aircraft can be put below deck avoiding the need to maintain them for any damage from the weather when they would have had to be topside on a legacy ship.

The second slideshow highlights aboard the USS America as it transited around South America.

- In the first photo, a U.S. Navy aviation boatswain's mate (handling) directs an MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft carrying Marines assigned to Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force South to land on the flight deck of the newly commissioned amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) in the Caribbean Sea following bilateral training with Colombian service members July 19, 2014.
- In the second, third and fourth photos, U.S. Marines assigned to Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force South return to the newly commissioned amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) in the Caribbean Sea following bilateral training with Colombian service members July 19, 2014. The America embarked on a mission to conduct training engagements with partner nations throughout the Americas before reporting to its new homeport of San Diego. The America was set to be ceremoniously commissioned Oct. 11, 2014.
- In the fifth photo, a tilt-rotor MV-22 Osprey, assigned to the "Argonauts" of Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron (VMX) 22, takes off from the flight deck of future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during flight operations.
- In the sixth photo, an Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) directs a pilot to an MH-60S Seahawk helicopter, assigned to the "Blackjacks" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21, in preparation for flight operations aboard the future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6).
- In the seventh photo, an MH-60S Seahawk helicopter, assigned to the "Blackjacks" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21, takes off from the flight deck of future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during flight operations.
- In the eighth photo, an Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) directs a tilt-rotor MV-22 Osprey, assigned to the "Argonauts" of Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron (VMX) 22, to take off from the flight deck of future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during flight operations.

- In the 9th and 10th photos, Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Kenny Vida, flight deck leading petty officer aboard future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6), observes an MH-60S Seahawk helicopter as it takes off.
- In the 11th photo, Sailors assigned to future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) chock and chain an MH-60S Seahawk helicopter after it lands during flight quarters.
- In the 12th photo, Aviation Electronics Technician 3rd Class Trevor Vindelov, assigned to the "Blackjacks" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 21, performs a corrosion inspection on a MH-60S Seahawk helicopter in the hangar bay of future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6).
- In the 13th photo, Aviation Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Jeff Acevedo, left, assigned to Air Department's V-3 division, directs his tractor driver, Airman Robert Johnson, while moving MV-22 Osprey in the hangar bay aboard future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6).
- In the 14th photo, Aviation Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Jeff Acevedo, left, directs Aviation Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Jeff Acevedo, both assigned to Air Department's V-3 division, while moving an MV-22 Osprey in the hangar bay aboard future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6).
- In the 15th photo, Sailors assigned to the "Blackjacks" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 21, embarked aboard future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6), perform preventive maintenance on aircraft tie-down chains in the ship's hangar bay.
- In the final photo, Aviation Structural Mechanic 2nd Class Reginald Gilmore, assigned to the "Blackjacks" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 21, embarked aboard future amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6), performs routine maintenance on an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter in the ship's hangar bay.

**Credit: USS America:Summer 2014**

**To set the proper landscape to discuss the changes within aviation and the amphibious fleet, one can go back a decade ago and look at the aviation and ship pairings and their operational reach.**

The ARG-MEU a decade ahead operated within the LPD-17, without the T-AKE ship, without the Osprey and was primarily a rotorcraft, landing vehicle and mixture of Harrier fast jets force.

And the three ship ARG-MEU would operate largely in a 200-mile box affecting the objective area where it was located.

The Osprey has obviously been a game changer, where today, the ARG-MEU can "disaggregate" and operate over a three-ship distributed 1,000-mile operational area.

Having the communications and ISR to operate over a greater area, and to have sustainment for a disaggregated fleet is a major challenge facing the future of the USN-USMC team.

Earlier, we discussed the challenge as seen by on veteran ACE Commander, [Lt. Col. Boniface](#).

*Sustainability over distance is a key challenge as the geography covered expands and the ACE assets can operate over those greater distances as well.*

*Lt. Col. Boniface highlighted two key challenges.*

*The first is simply the challenge to the Military Sealift Command to support a disbursed ARG-MEU.*

*The second is having a responsive and effective parts availability pool to support the deployed but dispersed ARG-MEU. This is an especially important challenge for the Osprey because of relatively limited locations within which parts are available to be flown or delivered to the ARG-MEU on deployment.*

*Put another way, the deployment of the ARG-MEU is not constrained by Osprey operations, but the effectiveness of the logistics or sustainment operations. The carriers get supplied every week; the ARG-MEUs only every 10-14 days. This disparity no longer makes sense given the reality of ARG-MEU operations under the influence of the Osprey.*

*In effect, there is a tactical limitation posed by sustainment, which can have strategic consequences.*

**In many ways, the USS America can be seen as significantly enhancing the logistical or sustainment punch of the amphibious strike force.**

[Major Schreiner](#), the ship integration officer within Headquarters USMC Aviation, whose task it is to help work through the intersection between the ACE and the ships off of which the ACE flies and will fly, provided insights into the thinking surrounding the design of the new ship in an interview last year.

“The USMC as a tiltrotar-assault enabled force is clearly just now coming into its own as a unique combat capability for 21st century operations.

The USS America will provide a significant boost to the ability to both maintain and to provide operational tempo to support the force.

According to Major Schreiner, one of the key elements of maintaining the Osprey is the need to open the nacelles and to work on them. On current LHAs, this can only be done topside, but with the new ship, it will be possible to maintain the Ospreys completely in the Hangar deck.”

**The synergy among the three decks, the flight deck, the hangar deck and the intermediate area will significantly improve the workflow and the ops tempo for the assault force.**

The traditional LHA was sized primarily for rotorcraft operations; the new one is sized for the Osprey and the F-35B.

According to Major Schreiner, “the footprint of the new aviation assets are about 30-40% larger than the rotorcraft and fast jets they are replacing. With the change in operational capabilities and concepts comes the need to provide for a new logistics capability for the force as well.”

**The logistics demands from the Ospreys on the traditional LHAs required work topside, which affects flight deck operations as well as facing daylight limitations within which the work needed to be done.**

*What we found with the MV-22 was that it needed some extra space.*

*It needed some space in the hangar for assault maintenance.*

*What we found in the legacy amphibious ships that we were unable to do that efficiently down below, so the workaround for the Marines, the only workaround is to do those modifications topside which are extremely time consuming and it is a delicate balance on doing them during a period of daylight where they could effectively see and then balance it out with flight operations.*

To get the needed changes, the ship designers of the USS America look to the hangar deck and the intermediate areas. The hangar deck has no well deck and that provides extra space as well as overhead cranes and storage areas for parts.

**The ops tempo for the assault force is enhanced as well.**

According to Major Schreiner:

*The idea was is not only to provide enough space to incorporate for the growth in airframes and the logistics footprints but also to provide for operational maneuver space down below as well.*

*We can cycle planes from the hangar to the flight deck to enhance sortie generation rates for the helos, the Ospreys and the F-35Bs in whatever package is appropriate to the mission.*

Working the synergy among the three decks will be crucial to shaping the workflow to support operational tempo.