

January 13, 1992

## **AS MILITARY IS CUT, AMERICA STILL NEEDS THE MARINES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**In the wake of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, America has begun to reduce drastically its defense budget. This month, in his State of the Union address, George Bush is expected to announce defense cuts well beyond those anticipated in the November 1990 budget summit agreement between the White House and Congress; Bush's new cuts could be the starting point for a free-for-all congressional assault on military spending. The White House and Congress are right to pare down the defense budget. As they do so, however, all military services should not be treated equally. While the Air Force and Army can be cut significantly, the Navy, and specifically the Marine Corps, cannot. The Marines never figured prominently in America's war plans against the Soviet Union. Instead, they have been oriented toward just the sort of conflict most likely to occur in the 1990s and beyond, including regional warfare in the Third World, violent attacks against American civilians and other interests, and combatting illegal drug traffickers.**

**Even with more benign rulers in Moscow, the United States will face threats to its interests that will require a military response that only the Marines can offer. These global interests include keeping sea lanes open, maintaining access to oil, chromium, platinum, and other strategic resources, stopping narcotics trafficking, and preventing the rise of aggressive Third World dictators armed with weapons of mass destruction.**

**Rapid Response. Marines at sea usually are never more than seven to ten days' steaming time from likely trouble spots in the Middle East, Africa, and the Pacific Ocean. Marine ammunition, tanks, guns, and other equipment are already stored on ships stationed in the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. This equipment can be matched up with Marines flying from bases in the U.S. in 24 to 72 hours.**

**Only the Marines, with support from the Navy, are equipped to conduct an airborne or waterborne attack from offshore in areas where America may not have allies willing to provide bases for the Army or Air Force. Unlike the Army, the Marines are self-contained, packed, and ready to fight for up to sixty days without any supply line back to**

the U.S.<sup>1</sup> For every Army soldier in a combat position, one soldier is behind the lines in such supporting roles as administration and supply; for Marines the ratio is two combatants to one administrator or supplier.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the Marine Corps delivers the most firepower in the quickest time when responding to a crisis.

America's three active and one reserve Marine divisions will cost U.S. taxpayers \$9.7 billion this year, or about 3.5 percent of the \$271 billion fiscal 1992 military budget.

At a time when rapidly changing superpower relations have reduced the threat of a Soviet strike on American interests, reductions in the size of America's defense establishment are prudent. The Marine Corps, however, should be left largely intact. The reason: the Marines are the best equipped and organized among the services to deal with just the sort of Third World conflicts America is likely to be faced with in the 1990s and beyond. To protect these abilities, George Bush should instruct Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney to:

- ◆ ◆ **Maintain three Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF).** In wartime, the largest fighting unit in the Marine Corps is a MEF that is likely to have up to 40,000 men. To accomplish all of their missions, the Marines need to be able to field three such MEFs. In peacetime, MEFs serve as three geographically dispersed reservoirs of all combat and non-combat Marines. To sustain the Marines' global mission each peacetime MEF will require approximately 59,000 men, for a total Marine Corps force of at least 177,000, the number now planned by Congress for 1995. They are needed at approximately this size to support overseas deployments, provide sufficient numbers of combat troops to fight when needed, and to ensure that the fighters are supported with supplies and equipment.
  
- ◆ ◆ **Purchase the V-22 *Osprey* and meet the Marines' other advanced equipment needs.** *Operation Desert Storm* against Iraq proved that advanced technology saves lives. The Marines, like the other services, need modern equipment. Top of the list should be the V-22 *Osprey*, a multi-purpose aircraft made by a consortium of the Bell Helicopter/Textron and Boeing Helicopter companies, that takes off like a helicopter and flies like a plane. Pentagon planners have tried for years to cancel the V-22 over the objections of the Marine Corps and Congress. Another high priority should be a new amphibious assault vehicle that will allow the Marines to attack beaches from safer distances offshore. The Marines also need advanced versions of their eight-wheeled, lightly armored, troop-carrying Light Armored Vehicle (LAV), most of which should be equipped with new thermal night vision sights. Some new LAVs should be armed with a 105 mm gun, while others

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1 This assumes that a full Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and its attendant supplies are called upon.

2 Author's interview with Major Pete Keating, Army Public Affairs Office, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C., December 12, 1991. As of 1990, the ratio of combat to non-combat forces for the entire Army is 58 percent combat, 42 percent support.

should be outfitted as air defense vehicles with *Stinger* missiles and automatic cannons.

- ◆ ◆ **Reduce the size of the Marine Corps Reserve.** The Marine Corps' greatest advantage over other services is the speed and muscle with which it can respond to a crisis. As the Marine Corps is reduced, the first cuts should come from the Reserves, which can be reduced selectively from 43,000 to 16,000. The reserves can be cut because they will never be as responsive as the active duty Marine Corps and therefore will see combat only when facing major contingencies like *Desert Storm*.
- ◆ ◆ **Eliminate the Marines' Norway mission.** Since 1981, the Marine Corps has been responsible for helping to defend Norway from a Soviet attack. Obviously the Marines no longer are needed for this. The Marines' equipment in Norway should be returned to the U.S.
- ◆ ◆ **Increase ship-to-shore firepower.** To support amphibious operations, the Marines need ship-to-shore firepower to pound enemy coastal positions. This is done best by the Navy's battleships, with their 16 inch guns, by far the most powerful in the fleet. The last American battleship, the USS *Missouri*, is to be retired on March 31, 1992. It should remain in the fleet.
- ◆ ◆ **Keep a strong naval amphibious fleet.** Marines cannot conduct amphibious operations against defended positions without ships outfitted to carry troops, assault craft, and attack aircraft from sea to shore. The Navy now has 62 amphibious ships. This number will drop to 53 by 1995.<sup>3</sup> Sixty is the minimum needed to respond to two different theaters of war at the same time, as required by Navy and Marine Corps planners.
- ◆ ◆ **Improve Marine Corps riverine warfare capabilities.** Inland waterways are major transportation routes for narcotics and illegal weapons. Yet, the capability of the U.S. to fight on and from rivers has languished since the Vietnam War. In the past two years the Marine Corps has begun to rebuild these capabilities, but it still needs more river patrol boats to transport Marines and more trained coxswains, who pilot the boats, to fight enemies located along inland bodies of water.
- ◆ ◆ **Increase Marine Corps "civic action" activities.** While the Marines are mainly a combat organization, they also have engineering and heavy construction units which can build roads and schools. This capability could serve an important goodwill function that facilitates operations with local armed forces, acculturizes Marines to the local environment, and allows them to tap local populations for intelligence information.

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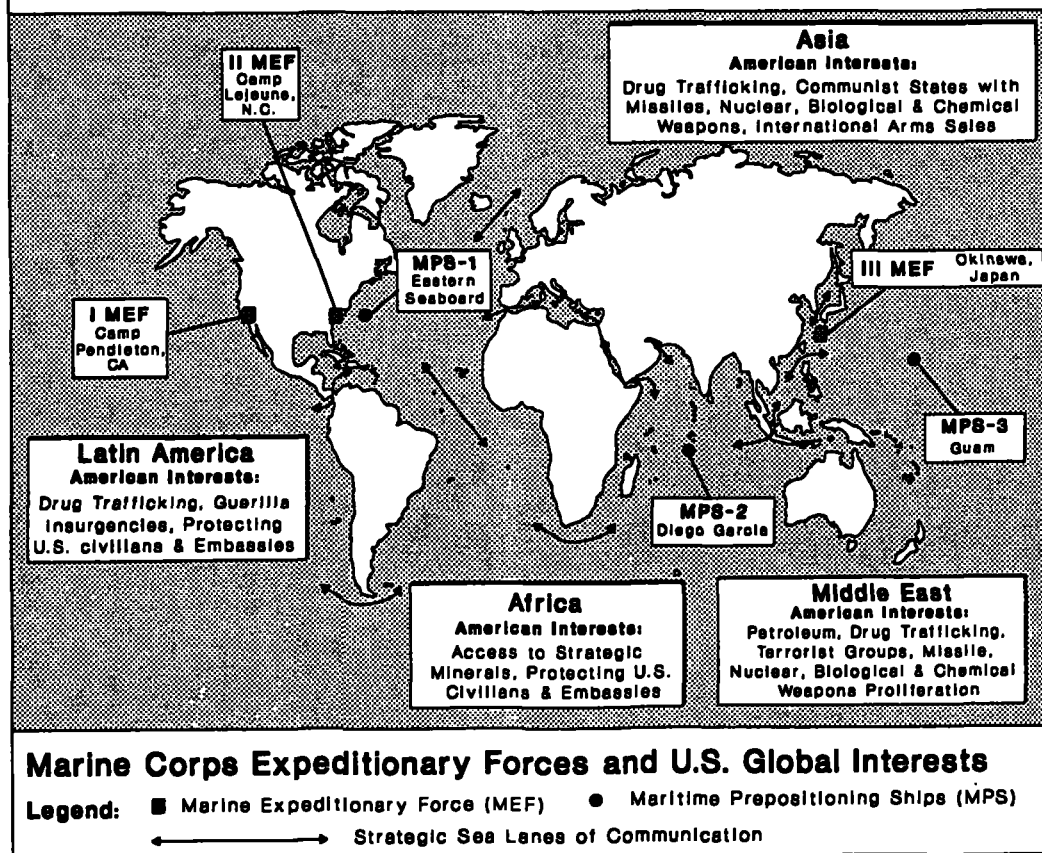
<sup>3</sup> Author's interview with Lt. Mark Walker USN, October 29, 1991, U.S. Navy Office of Public Affairs, Washington D.C.

## WHY THE MARINES?

Since its creation on November 10, 1775, the U.S. Marine Corps has allowed America to project power far from its shores. Against the Barbary pirates off the coast of Tripoli, Libya, the Marines, from 1801-1805, launched a series of punitive raids in retaliation for attacks on U.S. ships. The attacks ceased. Then, when Saddam Hussein sent his forces into Kuwait in August 1990, the Marines rushed to the region, arriving just seven days after Bush ordered U.S. forces to respond. The Marines brought the first heavy tanks and artillery to prevent Hussein's advance into Saudi Arabia.

The Marines are part of the Department of the Navy and operate in close cooperation with U.S. naval forces at sea. Marine units are deployed continuously on ships at sea and on standby at U.S. bases, as well as on U.S. military bases on the Japanese island of Okinawa, at Subic Bay in the Philippines, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. All Marines can move on short notice to match up with equipment stored on floating bases in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. This gives the Marines a better ability than any other service to respond rapidly with great firepower to contingencies worldwide.

**Serving Near and Far.** In the post-Cold War world, this remains an essential capability for the U.S. Near home, the U.S. has an interest in protecting the Panama Canal, fighting the drug war, and possibly countering guerrilla movements in Latin America. Marines serve as advisors to local counternarcotics troops and take part in military training with friendly forces throughout the hemisphere. Example: Marines are or have been involved in training operations in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, and El Salvador. It would be Marines who would rescue U.S. citizens in Haiti if threatened by the military junta that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide last September.



Farther away from the U.S., the Marines help keep sea lanes open. The loss of Clark Air Force Base and the impending loss of Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines could make it more difficult for the U.S. to project power in the critical Pacific Rim, an area where U.S. businesses now conduct over \$280 billion worth of trade.<sup>4</sup> In the future, shipborne Marines will be the President's clear choice in crises that require a quick American presence on the ground in Southeast Asia.

In the Middle East, Marines are on station in the Mediterranean Sea, where they help deter terrorists operating out of Libya, Syria, and elsewhere in the region, and can respond to terrorist acts against Americans. Marines also could reinforce some of the Arab states, such as Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, if it served U.S. interests to protect them from an attack by, say, a fundamentalist Iran.

## SELF-CONTAINED FIGHTING FORCE

The Marines are the smallest of the four services with a strength of approximately 194,040 active and 43,000 reserve troops. Unlike the Army, the Marines with the help of the Navy are organized as a self-contained fighting force, able to operate, if necessary, for up to sixty days independent not only of other services but of supply lines back to the U.S.

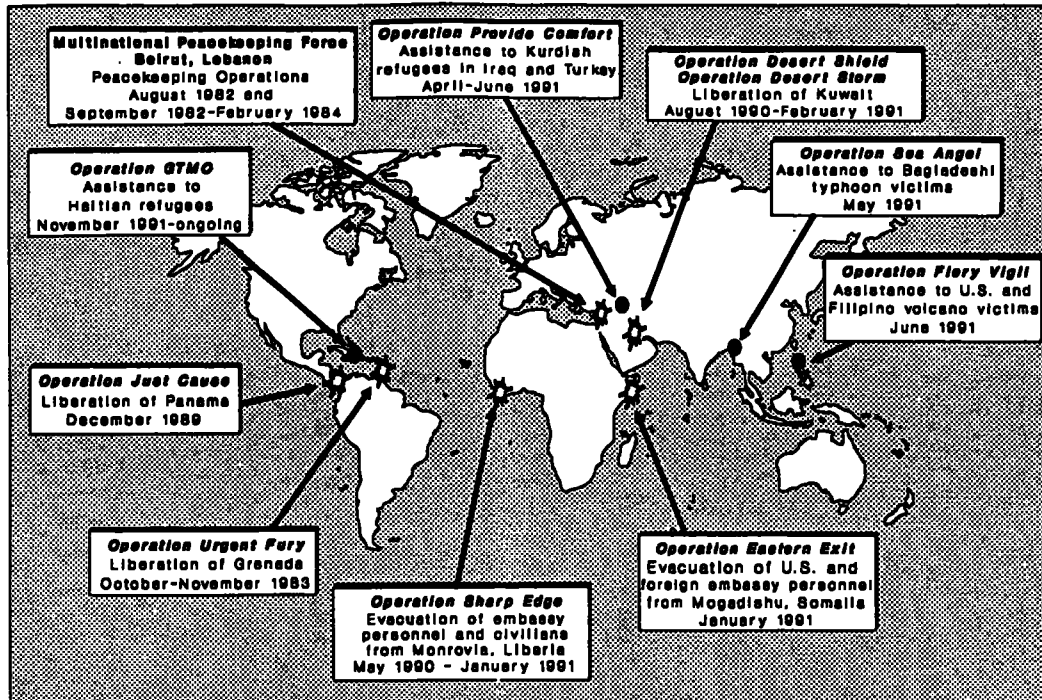
Marine air, ground, and logistics units are organized into what are called Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTF—pronounced “magtaf”). A MAGTAF varies in size and strength, ranging from a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) of 40,000 Marines with helicopters and jet aircraft, tanks, amphibious assault craft, and medical units, to a Special Purpose Force of under 100 Marines.

**Fully-Equipped Forces.** The most commonly deployed expeditionary force is the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) of up to 16,000 troops equipped to fight for thirty days. This is considered the minimum force needed to face the armies of even a small nation. MAGTFs in the form of two Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) of approximately 2,500 men each are stationed continuously afloat in the Mediterranean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. These MEUs are outfitted with helicopters, landing craft, armored assault vehicles, and other equipment.

The Marines are organized into three standing expeditionary forces based at Camp Pendleton, California, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and Okinawa, Japan. Much of the equipment they would need to fight overseas is placed on what are called Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS), which are floating storage lockers, each squadron of which carries the tanks, guns, ammunition, and other supplies to outfit up to one Marine Expeditionary Brigade. These are deployed at the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, along the U.S. Atlantic coast, and at Guam in the Pacific Ocean. In addition to Marine forces that conduct typical military operations, approximately 11,000 Marines serve as embassy guards, with security detachments on naval ships and bases, and in antiterrorism squads called Fleet Antiterrorism Security Teams (FAST).

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<sup>4</sup> Kenneth J. Conboy, ed., *U.S. and Asia Statistical Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1991).



## Marine Corps Operations: 1982-1992

Legend: ✱ Crisis Response    ● Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance

In all, almost two-thirds of the Marine Corps is structured into some type of combat-related unit with 30 percent of these Marines always deployed outside the U.S. in peacetime.<sup>5</sup> All of these Marines give America a global presence and capability to intervene quickly in a crisis. In peacetime, this not only can help deter potential aggressors around the globe, but help in such missions as disaster relief, military training, counter-narcotics operations, peacekeeping forces, and humanitarian assistance.

**Crisis Response.** Responding to limited military crises such as in the *Mayaguez* Rescue Operation off Cambodia in May 1975 is one of the signature capabilities of the Marines. Another example of crisis response was in Grenada in October and November of 1983. Marines can also evacuate U.S. diplomats and civilians in an emergency, as they did in Liberia in *Operation Sharp Edge* from May 1990 to January 1991 and in *Operation Eastern Exit* in Somalia in January 4 to 6, 1991. Securing embassies, as was done in December of 1989 during the coup attempt to overthrow Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, is another mission for the Marines.

In more severe crises, the Marines can supply large numbers of forces for sustained counter-insurgency operations, as in the Vietnam War, or large-scale operations with the other services, as in *Operation Desert Storm*. Their ability to threaten attack from the sea played a key role in *Desert Storm* by tying down about eight divisions of Saddam Hussein's forces, even though a seaborne assault never was launched. In any almost any situation, the Marines can conduct assaults from ships onto a defended

<sup>5</sup> "Marine Air Ground Task Force: A Global Capability," U.S. Marine Corps, FMFRP 2-12, April 1991, also "U.S. Marine Corps: Concepts and Issues 1991."

beach and helicopter assaults from the sea to points inland. Only the Marines can operate independently of such shore facilities as bases and airports, at a safe distance from coastal defenses.

The soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the Special Operations Command, the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps, and other "light" fighters are the only other U.S. forces capable of responding to most of these missions with the same speed as the Marines. But these other forces do not have the firepower of the Marines, the ability to sustain themselves in combat without resupply from the U.S., or the ability to fight their way onto a beach or heavily defended territory. The reason: they are not integrated with transport ships and mostly use aircraft to get to battle zones.

**Slow Moving Army.** Before most Army or Air Force troops can be moved, for example, their units must be brought together, loaded onto ships and planes that may not immediately be available, and they must find a secure runway or port near the fighting from which to disembark. A C-5B *Galaxy*, the Air Force's largest cargo plane, is capable of carrying only two of the Army's frontline M1A1 tanks and must land on high quality runways at least 10,000 feet long, which are found infrequently in the Third World.<sup>6</sup> The proximity of such an airfield to a battle zone is also a potentially limiting feature. To move even the Army's 10th Mountain Division, a "light" infantry force without tanks, would require from 500 to 600 trips by the smaller C-141 *Starlifter*, its main transport aircraft.<sup>7</sup> While fast sealift ships might also be used to augment these flights, it can take days to load each ship, a week or more of sailing time to get the troops and ships to port, and then one or two days to unload each ship. It took the Army roughly two months to move its first tank-heavy division to the Persian Gulf to counter Iraq in 1990. The Marines, by contrast, always have some forces loaded and ready to go, and frequently are within seven to ten days' steaming time to many potential hotspots.

In a major crisis, the Marines are not intended to take the place of the Army. In any large-scale conflict, only the Army has the tank-heavy divisions, large numbers of troops, and logistical support needed to sustain forces over time and defeat a large, well-equipped enemy. But the Marines have enough artillery firepower and air support to secure footholds long enough to await heavier and more numerous Army and Air Force units, as they did in conjunction with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division in *Operation Desert Storm*.

## BUDGET CUTS AND THE MARINES

The Marine Corps budget surely will be cut in coming years. According to the Defense Department's "Overview of the Changing Department of Defense: Strategy, Budget, and Forces," released last October, the Marines by 1995 are slated to drop to

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6 Author's interview with Air Force Captain George Sillia, Air Force Media Relations, Washington, D.C., and Air Force Master Sergeant Chuck Jones, Air Force Military Airlift Command Public Affairs Office, Springfield, Illinois, October, 21, 1991.

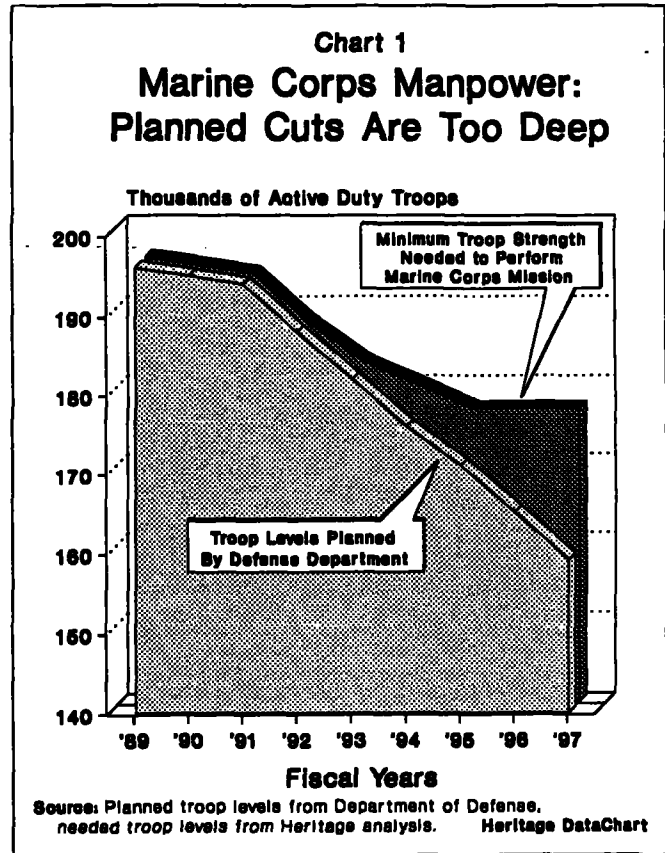
7 Author's interview with Major Hiram Bell, Public Affairs Officer, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), Fort Drum, New York, October 30, 1991

171,000 troops from a current strength of 194,040. The Defense Department projects that by 1997, the Marines could be down to 159,100 troops, or enough to support only two and a half warfighting Marine Expeditionary Forces instead of the current three.<sup>8</sup> Many important weapons programs also have been canceled. These include: a Light Armored Vehicle (LAV) armed with a 105 millimeter gun and the V-22 *Osprey* aircraft.

The Marine Corps uses manpower efficiently. For every Marine officer there are nine enlisted men; by contrast, for every Army officer there are seven enlisted men. In the Marines there are two combat troops for every non-combat Marine. This compares with a ratio of approximately 1 to 1 for the Army. Because of the high ratio of Marine Corps combat forces, cuts in troop strength likely will cut directly into fighting capability more than in the other services.<sup>9</sup>

At its current strength of 194,040, the Marines comfortably can accomplish all of the missions assigned to them by the President. These include sustaining a military presence overseas, peacetime missions such as evacuating embassies and U.S. citizens, and maintaining the capability to respond to two overseas regional conflicts at the same time.<sup>10</sup>

If manpower strength is reduced to 159,100 by 1997, as planned by the Pentagon, this would force the Marines to do two things. First: Marines would have to be afloat or abroad for 54 percent of the time assigned to combat-related duties, in contrast to 43



<sup>8</sup> The three standing MEFs are peacetime organizations that do not accurately reflect combat power. According to the Marine Corps, a standard, fully equipped warfighting MEF includes a total of 38,387 men including air, ground, and logistics personnel. MEFs can, however, include up to 100,000 men.

<sup>9</sup> The Marines have 174,287 enlisted men and 19,753 officers, for a ration of 1 to 9. The officer to enlisted ratio for the other services are: Army, 1 to 7, Navy, 1 to 7, and Air Force, 1 to 4. These figures are based on active duty strengths as of June 1991. Part of the discrepancy between the officer to enlisted ratios among the services is explained by the fact that the Marines rely on the Navy for all medical services which are always heavily staffed with officers. The Army and the Air Force have their own medical services.

<sup>10</sup> The requirement for the Marine Corps being able to respond to two concurrent regional contingencies is set by the Pentagon.



percent today. This will take its toll on men and equipment, diminishing the Marine Corps' fighting capability and discouraging Marines from re-enlisting when their terms expire. Second: the potential response time to crises overseas would be slowed. This cuts to the heart of the Marines' mission, to project power with little warning time to crisis spots anywhere on the globe.

**Equipment Deficiencies.** Budget cuts also could deny the Marines the weapons and equipment for their missions. Such cuts already have forced the Marines to cancel the V-22 *Osprey* program. The *Osprey's* main Marines mission would be to ferry troops into battle from points offshore, well out of the range of most coastal defenses. Without the *Osprey*, the Marines will have to extend the serviceable life of its troop carrying helicopter fleet of Vietnam War era CH-46E *Sea Knights* and other craft. And without the *Osprey* the Marine Corps will not have the aircraft to rush large numbers of troops quickly to targets well behind shore defenses.

A lack of airlift is not the Marines' only transportation problem. The mission for which the Marines are most famous, the hit-the-beach amphibious assaults conducted in the Pacific in World War II, may no longer be achievable unless the Marines obtain a new and modern Amphibious Assault Vehicle, which is an armored troop carrier that swims. The current assault vehicle, the AAV-7A1, was designed in the 1960s and will reach the end of its serviceable life in 2004.

The Marines now have on the drawing board a new AAV that will move faster and farther than the old AAV-7A1. And while the old assault vehicle can be launched from ships no further than 4,000 yards from shore, the new AAV could be launched from as far away as 25 miles. However, budget cuts could slow development of the new assault vehicle and cut the number of vehicles eventually purchased. With fewer dollars in its budget, the Marines may have to choose to retain men to fight and forego the expensive process of testing new vehicles.

The Navy's future amphibious ship fleet is another potential weak spot for the Marines. Because of budget pressures, the Navy is planning to reduce the number of amphibious assault ships in its fleet to 53 from today's 62. Some 50 ships are needed to carry out the initial deployment of a single warfighting MEF (approximately 40,000 men) to one high threat crisis. Assuming that about 10 percent of all amphibious ships in the fleet are always in overhaul or otherwise not operational, and that some ships will have to be kept in reserve for other missions, the U.S. could find itself short on ships for a major amphibious assault.<sup>11</sup>

**Heavy Firepower.** Other key equipment problems for the Marines include a lack of ship-to-shore firepower and insufficient defenses against mines in the shallow water of coastal regions. Before Marines assault a coastal position, heavy firepower must soften defensive positions. Such bombardment is best delivered by the huge 16-inch guns on the Navy's battleships, which can fire a 2,000 lb. shell. Four of these ships, the USS *Iowa*, the USS *Missouri*, the USS *New Jersey*, and the USS *Wisconsin* were

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11 The Marine Corps in the 1980s had planned on being able to use a Navy amphibious fleet of 72 ships in 1998. Furthermore, the Marine Corps needs 20 to 25 amphibious ships just to put a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) assault force into battle.

recommissioned during the Reagan Administration. In the past two years, three of the ships have been retired; this year the USS *Missouri* is scheduled for retirement.

In place of the battleships, the Navy plans to provide coastal gunfire support with air bombardment and the 5-inch guns, delivering 70 lb. shells, that arm the rest of the fleet. Using these smaller guns with their shorter range will force ships to come dangerously close to coastal defenses and still will not provide firepower needed.

**Light Armored Vehicles.** Another concern for the Marines is whether they will be able to improve their Light Armored Vehicles (LAV), which are eight-wheeled armored fighting vehicles and troop carriers that are the mainstay of light armored Marines infantry units. Some LAVs were to have been equipped with a 105 millimeter gun, similar to the gun on an M-60A1 tank, to improve the Marines' ability to defend themselves against enemy light armored vehicles and some tanks. The LAV now carries only a 25 mm Gatling gun. The 105 mm gun program was canceled on October 25 because of a lack of funds.

Two other LAV improvement programs, also threatened by budget cuts are even more crucial to the Marines' fighting ability. The first would equip the LAV with nightfighting thermal sights similar to those now used by Iran, Iraq, Syria, and many other Third World armies. The second improvement would outfit the LAV with air defense missiles and guns to protect fast moving Marine units from air attack. Both these programs could be dropped if the Marines are forced to decide between maintaining adequate manpower and modernizing their equipment.

## PREPARING THE MARINES FOR NEW THREATS TO AMERICA

The post-Cold War world will be an uncertain place, in which violent conflict could erupt with little warning in areas vital to America's global interests. While the Army, with its tanks and other heavy forces, was the weapon of choice for combating a heavily-armed Soviet threat in Europe, the Marines, with their flexibility and global reach, are America's weapon of choice to meet the main threats of the 1990s.

Some Marine response may be relatively small-scale operations like the December 1989 invasion of Panama; some may be larger conflicts like the Persian Gulf War. The Marine Corps is designed specifically for deterring, responding quickly, and helping to defeat these types of threats. Unlike the other services, the Marines are already organized and equipped to project American power into practically any kind of conflict. Marines can act without creating whole new doctrines, specialized forces, or equipment depots overseas. This may make the Marines, along with the military's special operations forces the pivotal forces in America's post-Cold War arsenal.

A modern and well-armed Marine Corps will be essential if America is to meet the global military challenges of the 1990s. George Bush should instruct Defense Secretary Dick Cheney to:

◆◆ **Maintain three Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF).**

Based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Camp Pendleton, California and at Okinawa, Japan, Marine air, ground and logistics troops from these expeditionary forces quickly can be dispatched to flashpoints in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For there to be enough troops to sustain three Marine Expeditionary forces, the Marine Corps as

a whole needs a minimum of 177,000 active duty troops. Anything short of this will require individual Marines to be deployed overseas longer; this creates considerable morale and retention problems.

A force of 177,000 Marines already is approximately 17,000, or one Marine Expeditionary Brigade, smaller than the current force. The Bush Administration should ensure that nothing more is cut. Thus, the Pentagon should draft, and Bush should submit to Congress an amendment to U.S. Code Title 10 of 1952, which outlines the mission and force structure of the Marines. This amendment should establish that the active duty strength of the Marine Corps should not drop below 177,000. Title 10 now says only that the Marines should have a minimum of three ground and three air divisions, but does not set a specific manpower level, leaving the law open to broad interpretation.

◆ ◆ **Purchase the V-22 *Osprey* and meet the Marines' other advanced equipment needs.**

To get troops into battle quickly and safely in the future, the Marines will have to project power to an intended landing site from a point over the horizon. Future airborne assaults will require that the entire fleet of Vietnam era CH-46E *Sea Knight* and CH-53D *Sea Stallion* helicopters be replaced by the faster, longer range, V-22 *Osprey* vertical take off and landing aircraft. The Marines will need a total of 500 of these *Ospreys*, which are now undergoing testing.

The Marines amphibious assault craft, the AAV-7A1, also must be replaced soon. For the past decade, the Marines have been developing the "advanced amphibious assault vehicle"; this would have increased range and speed at sea and tougher armor and improved armaments for operations on land. This vehicle eventually must be purchased if the Marines are to retain an "over-the-beach" amphibious assault capability. Budget cuts, however, could threaten the program, still in its research phase.

The Pentagon also should revive the program canceled on October 25 to equip 154 Light Armored Vehicles (LAV) with the 105 mm guns needed to defend Marine units against many of the medium and light tanks found in the Third World. This program is needed to augment the Marines' force of aging M-60 tanks and newer M1A1 *Abrams* tanks, to provide lightly armored forces with more firepower. Much of the LAV force should be equipped with thermal sights for night operations, a capability now enjoyed by many potential enemies in the Third World, including Iraq. Since the Marines now are without an effective air defense system capable of moving with quickly advancing forces, an additional anti-aircraft LAV should be procured and armed with *Stinger* missiles and a 25 mm air defense cannon.

Other equipment priorities for the Marines include electronic navigation equipment that uses the Pentagon's Global Positioning Satellites which allow U.S. military units to pinpoint their location within 16 meters' accuracy. The Marines also need sensors and protective kits for detecting and protecting men and equipment from nuclear, chemical, or biological threats.

◆ ◆ **Reduce the Marine Corps Reserve.**

The Marine Corps' greatest asset is the speed and strength with which it can respond to a crisis. Yet it can take reservists at least a month to gear up to fight. If the Marine Corps is to be reduced in size, then the first cuts should come from the Reserves.

Ideally the Army should serve as reinforcements for the Marines. Larger, outfitted with more equipment, and slower to respond, the Army and its reserves are better suited than the Marines for extended conflicts against heavily armed foes.

The current Marine Corps reserve strength of 43,000 should be reduced to about 16,000, roughly the size of one Marine Expeditionary Brigade. This MEB should be structured to emphasize infantry, artillery, light armored infantry, and combat engineers. This will allow the Marines to replace front line battle losses. This will also keep the combat strength of the Marine Corps at a relatively constant level if they should be called upon to respond to other quick rising contingencies.

The Marine Corps Reserve should retain its civil affairs units which administer captured municipalities and keep refugees from interfering with military operations. The Reserve also should develop a psychological operations capability, which the Marines now lack. Psychological operations use radio, TV, and publications to weaken an enemy's morale and encourage them to surrender. A Marine Corps Reserve manned at about 16,000 men will save approximately \$280 million.<sup>12</sup>

◆ ◆ **Eliminate the Marines' Norway mission.**

The Marine Corps has been responsible for helping to defend Norway from a Soviet attack since the early 1980s. The threat of such an attack, of course, has disappeared almost completely. Thus the Marines' equipment in Norway, which includes armored vehicles, guns and ammunition, should be returned to the U.S.

◆ ◆ **Increase ship-to-shore firepower.**

Naval gunfire support always has been critical to Marine Corps amphibious landings and other operations because it clears enemy defenses and harasses enemy gunners. To ensure that the Marines continue to have such gunfire support, the Navy should keep the battleship USS *Missouri* in the fleet. The Navy also should continue exploring future long-range gunfire support systems so that its ships, armed with 5 inch guns, will not have to move dangerously close to enemy shore emplacements. These new guns will need a range in excess of 25 miles and must be capable of delivering sustained, accurate fire onto targets ashore.

◆ ◆ **Keep a strong naval amphibious fleet.**

The Navy has 62 amphibious ships in its fleet, nine of which are expected to be retired by the year 1995. The Navy must continue replacing enough aging amphibious ships to keep at least 60 in the fleet. At least seven new ships thus must be built by the end of the decade. Among these ships should be the last of five scheduled *Wasp*-class multi-purpose amphibious assault ships which can carry 1,900 Marines, helicopters, AV-8B *Harrier* attack jets, and amphibious assault vehicles. The Navy also should acquire the new USS *Harpers Ferry*-class cargo ship, which will carry large amounts of ammunition and vehicles to support amphibious landings. Finally, the Navy should continue planning for the "LX," an amphibious ship that will carry 700 Marines and several aircraft. It would be used to respond to small-scale crises.

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12 Author's interview with Marine officials in Marine Corps Budget Office, December 11, 1991.

◆ ◆ **Improve Marine Corps riverine warfare capabilities.**

Inland waterways in the Third World are used to transport illegal drugs, guerrilla insurgents, and terrorists. To improve the U.S. ability to fight on rivers and lakes, more riverine assault craft (RAC) are needed. Nineteen of these boats should be purchased. The Marines now have fewer than 50 small boat pilots to operate all their riverine craft; the number of these pilots should be increased, as should the number of Marines trained in riverine warfare.

The Marines together with the Navy SEALs (Sea, Air, Land) have devised a riverine warfare strategy for small scale raids, reconnaissance missions, counternarcotics operations, and larger-scale riverine assaults. To put this plan into action, the Marines will have to train more with foreign forces and expand the number of Marines qualified to teach riverine warfare skills. Because Central and South America will be the primary area of operation for Marines and SEALs conducting riverine warfare training missions, and since local guerrillas and drug traffickers make extensive use of rivers for transport and para-military operations, the Marines and Navy SEALs must expand their limited Spanish and Portuguese language programs.

◆ ◆ **Increase Marine Corps "civic action" activities.**

The Marines are, of course, a combat force, but they also can perform non-combat missions. Examples: humanitarian assistance provided in the wake of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in *Operation Fiery Vigil* and the Bangladesh typhoon of April 30, 1991 in *Operation Sea Angel*, and to Kurds in the months following the Persian Gulf War in *Operation Provide Comfort*.

While such activities demonstrate America's generous willingness to help others in distress, these activities also help America. Marine humanitarian actions create goodwill abroad and serve as training missions for the Marines, allowing them to practice logistical operations, amphibious assaults, engineering, and other skills needed for combat.

In addition, Marines in such areas as Northern Iraq on humanitarian missions can gather intelligence and familiarize themselves with possible combat areas. Marine training deployments in Third World countries should include civic action such as building roads, and schools and providing potable water. Navy corpsmen and doctors that deploy with the Marines also can be used more fully to teach preventative health techniques and improve local health conditions.

## **CONCLUSION**

America has won the Cold War and thus safely can reduce those elements of its armed forces that have been geared mainly to the Soviet threat. These include strategic nuclear forces, Army heavy forces, the large tactical Air Force, and even some advanced Navy ships and submarines.

America cannot afford, however, significantly to reduce the Marine Corps. The world after the Cold War will be an uncertain and in many ways still an unsafe place for America. Regional tyrants threaten access to critical resources in the Middle East and elsewhere. Anti-American guerrillas and drug traffickers plague Latin America.

And conflicts continue to simmer in East Asia, home to America's major trading partners. The Marines, posted around the world and able to respond quickly to unexpected crises, will be needed probably more in the 1990s than they were during the Cold War.

When American forces are brought home from Europe and elsewhere, the Marine Corps may be the only American military force stationed overseas, ready to respond quickly and forcefully to protect American interests around the globe. The Marines are best equipped to rush to defend friendly governments, keep open sea lanes, protect American lives and property, evacuate Americans from war zones, and maintain a continuous military presence to deter potential aggressors.

**Major Responsibility.** Right now, the Marines shoulder a major share of America's crisis response capability. To meet this responsibility, the Marines need their three Marine Expeditionary Forces, modern equipment like the V-22 *Osprey* aircraft, and a new amphibious assault craft. To support the Marines, the Navy must deploy at least 60 amphibious ships and keep in service at least one battleship. To improve operating skills in the Third World, the Marines should expand their riverine warfare capabilities and their "civic action" and other humanitarian missions.

To help meet defense budget reduction goals, the Marines can give up roughly 17,000 active duty forces and 27,000 reserve forces—or two-thirds of all Marine reserves—and should give up the waning mission of reinforcing Norway in the event of a Soviet assault.

The Marine Corps adds an important dimension to America's overall military posture, including the ability to strike quickly from the sea. If America gives up these capabilities, through neglect or by choice, its ability to defend its vital interests overseas will suffer. While America's other services can take major cuts in the wake of the Soviet collapse and still fulfill their missions worldwide, the Marines cannot. As America's smallest force, it is most vulnerable to the budget cutters. The U.S. still needs the military capabilities that only the Marines can offer. They should be spared the budget knife.

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