

Operating Concepts

Marine Corps operating concepts for a changing security environment.

by Maj Pierre G. Hollis

In 1998 the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) published *United States Marine Corps Warfighting Concepts for the 21st Century*. Commonly referred to as the "White Book," it provided the 12 concepts that collectively articulated the operational capabilities we sought to achieve. Foremost among them was operational maneuver from the sea (OMFTS).

These concepts served as a framework for the ongoing process of innovation and capability development. The ideas contained therein, coupled with our maneuver warfare philosophy, core competencies, and expeditionary heritage, eventually came to be known as expeditionary maneuver warfare. Those concepts have served us well, and recent history has proven that many of the ideas espoused—such as the three block war—were remarkably insightful.

The 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, subsequent world events, and new national security and defense strategies have redefined what the Nation expects of its Armed Forces. The *Marine Corps Mid-range Threat Estimate: 2005–2015* provides additional insight with respect to the likely causes, locations, and adversaries for future conflict. *The 21st Century Marine Corps (ALMAR 018/05)* has provided the Commandant's guidance for the future of our Corps. As a result, the Marine Corps recently published a successor to the White Book.

Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment distills the Commandant's broad guidance and direction into a new family of operating concepts. It describes Marine Corps forces that will be organized, based, trained, and equipped for forward presence, crisis response, forcible entry, prolonged operations,

and countering irregular threats. Designed as an interim product, it will be refined into an enduring body of work—nested under a forthcoming naval concept—that will guide future capability development.

Forward presence proposes options for sizing, shaping, and posturing Marine Corps forces in a manner that supports expanding our forward presence requirements of the regional combatant commanders. It describes how forward postured naval forces will proactively conduct security cooperation with an expanding set of international partners. In addition to conducting security cooperation, these forces will be situated to

environment, and strong enough to prevail in likely missions across the range of operations. Forcible entry articulates how forward deployed and crisis response forces can be concentrated from significant distances, on a compressed timeline, to overcome limitations on access within an operating area and open entry points for the joint force commander. Prolonged operations addresses the challenges of refining our organization, equipment, and training to balance general-purpose capability with those specialized capabilities that may be required to conduct long-duration operations against current and future opponents. Finally,

countering irregular threats addresses the need to integrate military operations with other elements of power and influence to support a host nation in its efforts to effectively resolve the conditions that sustain discontent or insurrection.

Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment is intended to focus our creativity, initiative, and judgment toward developing the military capabilities that will ensure that our Corps continues to be the

Nation's premiere expeditionary force-in-readiness.



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Marines participate in a wide variety of operations. (Photos courtesy of the National Archives and DoD.)

provide forward defense of the homeland through preemptive counterterrorism operations. Crisis response describes our ability to quickly react to emerging events via a force structure and global posture that is agile enough to deploy and reinforce rapidly, robust enough to sustain itself in an expeditionary