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A REORIENTATION

Most MARINES FACE THE ORIENT. The tinder box quality of events in China and Viet Nam and the possibility of Marine operations in these troubled areas have the irresistible attraction of a magnet for our tactical speculations. For years the attention of every Marine has been focused upon the Orient and the Pacific. World War II, occupation duties and Korea have all required Marine concentration in these areas. Much of our thinking has been developed and refined in the context of Oriental foes, Asiatic and Pacific terrain and the command relationships of that theater.

There is a danger that, outside of a few staff officers struggling with European problems, the majority of us will forget that we must also face eastward. While the possibility exists that a peripheral war in the Orient might expand into a major conflict, the probability is that the area of decision in any World War III would be in Europe. Therefore, the Marine Corps must be prepared to operate against an aggressor there; employment in the area of decisive struggle is a continuing Marine Corps goal.

Facing the Atlantic area involves facing a new set of problems and an environment different from that of the Pacific area. Let us look at some of these factors with which all of

us Marines must be familiar if we are to be prepared to be "the first to fight," no matter what the locale of the action.

NATO

Our principal Allies are members of, and the most probable areas of combat fall within, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization military establishment. The littoral areas of amphibious interest lie, for the most part, within the command area of Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The movement to Europe from this country of amphibious forces would probably be made by Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic. It is evident that amphibious operations against shores fronting on the Atlantic would involve, at some point during the campaign, a shift of control from one Supreme Commander to the other of the landing force elements involved. On the other hand, Allied Command Europe is subdivided into Northern, Central, Southern and Mediterranean command areas, with US Naval Striking Forces assigned to the Southern area. We can thus easily imagine a situation in which amphibious operations would take place under the control of the Southern regional commander. Finally, it should be noted that command and key staff positions throughout the NATO

organizations are filled by officers from all the services and from all of the principal countries which are members.

US Commands

There is a US command structure paralleling that of NATO. The US Naval elements are of interest to us. On this side there is the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. It is entirely conceivable that this command might be the one to move amphibious forces across the ocean, under certain circumstances. In Europe we have the Commander in Chief, US Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean and his subordinate Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. This commander would always retain certain responsibilities, primarily of an administrative and logistical nature, for Navy and Marine forces committed to Europe.

Command Relationships

We see from the above that Marines moving to Europe are entering a complex command arrangement which will affect vitally the planning and command relationships which will govern their actions. The higher commands under which amphibious operations and force movements might have to be conducted, or with which they might have to be co-ordinated, could be American or

Allied and of various services. Allied Forces Northern Europe—British Navy; Allied Forces Central Europe—French Army; Allied Forces Southern Europe—American Navy; Air Forces Southern Europe—American Air Force; these are all examples of the foregoing statement.

Among these various commanders and their staffs, it is evident that there will exist widely differing opinions and perhaps lack of appreciation of the capabilities of amphibious warfare and of its application to the strategic problems in the European area. The solution to this problem is doctrinal education and will be discussed later.

The most important, and thorniest, command relationship problem relates to the operational control of air units. There is a widely held body of opinion that all air units should be under one functional air commander who, on a co-equal basis, would co-operate with the amphibious task force commander during the operation. Our view, of course, holds to the task force principle in which the amphibious task force commander has operational control of the air units within the objective area. He is given operational control of the air units which he requires for the successful completion of his mission. It is evident that the functional concept of command of all air units is not compatible with the Marine Air-Ground Task Force principle. The establishment of proper command relationships within a theater is the province of the theater commander; therefore Marine officers on high level staffs must present the case for our views.

The command situation at the scene of action also deserves comment. The US will probably contribute the bulk of amphibious units, both Navy and Marine. However, our Allies will often contribute forces also, and with high ranking commanders. In order that our doctrine and principles of command relationships will be employed, it is necessary that Commander Amphibious Task Force and Commander Amphibious Troops be US Naval and Marine officers respectively. They should be of 3-star flag and general rank to insure that they will command and so that their views will carry maximum weight with higher commands.

Doctrine

Our doctrine stresses certain principles which we believe are necessary for successful operation of our forces with maximum effectiveness. We believe, first, that the Marine Air-Ground Task Force is a ground-air team which forms part of the balanced naval amphibious force. Separation of the ground and air elements from each other sharply reduces the specialized capabilities of this team. In this instance the power of the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts acting individually. In short, Marine forces are primarily part of naval amphibious power and should be used as a mobile force, striking primarily from the sea, with emphasis upon offensive operations.

The next tenet is that Marine amphibious elements should be employed in the manner of a strategic reserve, emphasizing their mobility and shock power. It is desirable to commit them at the critical time and place during the main battle in such manner as to be decisive or contribute materially to the decision. Employment on other missions, capable of being performed by other units, should be ordered only in emergency and then with full realization that a highly specialized and powerful potential is being lost for the duration of that operation.

The doctrine outlined above should govern the conduct of amphibious operations in Europe; however, the diversity of commanders and concepts involved may present difficulties. Specific areas of digression from this doctrine, prompted by some of these different concepts, may be forecast. We can then be ready to cope with the problem, being forewarned.

The first danger is that the Marine air-ground team might be split up. The publicly stated disparity between NATO and Soviet ground and air forces will always present a great temptation to bolster the NATO front lines with any troops and planes that come to hand, regardless of their primary mission or specialized potential. Thus, our specially trained troops may be used merely to plug gaps, instead of to strike decisively. Such use of Marine air and ground forces as fillers, or reinforcements, for NATO

ground and air forces would completely destroy the amphibious power and balance of the fleet. A specialized and irreplaceable naval force would have been broken up and employed for duties which could be performed by conventional units.

Secondly, because the decisive nature of amphibious operations and the great mobility and flexibility of amphibious forces are not always understood, there exists the danger of their employment on secondary tasks or in non-decisive areas. A feeling could develop that in order to "keep everyone busy" amphibious forces would have to be committed to the first task that came to hand. Or, forgetting mobility, amphibious forces might be committed to the area in which they were located, simply to avoid movement to a scene of more profitable employment. It must be borne in mind always that amphibious forces are a powerful, mobile strategic reserve—readily sent to the area of decisive combat and there employed with great shock power and telling effect. They, together with the employment of atomic weapons, are the principal means by which the high commander can influence the action.

There is also the problem of defensive versus offensive combat. The imbalance of opposing forces will certainly result in a strategic defensive by most elements during the initial phases of any aggressive attack by the enemy. However, amphibious forces, unlike many other units, can be employed in the tactical offensive during this critical period. Their offensive commitment would assist decisively in stopping hostile offensives. Amphibious forces could contribute far more to the stabilization of enemy attacks by offensive amphibious operations than by being filtered into the gaps in existing defense lines.

Making certain that Marine amphibious doctrine is understood and accepted is primarily an educational matter. The work and recommendations of Marine staff officers on these staffs should consistently present our approved concepts of amphibious warfare. Proper doctrine must be the foundation stone upon which all else rests. In the past, visits to European commanders by Marine general officers, who expound our principles and concepts, have been very helpful.

ful and will continue to be so. Review of plans by Marine staff officers charged with this function in Europe, in commands here and at Headquarters Marine Corps, has served as an opportunity to make corrective and constructive recommendations. Finally, those connected with NATO training which includes amphibious exercises must continue to exert every effort to see that these exercises are realistic and conducted in accord with current Marine Corps/Navy practice.

In summary, we must overcome doctrinal problems by vigorous efforts on the part of all officers in a position to influence the situation. It is a never ending task and one which can be done only by sound presentation, never by argument. Our doctrine is sound, but others will accept it only when we can demonstrate it. We must all shed light, not heat, on this important topic when it arises in joint and combined commands.

Planning

If we accept the premise that Marine forces may be employed in a European war, then it follows that a major problem of preparation is planning. Advance planning is required so that prompt amphibious action will be possible and so that some of the problems already considered in this discussion may be settled early, prior to arrival at the scene of action.

A brief look at Europe shows us that any aggressive thrusts from the east must offer a seaward flank to counter-offensive action. It is difficult to find a regional area of strategic importance that does not have suitable beaches and terrain for landing. At the same time many of these areas are separated from each other by terrain obstacles which render large scale movement of conventional ground troops between them extremely difficult, if not impracticable. These considerations do not affect amphibious forces which can readily be shifted to any part of the European theater by sea under the requisite air cover. Great opportunities would exist for employment of Marines in our primary mission. Inchon provided the largest example of the decisive effect of a deep envelopment by sea. Similar results can be expected from am-

phibious blows of the same type—flank or enveloping attacks from the sea—in any future conflict. Strategic planning must reflect these capabilities. Strategic plans must include the assignment of an amphibious mission, although of necessity a generalized one, to amphibious forces.

Technical planning is a problem, as no designation of definite target areas can be given by higher commands prior to the development of the initial campaigns of the aggressor and assessment of the effect of our counter-moves. Nevertheless, many details which would apply to any operation can be prepared in advance and a number of problems can be solved relating to command relationships, force availability, tactics, air and other support operations, logistics and communications. These supporting plans, plus studies of likely areas of commitment, must be made in advance by the Navy and Marine commands which will be immediately responsible for the conduct of operations. The fact that there are a multiplicity of commands involved necessitates the use of a full time planning group on this task.

Tactics and Techniques

Marine employment in a major European war highlights a number of tactical questions which every Marine should ask himself, and do his best within his province to provide the answers.

First, are we fully prepared to use atomic weapons in support of our operations and have we developed all possible defensive measures? There may be policies within European commands relating to this field which would vitally affect our unilateral concepts—action toward mutual readjustment would then be indicated.

Second, are we fully prepared to meet armor employed in mass? No elaboration is required!

Third, are our air elements prepared to mesh into the highly centralized and integrated air operations in Europe, particularly air defense, while at the same time remaining responsive to the operational control of the amphibious task force commander? Air defense operations in Europe involve the use of national air forces, other Allied air forces, our own units and func-

tional air commanders. Air defense of the task force, the key to amphibious operations in the atomic age, is provided by air elements of the task force under the operational control of its commander. There must not be mutual interference between these various air elements; at the same time we must realize that it is an "all hands" evolution. A high degree of co-operation is obviously required and we must be ready to provide our share of it.

Fourth, are our logistic operations geared to possible conditions of a major war? We can no longer count on unmolested and concentrated use of major ports on either side of the Atlantic for unloading, mounting, staging, rehearsals or logistic support in the objective area. Lip service to this unpalatable fact is not enough; we must practice doing the alternative.

Conclusion

Marines must face eastward—as well as toward the Orient—and understand the European military environment and the NATO structure. We must give serious thought to the problems generated by employment there, since there is strong possibility that it would be the area of decisive struggle. These problems include major ones in the fields of command relationships, doctrine, planning and operational techniques. They must be solved lest we find our air-ground team separated and used merely as a reinforcement of so many troops and so many planes and in a non-amphibious capacity. One of the major advantages of the United States in war is our amphibious capability; it must not be allowed to lapse by default or be dropped into the discard through lack of understanding. We Marines are directly responsible for a large share in preventing this. This leads to the final conclusion that Marines can do much to initiate solutions to these problems. If we give our undivided attention to this field then this asset is bound to produce results. Vigorous and continuous action is required and, in many cases, an effective educational effort to insure that the great potential of amphibious warfare is not lost through lack of knowledge or appreciation of its powerful capabilities.

USMC