

# A WEAPON SYSTEM DEFINED

*Remarks by  
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I want to tell you about a Weapons System—one that is powerful, versatile and unique. I want to bring into focus:

- What it is . . .
- What it can do . . . and
- Why we need it.

I refer, of course, to our Amphibious System—of Navy and Marine Corps sea, land, and air forces.

Like other weapons, this one can be field stripped, so we can look at the operating parts. In each amphibious organization, Naval, landing, and supporting forces are task organized to meet specific requirements. There is no rigid structure.





## A WEAPON SYSTEM DEFINED (continued)

We generally employ these task organizations at three levels:

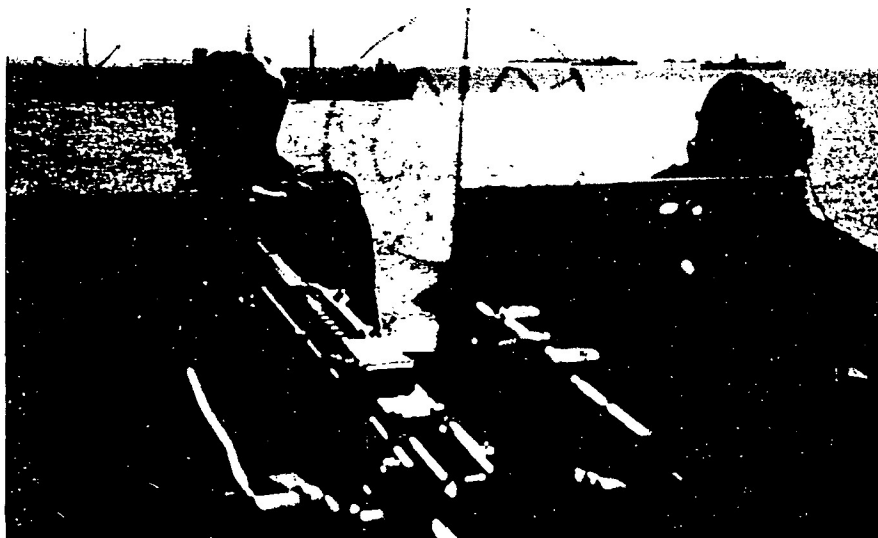
- *A Marine Amphibious Unit.* Together with a Navy Amphibious Task Unit, normally consists of 1,800 to 4,000 Marines embarked in four to seven amphibious ships. They are supported by helicopters, artillery, tanks, and when needed, tactical aircraft. Forces of this size are normally deployed in the Western Pacific, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean. They are geared to respond to minor contingencies, including natural disasters, and low level warfare. Forces of this size and smaller have answered the bell in 28 emergencies not actually involving combat, seven local conflicts, and one sub-theater war, since 1948.

- When the situation demands, these amphibious units can be combined or augmented to form *Marine Amphibious Brigades*, which, together with Naval Amphibious Task Groups, consist of 8,000 to 12,000 Marines embarked in 15 to 21 ships. Their artillery, armor, and helicopter support is increased, and backed up by 45 to 65 Marine Corps tactical aircraft, as well as one or two Navy carrier wings of 90 to 100 aircraft each. Forces of this size are prepared to respond to more intense local and sub-theater conflicts, and have done so four times since 1948.

- Finally, our traditional heavy assault capability is retained in the *Marine Amphibious Force*—about 40,000 Marines embarked in 45 to 55 ships of the Amphibious Task Force, heavy with firepower from its attached units and supporting Naval forces. Forces of this size have mounted out five times since 1948, twice for involvements which stopped short of combat.

As I have indicated, this system is powerful, versatile, and unique:

Its power lies not only in its massive firepower, but in the ability of forward deployed forces to respond to crisis quickly, when it counts. If needed, they can enter *directly* into combat upon arrival in the critical area without staging or reorganizing, and this power can be sustained through the combat-tested Marine logistic setup and the Navy's under-way replenishment (UNREP) system. On the other hand, deployed units can stay on station, near threatened areas, for up to 60 days without relief, and by their mere presence exert an influence on events





ashore. Once committed to operations ashore, they receive automatic resupply, with fuel and ammo replenishment conducted at sea as required. Nobody gets left high and dry.

As we continue to reduce our land-based forces overseas, there will be an *increasing reliance* on our ability to sustain combat power from the sea, especially in the lower ranges of conflict. We have two particularly significant projects underway, in our search for new options to cope with this factor of necessity:

- A study, with the Navy, of a seaborne mobile logistic system (SLMS), to develop organizational and operational procedures for the logistic support of sea-based Marine landing forces, and

- A second study, conducted by the Marine Corps Development Center at Quantico, to develop tactical doctrine for sea-based landing force operations.

Both studies take into consideration present shipping and budgetary constraints. We expect detailed results for the Marine Amphibious

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Unit/Amphibious Task Unit level by this summer.

I don't want to leave the impression that we are re-writing the book on amphibious warfare. Sea-basing represents an evolutionary refinement, not a revolutionary new concept.

We have deployed forces which were essentially sea-based since the end of World War II, including our Caribbean and Mediterranean ready forces and our Special Landing Force in Vietnam. However, it would be incorrect to assume there is nothing new about a sea-based concept. Some wrinkles must be ironed out, with respect to:

- Command and Control
- Ship-to-Shore Movement
- Logistic Support, and
- Operational and Embarkation Planning.

Despite our interest in sea-basing, however, we will not turn our backs on our traditional responsibility—to be able to conduct a large-scale assault in a high intensity environment.

The versatility of the Amphibious System is a spin-off from the nature of amphibious operations themselves, the most complex undertakings in the history of warfare. After coping with the variables and unknowns involved in setting up an assault from the sea, our planners and operators can handle just about any quick reaction situation.

- Power can be projected ashore selectively . . . precisely—with helicopters and surface assault craft—up to 50 miles inland. Amphibious roles can range from show-of-force and disaster relief all the way to operations in theater conventional war.

- This selective use of power is closely controlled by advanced command and control systems within the task forces and through rapid, dependable communications through parent commands to the national command authority. We do not operate in a vacuum.

Finally, our amphibious forces are *unique* in two important respects:

- They alone are independent of seaports and airheads for entry and sustained operations ashore. This applies both to forcible entry and to operations in under-developed areas.
- Their self-sustaining packages of integrated Naval, ground and air



components are unique among the world's military forces. Linked through training and tradition, these Navy/Marine teams enter crisis situations with their operation procedures and priorities already sorted out and understood.

Why do we need this particular weapons system?

- In the first place, it plays a significant role in implementing the Nixon Doctrine and its supporting Military Strategy of Realistic Deterrence.

- In brief, the President's goal is a generation of peace—through a policy based on partnership, strength, and willingness to negotiate. The basic objective of the military strategy is crisis deterrence, rather than management of crises once they begin. Increasing reliance is placed upon our allies to bear the burdens of their own defense.

- Deterrence, as you know, is a state of mind. The warfighting capability of our forces is only one of several considerations if their deterrent effect is to be realistic and not a bluff. Their credibility depends on their availability, their suitability, and the *visible readiness*, as well.

- This is why readiness has become our *raison d'être*—a way of life for the Marine Corps.

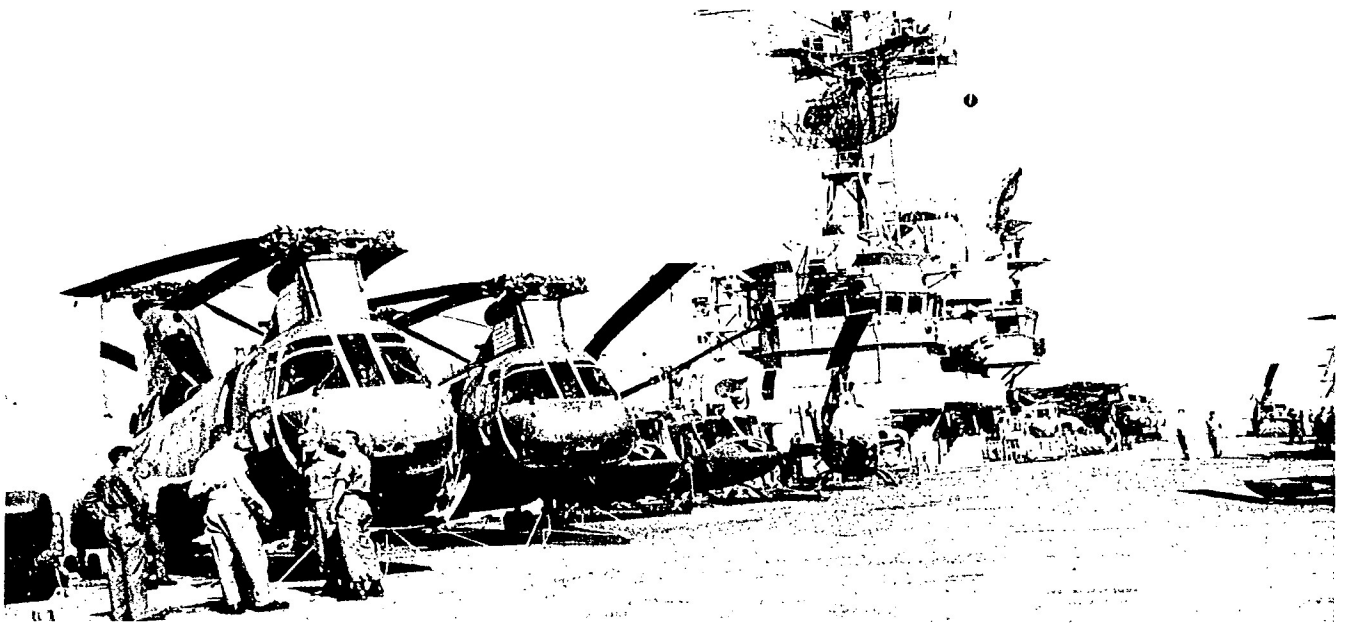
- Above all, a potential enemy must be convinced that we will *use* our deterrent forces, if necessary. Our credibility is enhanced by the historic willingness of the United

States to employ amphibious forces—48 times since 1948, 33 of which were alerts, evacuations, and humanitarian assistance.

Under the total force concept of our national security strategy, the question of interaction with our allies grows in importance. We shall continue to honor our commitments and to maintain adequate strength to meet our responsibilities. At the same time we shall depend upon our friends and allies to carry a greater share of the responsibility for their own defense. Overseas-based forces, while giving allies the greatest degree of assurance, tend to undercut the necessity for burden-sharing. On the other hand, Stateside-based forces throw the onus of self-defense on the allies, but offer the least assurance that the United States will be ready or willing to help when needed. Splitting the difference, forward deployed amphibious forces offer reasonable assurance of United States support, without automatic, irrevocable, United States commitment.

To be effective, of course, any weapons system needs continuing care and maintenance, and I would like to close with a few remarks about the Marine Corps aspects on this requirement, particularly with respect to our readiness, the maintenance of our standards, and our approach to the challenges which confront us.

We are back in battery as a ready



force, deployed around the world essentially as we were before Vietnam.

We returned from Vietnam in good shape—both in terms of personnel and equipment. In drawing down our strength by about a third, you can be sure we didn't discard our best Marines. And we brought back all our gear. With new equipment buys already programmed—including the revolutionary new AV8A V/STOL aircraft and the LVTP-7 family of amphibian vehicles—we'll stay in good shape.

As my foregoing discussion indicates, we are pulling our heads out of the jungle and getting back into the amphibious business. The demands of our six-and-a-half-year involvement in extended land warfare had produced some side effects which bothered us, for example:

- A generation of Marines who had never made a wet net landing; and

- Growing numbers of Marine aviators who had been unable to attend the Amphibious Warfare School, because of heavy pilot requirements in Southeast Asia.

- Although our special landing forces made some significant contributions in Vietnam, their operations were generally conducted in an environment which is not likely to be duplicated in the future. Our amphibious work was generally overshadowed by our activities well inland from the high-water mark.

At any rate, we are redirecting

our attention seaward and re-emphasizing our partnership with the Navy and our shared concern in the maritime aspects of our national strategy. In my view, there is room for concern—especially in the areas of amphibious lift and Naval gunfire support capabilities. We will watch these closely.

With respect to our standards—we will maintain them: in appearance, in discipline, in personal proficiency, and in unit performance. Without them, we would not be the Marines. I think this fact is generally appreciated, and this helps us to hold the line. We will retain our orientation toward combat, from boot camp right through the operating forces. Our combat-seasoned career force is uniquely qualified to do this.

At the same time, we will continue to look after our own. We are expanding the training of both our NCO's and officers, to give them the tools to deal not only with our military problems, but with some of the newer human problems which have surfaced over the past few years:

- Drug abuse, though still something of a concern, has not been the problem it might have been—thanks in part to our relatively early redeployment from Vietnam.

- With respect to racial relations, we are dedicated to the creation of a climate of understanding within the Corps which will keep us all pulling together—free of any vestige of intolerance or discrimination. There

are no quick and easy ways to bring about the basic changes required, but we'll keep chipping away at the problem.

I am hopeful that a steadily improving atmosphere within the Corps will assist us in meeting what I consider to be the prime challenge of the next few years: that of recruiting and retaining enough good men to sustain a top-quality Marine Corps in an all-volunteer environment. So far, we have generally been holding our own—except for reserve recruiting—but we have a tough row to hoe.

An atmosphere of challenge is nothing new for our Navy/Marine Team, though. Together, I am confident we will keep the United States in the forefront as a Maritime power.

We have been working together through four decades, developing an Amphibious Force-in-Readiness which is one of America's soundest security investments—both in terms of inherent quality and potential returns. We are aware of the special trust our country places in our capability.

We will continue to honor that trust.

