

Amphibious Warfare Conference, Department of State

A viable and flexible amphibious capability is necessary

by Gen Paul X. Kelley

First, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your participation in this important program. When Fred Haynes and John Conlin approached me some months ago with a “germ of an idea” for this meeting, I now regret that my reaction may have been less than enthusiastic. Like all Marines, however, we admit to our mistakes, and mine was to underestimate the professionalism and dedication of those who made these two days a reality. I thank them, one and all!

Even though it oftentimes doesn't show, I have always been impressed by the important part which history plays in the development of our future. And, to emphasize this, I would like to share several quotes from yesteryear. [See box at right.]

It was the year 1976 that Washington was struck by an almost fatal disease which was sweeping the country. It was called the “heavy-up syndrome.” If you couldn't wargame it on the Central Plains of Europe, then it had no relevance to a viable national strategy—or so they said! With that said, so were the often heard words, “Maritime operations are an anachronism.”

It was the year 1976 that a distinguished scholar, a respected expert on maritime operations, sat in my office at Quantico and told me, “Amphibious doctrine is woefully outdated.” I went to my desk, secured a copy of *LFM-01* [*Landing Force Manual 01, Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*], gave it to him, and said, “Show me where.” It should come as no surprise to learn that he

>Gen Kelley was the Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1983–87. He gave this speech on 20 October 1982. It is still very relevant today.

“My military education and experience in the first World War has been based on roads, rivers and railroads. During the last two years, however, I have been acquiring an education based on oceans, and I've had to learn all over again. Prior to the present war, I never heard of any landing craft except a rubber boat. Now, I think of little else.”

—George C. Marshall, 1943

“The amphibious landing is the most powerful tool we have.”

—Douglas MacArthur, 1950

“Amphibious flexibility is the greatest strategic asset that a sea power possesses.”

—Liddell Hart, 1960

“The amphibious operation is a behemoth—a slow, ponderous relic of the past.”

—Nameless, faceless Washington analyst, 1976

had never seen—never touched, never read—the very document he was indicating as “being outdated.”

I have here in my hand a copy of *LFM-01*. Here it is—all you ever wanted to know and more about amphibious operations. Our bible! How many of you have ever read it? And, for those who have, when was the last time you cracked its covers? With minor changes, *LFM-01* is as valid today as it was on the day it was approved by all four Services some 15 years ago.

Each of you is here today for a different reason, but all, I hope, with a common goal—to better understand and improve our amphibious capability. Some may be here for profit, some for education, some just curious. But I sense that in the end you are all here to support or Navy/Marine Corps Team in this vital task.

In his opening remarks, Charlie Pier-sall hit the nail right on its head. Four years ago he was nervous that the first program at Panama City would be a bust. What Charlie didn't say was that during this same period those of us who were concerned with the steady decline of our amphibious capability were in a state of shock. Let me be reflective for a moment. The Marine Corps was so destitute that it was facing a 10,000-man cut in end strength just so it could pay its bills. In August of 1979, we had not one amphibious ship in the first year shipbuilding program. MPS [maritime prepositioning ships] wasn't even a twinkle in an eye. OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] kept killing what turned out to be a hydra-headed pro-

gram—the AV-8B. Needless to say for those who were there, I could go on ad nauseum with a listing of program disasters, which, in the aggregate, left many of us to conclude that the Navy/Marine Corps capability to project power was “twisting in the wind.” How different we look today, just a few short years later. First, not only did we not lose our 10,000 precious Marines and reduce to below 180,000, but, as of today, we are over 194,000 and going to 203,000 by 1988.

LFM-01 is as valid today as it was on the day it was approved. . . .

If one were to believe the current SCN [Shipbuilding and Conversion, Navy] plan and the Extended Planning Annex, we will have a solid number of LSD 41 [Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship] class ships, LHD 1s [Wasp-class amphibious assault ship (multipurpose)], LCACs, and possibly LPD-Xs [amphibious transport dock] in the decade of the “80s.” The point is that as a part of the 600-ship Navy, we have included an amphibious lift capability for one MAF [Marine Amphibious Force] and one MAB [Marine Amphibious Brigade]. I might have mentioned the LCAC too quickly, for its importance cannot be overemphasized. It will be to the surface assault what the helicopter was for the vertical assault. It opens up new and significant horizons.

As if this isn't enough, with the recent signing of MPS convert and charter contracts, we now have a viable program to support three MPS brigades. As General Barrow has said, MPS is quite possibly the most innovative and dynamic program for the Navy/Marine Corps Team since the advent of amphibious operations.

Concerning the AV-8B, it was just a year ago that I spoke at the rollout of the first full-scale development model at MACAIR [McDonnell-Douglas Aircraft Company], and currently we are looking to an inventory objective of 336. The AV-8B, F/A-18, CH-53E, and AH-1T are all examples of how we are modernizing Marine aviation to improve combat capability on the battlefield. Just over the threshold into the “90s,” we hope to have the JVX [joint vertical lift] to replace our aging medium lift helicopter force. This aircraft, based on tiltrotor technology, is under accelerated development and has the potential of increasing the speed of our vertical assault to speeds in excess of 300 knots!

On the ground side, it is equally exciting. In the next few years, we will increase the firepower of our infantry battalion by 25 percent, with a concomitant reduction of 10 percent in manpower. Moreover, we have just recently signed a contract for a light armored vehicle, which will provide our ground commanders with a significant increase in shock action, firepower, and mobility. In this regard, we hear a lot of rhetoric these days about a dynamic new concept known as maneuver warfare. I respectfully submit that the Navy/Marine Corps Team has, through a concept known as amphibious operations, been conducting a most sophisticated form of maneuver warfare for the past 207 years. Historians, please take note! If the concept of maneuver warfare means bringing the fight to the enemy—in simple words the spirit of attack—I lay claim to the fact that we are, indeed, the “duty experts.” Defense is a word alien to the lexicon of Marines, except as it relates to offensive operations.

President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower referred to the union of our military and



The AV-8B was just one example of the modernization of Marine aviation. (Photo by Cpl Gene Allen Ainsworth III.)



The light armored vehicle provided ground commanders with a significant increase in shock action. (Photo by Sgt Elyssa Quesada.)

industrial as the so-called "Military-Industrial Complex." Unfortunately, this, to many, has taken on a sinister connotation. Personally, I would prefer to call it "The Military-Industrial Team." Teamwork is what we must stress—you and I—and I would like to emphasize salient points of this essential team effort.

First, we in uniform must be totally honest and forthcoming in establishing our requirements. While they must manifest a capability to perform the task at hand, they must also be simple, straight forward, and above all, essential. In this day and age, all costs must be carefully weighed against the benefits derived. We cannot accommodate frills or marginal improvement. In simple language, we must stop "gold plating" and "nice to haves," and live in a world of fiscal realities. We must cast our focus on the "doable" and stop wasting precious time and effort on the "ultimate dream."

Second, those of you in industry must employ extraordinary costs and quality control measures. The days of "touching the brim of your cap" to cost overruns by blaming them on inflation are gone! If a program goes out of control with respect to cost, it immediately becomes a prime candidate for a vertical cut—and cut we will—I promise you! And, quality—a piece of equipment which goes to war must be perfect. The lives of young Sailors and Marines demand it. If our country asks them to lay their lives on the line,

they will, without hesitation, but your obligations are equally patriotic and demanding. The defense of our freedom is the responsibility of all Americans. For this reason, then, let quality be the absolute rule. There is no room for exceptions!

In closing, let me leave you with two thoughts—one provided by the recent Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Terence Lewin, in a speech before the Royal United Services Institute on 24 June, and the other by me in a speech prepared for presentation before the House Armed Services Committee in 1978. In his remarks, Admiral Lewin said:

You cannot produce confident highly skilled professional fighting men by keeping your aircraft on the ground, ships in harbor, or men and vehicles in barracks. You have got to fly in all weather, get to sea and stay there, and get out in rain, snow, mud, heat and never forget your job is to fight.

And mine:

When we Marines look at our responsibilities we see a map of the world. For anywhere on this map could be our battlefield of the future. Marines, in looking at this map, don't see continents or the fact that 75% of the Earth's surface is covered by water. We see approximately 272,000 miles of coastline. We see examples such as 34,000 miles of coastline in Europe and 31,000 miles in Africa. The reason we see coastlines is that these represent our most realistic battlefields of the future.

If you look at them carefully, you can't help but feel awed by their diversity. You see frozen wastelands of the Arctic, precipitous cliffs and fiords of Norway, vast desert reaches of the Middle East, the diversity of terrain on the continent of Africa, tropical forests of the equator, and the rugged mountains of Korea.

This, then, gentlemen, is our challenge: To project and sustain essential combat power across the oceans of the world to every "clime and place." With your help, and only with your help, can we give this Nation and the free world something it richly deserves—a viable and flexible amphibious capability.

Thank you.



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