CSS and Adaptive Force Packaging

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Adaptive force planning affects every element of the embarked landing force, but with careful planning, some improvising, and a modest reduction in expectations, combat service support elements should be able to adjust and meet the challenges ahead.

Much has been said in recent months regarding the benefits of adaptive force packaging as espoused by the U.S. Atlantic Command. The focus of this article is to evaluate the impact adaptive force packaging has had on the combat service support of the Marine expeditionary unit (MEU). Operational capabilities of the MEU will not be discussed and are beyond the intended scope of this article. The 22d MEU(SOC) was the first special operations capable MEU to test this concept. The 22d MEU deployed to the Mediterranean in mid-August 1993. It was made up of a command element (CE), a ground combat element (GCE)—Battalion Landing Team 1/8 (BLT 1/8), an air combat element (ACE)—HMM–162, and a combat service support element (CSSE)—MEU Service Support Group 22 (MSSG–22), but these elements were at somewhat reduced strength and had an unusual embarkation plan. The MEU totaled only 1,700 men (as compared to the normal 2,200-man force), and it combined with a three-ship amphibious ready group (ARG)—the USS *Guadalcanal* (LPH 7), the USS *Shreveport* (LPD 12) and the USS *Ashland* (LSD 48). This smaller amphibious force then joined with the USS *America* (CV 66) Carrier Battle Group to form Joint Task Group 93–2 (JTG 93–2).

The embarkation constraints placed on the MEU were obvious from the start. With the loss of two LSTs, we could only take what could fit on the three amphibious ships of the ARG and the limited space offered on the *America.* There were additional limitations, as the Navy had special units with substantial amounts of equipment to embark onboard the ARG, which further reduced the space available for Marine equipment. These units included a SEAL platoon, an explosive ordnance disposal detachment, and an unmanned aerial vehicle detachment. This posed an interesting dilemma—how to meet all MEU(SOC) missions yet not exceed existing em- barkation space limitations. After several iterations an embarkation plan was developed that allowed us to support all of the missions. To accomplish this plan, substantial cuts were made across the board. Overall, almost 50 percent of the MEU's normal rolling stock and half of its artillery tubes were left at Camp Lejeune so that the downsized force could fit aboard the JTG.

Equipment	LF6F 1–93	JTG 93–2	Loss
M813, 5-Ton Truck	17	13	4
M816, Wrecker	1	1	
LVS, MK48/14	3	2	1
LVS, MK48/17	1	0	1
M149, Water Trailer	4	4	
M762, Trailer	5	4	1
M105, 1 1/2-Ton Trailer	6	4	1
M101, Trailer	1	0	1
M997, 4 Litter Ambulance	2	2	
M1035, 2 Litter Ambulance	2	0	2
M998, HMMWV	7	6	1
M109, Maintenance Van	2	2	
DTC 4000 Forklift	2	2	
MC 6000 Forklift	2	0	2
TRAM, 10K Forklift	3	3	
D–7 Bulldozer	1	0	1
MRC–110	2	2	
MRC–138	2	1	1
600 GPM Pump	2	0	2
Amphibious Assault Fuel System	1	0	1

Figure 1. Comparison of Deployed MSSG Equipment.

Of note is the fact that the MEU initially had about 250 Marines embarked aboard the USS *America.* This included four CH–46 helicopters and Company B (-) from BLT 1/8. However, this group of Marines was not organized as a stand alone unit nor were they capable of carrying out missions independent of the rest of the MEU. If the ARG/MEU(SOC) was called on to function separate from the rest of the JTG, the unavailability of CV embarked assets would have been a serious consideration when evaluating potential missions. This proved to be the case in the early months of the deployment. The *America* was ordered into the Adriatic Sea in support of Operation DENY FLIGHT, while the ARG/MEU (SOC) exercised in the western Mediterranean. Approximately 2 months through the deployment, the Marines aboard the America were returned to the LPH to participate in Exercise DYNAMIC GUARD 94 in Turkey, while the *America* maintained its position in the Adriatic Sea. This situation improved the unit integrity of the MEU(SOC), however, it degraded the abilities of the divided JTG.

When determining our equipment requirements for JTG 93–2, MSSG–22 relied on past experience in identifying remain behind equipment (see *MCG,* Jul93, pp. 68–75). It was crucial to bring

Personnel	LF6F 1–93	JTG 93–2	Loss
Headquarters	50	47	3
Landing Support	29	27	2
Supply	18	17	1
Medical	26	21	5
Maintenance	36	34	2
Communications	32	27	5
Engineer Support	38	28	10
Motor Transport	46	31	15
Total	275	232	43

Figure 2. Comparison of Deployed MSSG Personnel.

sufficient equipment to be able to fully support the downsized MEU and accomplish our CSS missions as advertised. At the same time we had to live with the embarkation constraints. Figure 1 lists the major items of equipment employed on LF6F 1–93 and the equipment we embarked on JTG 93–2. Figure 2 indicates the commensurate reduction in personnel to once again meet lift constraints and match the operational requirements of our embarked equipment. MSSG–22 reduced equipment by 29 percent and personnel by approximately 16 percent.

As mentioned before, the 22d MEU(SOC) was constrained by the ship mix assigned. For all intents and purposes, the *Shreveport* and the *Ashland* were the only platforms capable of embarking large quantities of equipment. The *Guadalcanal* had a substantial portion of the MEU's personnel aboard as well as most ACE assets, which severely limited what assets the MSSGe could embark.

During its adaptive force packaging deployment, MSSG–22 participated in Exercises SPANISH PHIBLEX 2–93, DYNAMIC GUARD 94, BRIGHT STAR 94, and TRANCH 3–93 (France) and Operations PROVIDE PROMISE/DENY FLIGHT (off the coast of Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Somalia contingency operations in support of Operation CONTINUE HOPE and UNOSOM II. It was readily apparent after the first exercise where our strengths and weaknesses would lie. Indeed, we felt we had more capabilities than ComMarForLant had originally expected, although less than what we have been accustomed to in the past. Let's look at each functional area of CSS and see where capabilities were lost or reduced:

• *Transportation:* We lost 50 percent of our heavy lift and 25 percent of our medium lift capability. Additionally, the BLT lost several 5-ton trucks and HMMWV's causing them to become even more reliant on the MSSG for troop and cargo movement. This loss had a severe impact on the sustainment and mobility of the MEU. There was a tremendous gap between the operational requirements of the GCE and resources available. The MSSG was not equipped to fully support the MEU in the event of a real-life contingency in which transportation of personnel, water, fuel, and especially ammunition would be required. Movements could still be accomplished; however, the result was a reduction in overall operational responsiveness and flexibility and an increased reliance on helicopter lifts, which were already overtasked and faced with serious CH–46 lift constraints. Shuttling troops almost became the norm as there were not sufficient assets to devote to single lift troop movements. The area of mobility was probably the capability most seriously impaired, the area in which our support for the MEU suffered the greatest. Future MSSGs should consider increased employment of the LVS Mk48/17 instead of standard 5-ton trucks as these vehicles can be used for troop transport, movement of bulk cargo, and for limited materiel handling.

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• *Materiel Support.* Despite the loss of two 6K forklifts the MSSG's ability to provide materiel handling support was not seriously hindered. The TRAMs proved especially versatile, more so when an additional bucket was added to provide a horizontal construction capability. The quantity of two 4K forklifts was unchanged and provided their usual versatile support from the air or surface.

• *Landing Support.* There was no loss of capability in the landing support area. However, in order to provide an external lift capability from ARG shipping as well as operate a beach landing site and up to two landing zone support areas, personnel cuts were kept to a minimum. No other appreciable loss of capability was noted.

• *Supply.* Reconfiguration forced us to leave a substantial amount of Class II (cots, tentage), Class IV, and part of our Class IX block behind. This affected the sustainment of the MEU. This point was driven home upon our arrival in Somalia where the lack of Class II limited our ability to provide supply support to the MEU. Due to our movement out of theater to Somalia, we experienced some delays in receiving repair parts, despite the quick response of the Deployed Support Unit (DSU) of 2d Supply Battalion. Parts and supplies were expeditiously pulled, packed, and forwarded for shipment as always. The primary difficulty was the lengthy transportation pipeline across the Atlantic, into the Mediterranean, and then to the Indian Ocean, transiting three separate Joint Commands, LantCom, EuCom and CentCom, until finally arriving in Mombasa, Kenya. From there we had to rely on resupply ships to get it to us with several more days delay. This had an obvious impact in that equipment remained in the maintenance cycle for extended periods of time due to difficulty in obtaining repair parts.

• *Deliberate Engineering.* Our capability to perform horizontal construction was greatly reduced with the loss of the D7G Dozer. The TRAM with bucket, however, performed quite well, although at a slight cost to our materiel handling support. Additionally, we placed more responsibility on the Beachmasters D7G Dozer for recovery and beach preparation support. The addition of a SEE

tractor and an extended boom forklift would have greatly assisted in providing additional material handling equipment and horizontal construction capability. What probably had the most detrimental effect on engineering support was the reduction of combat engineers (from seven to only four). We would have been hard pressed to provide support for simultaneous missions with this limited number of combat engineers. We had the equipment and, to a limited extent, the personnel to perform all missions, but we lacked the depth to perform them simultaneously.

• *Maintenance.* No loss in capabilities here; however, there are two side effects of the adaptive force packaging concept that have had an adverse impact on how we do business. The loss of two LVSs and four 5-ton trucks meant that our two electronic maintenance shelters and the TAM–4 (Bottle Charging Van) could not be mobile loaded and remained seabased. The effect was reduced responsiveness in providing communications/electronic maintenance support.

• *Health Services.* There has been no real loss of capability because we have the standing mass casualty team for the MEU. The reduction of four corpsmen, however, has again stretched our ability to support simultaneous missions.

• *Services.* The reduction of two military policemen (MPs) curtailed our ability to provide adequate MP support. This was corrected by cross-training other Marines in riot control, traffic control, and search techniques. Other services such as postal, disbursing, and information systems were unaffected.

• *Other.* The mobile kitchen trailer (MKT) proved to be highly effective in meeting our food service needs and was a real morale booster. It gave us the capability to feed the entire MSSG in the field. It is highly recommended that an effort be made to outfit future MSSGs with this unit on a permanent basis. The GCE also deployed with an MKT instead of the field kitchen normally deployed with the BLT. The MKT saved BLT 1/8 enough embark space to include another four HMMWVs.

In summary, the changes imposed by the adaptive force packaging plan used by 22d MEU(SOC) obviously did not enhance the MSSG's ability to support or sustain a MEU. However, they also did not degrade it to such an extent that adequate CSS cannot be provided to elements of the MEU. The ship mix is the major problem with adaptive force packaging in that the wrong mix could severely reduce cubic feet allotted to the MEU and result in reduced levels of personnel and equipment as experienced on JTG 93–2.

The reduction in personnel also forced us to review the structure of our evacuation control center (ECC) teams and our mass casualty team (MCT). Both the ECC and MCT were reduced in size so that, if required, they could be called out at the same time and sent to different platforms. For example, we had a sufficient number of corpsmen to provide a medical section for each ECC team and still have corpsmen for the MCT if it were to be employed simultaneously with the ECC teams. The missions assigned to the MSSG have to guide personnel reductions.

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JTG 93–2 is nearly completed as this is being written and looking back on what personnel and equipment MSSG–22 embarked, we believe our mix was sound—that we did a good job determining what equipment and personnel to embark based on the constraints of the JTG. With a few revisions to our equipment list and shuffling of personnel, we will be better prepared to support future MEUs. As it turned out, we were able to accomplish all missions and meet the combat service support requirements of the 22d MEU without any significant problems. There was a loss in capability, as described above; however, by looking at alternative methods we were able to provide essential support. Faced with more demanding missions, we could easily have felt the impact of the reductions. MSSG–13 deployed shortly after us with much less equipment. It has yet to be determined if their mix was more or less efficient. With adaptive force packaging, the ship mix determines everything. As far as combat service support is concerned, this test was enlightening.

Currently, the follow-on MEU, 24th MEU(SOC), is scheduled to deploy under a similar concept, although with a larger amphibious ship mix (LPH, LPD, LSD, LST) and the USS *Saratoga.* This configuration could fill some of the shortages identified during JTG 93–2, in regards to additional motor transport and engineer assets. The Navy's long-term plans to replace 38 ships of 4 classes with 12 of the new multipurpose LPD–17 class ship (formerly referred to as the LX class), should provide the necessary space to embark a fully equipped MEU. Additionally, the Navy is also planning to replace its Iwo Jima-class LPHs with Wasp-class LHDs and is in the process of constructing four LSD 49-class dock landing ships (see *MCG* Mar94, p. 5 and Dec93, p. 4). These ships will be able to carry considerably more equipment since they have substantially more square feet of vehicle storage space and bulk cargo space. Future ARGs supposedly will consist of a mix of a Wasp-class LHD or a Tarawa-class LHA, with an LSD 41 or LSD 49 (cargo variant), and an LPD 17-class amphibious assault ship.

With the shrinking Defense Department budget and reduced force structure levels, adaptive force packaging is probably here to stay. As long as commanders continue to realize the importance of the CSS element to the MAGTF and embark accordingly, there will be adequate space aboard the three ARG ships to provide for ample equipment and personnel to meet the difficult missions assigned to the MEU(SOC).

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