

Power Projection Capabilities

Discussion

Rapidly projecting decisive military power is key to the national military strategy. Amphibious and maritime prepositioning forces play a critical role in U.S. power projection. Replacing and revitalizing the essential platforms and improving the effectiveness of these expeditionary forces is a major goal. To that end, the Marine Corps will continually strive to blend advances in technology with newly developed operational concepts. Today, the Navy-Marine Corps Team is rapidly implementing the strategic and operational concepts of Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS) to take full advantage of the littoral environment and the



maneuver space it provides. Emerging technology will allow the OMFTS concept to become a reality and provide a tremendous increase in the flexibility, agility, and effectiveness of Marine Expeditionary Forces. The result will be a significant increase in naval power projection capabilities. The following initiatives are key to the achievement of Marine Corps operational objectives:

□ ***Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV)***. The AAAV is critical to the Corps' future ability to project power inland from amphibious ships. Significant enhancements in speed, firepower, and survivability for the AAAV will allow a faster buildup of combat power

ashore, ensuring greater force survival and effectiveness. AAV allows tactical maneuvers from ship to inland objectives from over the horizon, creating significant operational advantages. The AAV will replace the current AAV7A1 family of assault amphibious vehicles that are now almost 30 years old. The first prototype AAV was successfully rolled out in 1999 and AAVs will be tested in several locations throughout 2000. They are scheduled for fielding to the operational forces in 2006.

□ ***MV-22 Osprey.*** The MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft will allow combat power to transition ashore faster and increases the depth of the battlefield through its enhanced range, endurance, and flexibility. It will replace the aging medium lift fleets of CH-46 Sea Knight and CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters. While fulfilling the Marine Corps' critical medium lift requirement, the MV-22's increased capabilities will provide significant tactical and operational leverage.

□ ***Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC).*** The LCAC is a shipborne, over the horizon, high speed, amphibious landing vehicle capable of transporting payloads of up to 72 tons. The ship-to-shore payload may include both troops and equipment as heavy as the M1A1 Tank. The LCAC significantly increases the build up rate of combat power ashore, including over the beach and a limited inland transportation capability. A service life extension program, scheduled to begin during FY00, will ensure its viability into the future.

□ ***Maritime Prepositioning Force (Enhancement) (MPF(E)).*** MPF(E) is a three ship conversion program funded in the National Defense Sealift Fund. Lessons learned during Operations Desert Shield/Storm, in Somalia and on annual exercises have highlighted the need to add additional capabilities to the current Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) program. Specific capabilities added are an Expeditionary Airfield (EAF), Naval Mobile Construction Battalion, and Navy Fleet Hospital. In addition, space was included for the restoration of equipment and supplies removed from existing MPF ships due to the introduction of larger, modernized equipment. Prepositioning of these additional capabilities and equipment with the existing Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadrons (MPSRONS) will significantly enhance the capabilities available to the supported Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs).

□ ***Shallow Water Mine Countermeasures.*** This program is designed to improve critical deficiencies in mine countermeasures. The development of technology and systems to detect, clear, and neutralize these threats is vital to allow Marine forces to maintain presence, to maneuver

unencumbered throughout the littoral areas, and to effectively project combat power ashore.

□ **Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS).** NSFS is an essential dimension of our power projection capabilities. Efforts to upgrade current ships are focused on modifications to the existing Mark 45 gun mount and the development of extended range guided munitions and the Land Attack Standard Missile. The long-term program calls for the development of a larger caliber gun and an extended range missile system. These enhancements will provide a critical boost to Marine amphibious capabilities by adding fires with more range, responsiveness, accuracy, and lethality to maneuver forces ashore.

□ **Joint Strike Fighter (JSF).** The JSF will provide the Marine Corps with a state-of-the-art, next generation, short takeoff and vertical landing (STOVL) aircraft to replace the AV-8B and F/A-18A/C/D. It will be a superior performance, stealthy, multi-mission jet aircraft, possessing state-of-the-art technology, that can operate with full mission loads from amphibious class ships or austere expeditionary airfields. This blend of stealth, performance, and basing flexibility will enable the STOVL JSF to perform a broad range of missions including: escorting the MV-22; striking critical deep targets; providing armed reconnaissance, close air support, tactical reconnaissance, and suppression of enemy air defenses; and conducting active air defense missions. With the STOVL JSF, Marine aviators will be able to support the full range of OMFTS mission profiles and provide Marine ground forces the precise and timely fire support needed on the 21st Century battlefield.

Marine Corps Position

Technological advances enable the Corps to rapidly move OMFTS from the concept stage to reality. The Corps acquisition focus is to leverage technological initiatives that improve the mobility, flexibility, and lethality of Marine Expeditionary Forces in a cost-effective manner. These initiatives enhance the Marine Corp's role in the national military