## *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, by rapidly implementing the strategic and operational principles of EMW, the Navy-Marine Corps Team is to taking full advantage of emerging technology as well as the littoral environment and its maneuver space. These advances in materiel and concepts will provide a tremendous increase in the flexibility, agility, and effectiveness of MAGTFs. 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. AAAV allows tactical maneuvers from ship to inland objectives from over-the-horizon, creating significant operational advantages. The AAAV will replace the current AAV7A1 family of assault amphibious vehicles that are now almost 30 years old. The first prototype AAAV was successfully rolled out in 1999 and AAAVs were 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-46E 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 high-speed, ship-to-shore, over the beach amphibious landing craft that can transport equipment, personnel, and weapons systems from ships located beyond the horizon, through the surf zone, and across the beach to hard landing points beyond the water line. The LCAC cargo deck can accommodate the majority of combat and combat support equipment currently in the Marine Corps inventory to include the M1A1 Tank. A service life extension program initiated in FY01 and consisting of a buoyancy box replacement, navigational upgrades, enhanced engines, and a deeper skirt, will ensure the viability of LCAC 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). The first MPF(E) ship has been delivered and has joined MPS Squadron 1 in the Mediterranean. The second and third vessels will join MPS Squadrons 2 and 3 over the next two years.

***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, which 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; 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 mission profiles and provide Marine ground forces the precise and timely fire support needed on the 21century battlefield.

## *Marine Corps Position*

Technological advances enable the Corps to rapidly move EMW from the concept stage to reality. The Corps' acquisition focus is to leverage technological initiatives that improve the mobility, flexibility, and lethality of MAGTFs in a cost-effective manner. These initiatives enhance the Marine Corp's contributions to the National Military Strategy.