

JOINT EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS DOCTRINE

For Marines, the term expeditionary connotes more than the mere capability to deploy overseas when needed. Expeditionary is our ethos; a pervasive mindset that influences all aspects of organization, training, and equipping.

United States Marine Corps¹

Since at least the 1987 Fiji crisis (Operation MORRIS DANCE), the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has recognised the need to possess the capabilities to conduct complex expeditionary operations within our region. Existing weaknesses in capability were firmly underlined by the joint and combined intervention in East Timor during 1999-2000 (Operation STABILISE), and since then the ADF has been almost continually involved in such operations. This interest in the ADF's ability to generate deployments at a distance reflects the experience of all three Services over recent decades, and the requirement was explicitly reconfirmed in the 2009 Defence White Paper.²

More recently, at the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Sea Power Conference, held in late January 2010, the Chief of Navy (CN), Chief of Army (CA) and Chief of Air Force (CAF) appeared together in a panel session where each spoke on the topic *Combined and Joint Operations from the Sea*. That they essentially spoke with one voice demonstrates just how much the ADF's conceptual thinking on expeditionary operations has advanced over the last ten years or so.

CN's speech provided an overall Australian perspective, noting that in order to be an effective force we need to have appropriate doctrine that is comprehensively understood. He then listed the five keys to the effective operation of an expeditionary capability:

- Forward - the ADF must be able to take its presence to where it is needed by the government. The oceans provide a highway to enable this and we need to take full advantage of this freedom.

- Mobile - we will not have an expeditionary capability if we do not exercise it. Air Force and Army elements will become more used to being at sea and deployed either on operations or as a contingency.

- Offensive - it is axiomatic to success in military operations that we take the initiative. We need to be able to quickly establish a forward presence from which we can react to government direction as the strategic circumstances require.

- Self-reliant - it is one of the truisms of contemporary maritime operations that we work in coalitions, often with partners with whom we do not have historic links. But it is our ability to operate both independently and with others that makes us valuable to coalitions and the ability to be self-reliant is a key tenet of the White Paper.

- Adaptable - in our maritime doctrine the adaptability of maritime forces to match the strategic situation is one of the fundamental characteristics that define their utility. A force capable of expeditionary operations is able to respond to a humanitarian crisis just as readily as conducting military operations without changing its configuration.³

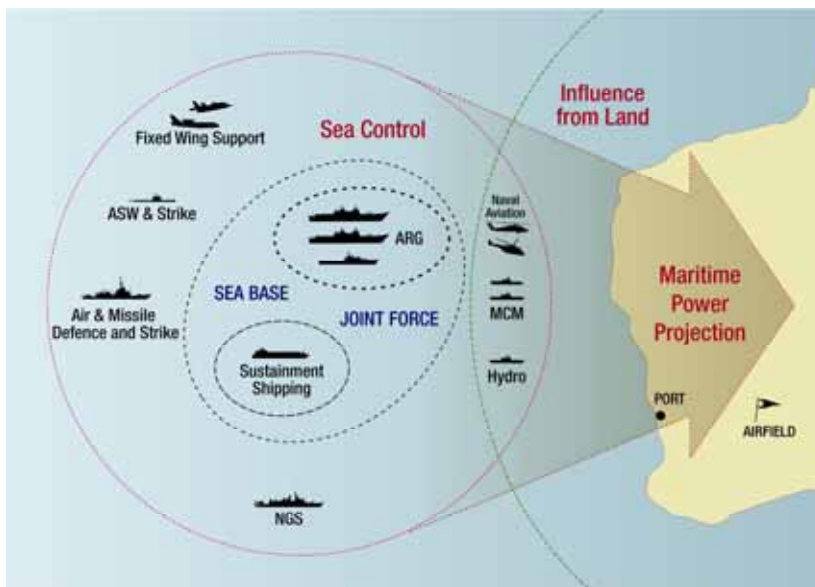
In similarly a wide ranging speech, CA confirmed that,

the introduction of emerging amphibious doctrine, such as ship-to-objective manoeuvre [STOM], distributed manoeuvre and sea basing highlights that this capability [the new amphibious assault (LHD) and sea lift ships] is beyond just delivering Army to the amphibious objective area. It is clear to me that Army needs to learn how to live, deploy, operate in, and operate from the LHDs to maximise the government's investment in this capability.

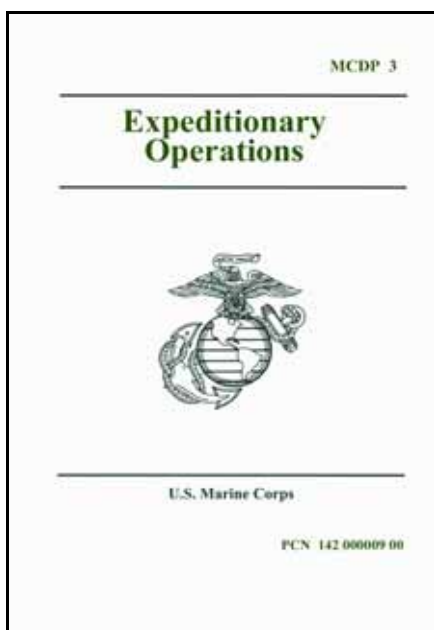
All this, CA admitted, will require a major cultural change for the Australian Army.⁴ For his part, CAF emphasised the need for expeditionary air power,

...regardless of the maritime environment that the amphibious task force is operating in - littoral, brown or blue water - or the phase of the operation, air power expands the ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance], strike and defensive capabilities of the task force and provides a significant sustainment function. Further, we have the command and control systems in place to do this effectively and with the best efficiency.⁵

Australian expeditionary operations involve elements from all three Armed Services working together as a joint force (RAN)



With the post-Cold War era imposing many changes on Western armed forces, and in particular a change of focus from the blue water environment to the littoral, it should not be surprising to find that the ADF is not alone in reconsidering expeditionary issues. During the 1990s the US Navy adopted the 'From the Sea' and the 'Forward from the Sea' strategic concepts, while the Royal Navy developed the 'Maritime Contribution to Joint Operations' concept.⁶ US Marine Corps doctrine *MCDP 3 Expeditionary Operations* is an outstanding if dated reference, while the 'Expeditionary Maneuvre Warfare' concept is one of the principal drivers of future US Marine Corps strategy.⁷ Such concepts represent world-best practice on the subject and not only inform our allies' views but also our own.



MCDP 3 Expeditionary Operations (US Marine Corps)

But how should these concepts inform ADF doctrine? In truth we still have a long way to go. *Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine*, issued in July 2005, only mentions expeditionary operations in passing, and then in the historical context of the seizure of German New Guinea in 1914. It lacks detail on how the three Services should work as a team, alongside our allies, and in conjunction with other government and non-government organisations. The latest version of ADDP 3.2 *Amphibious Operations*, effectively combines theory and operational experience, and provides lower level doctrinal information on the conduct of amphibious operations, but likewise does not adequately address expeditionary operations.

In truth, current joint ADF amphibious doctrine does not fill the expeditionary void at the higher levels of command, and this is largely because 'amphibious' and 'expeditionary' are not synonymous. As Professor Geoffrey Till argues in a recent study, amphibious operations should be seen as 'primarily military in purpose, usually being related to other operations in the course of a conventional campaign or war', whereas expeditionary operations 'may grow out of the coercive aspects of naval diplomacy and are usually highly politicised' normally involving 'joint action of a more sustained kind'.⁸ Even if Till's definitions are not entirely

accepted, it should be clear that more work will be required to fill in the ADF's doctrinal gaps.

This is not to suggest that relevant doctrinal work has not already been undertaken by the individual Services. The Australian Army's *LWD 1: The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, has been recently updated to reflect what it calls the emerging expeditionary military strategy, while the Royal Australian Air Force's *AAP 1000-D: The Air Power Manual* reflects the requirements of a 'networked expeditionary Air Force'. The naval aspects of expeditionary operations, are similarly addressed in *Australian Maritime Doctrine: RAN Doctrine 1*, and *The Navy Contribution to Australian Maritime Operations: RAN Doctrine 2*. Unfortunately individual Service doctrine cannot define the complete expeditionary requirement, and is thus inadequate from a joint warfare perspective.

One of the first steps to improving this situation would be to ensure that we all speak the same expeditionary language. Currently, many terms are common, but are used differently by each of the Services, and even an agreed joint definition of fundamental terms such as 'expeditionary operation' and 'littoral' is lacking.⁹ These definitions should ensure that they incorporate joint influence and support 'from the land' as well as 'from the sea', and in this respect the existing RAN definitions may be the most suitable.

Within our joint and increasingly seamless ADF, each Service has committed to developing its part of a leading edge expeditionary force that is capable of meeting the land, sea and air demands required by Australia's maritime strategy. Over the next few years we will no doubt see much related doctrinal work to ensure that we are all singing from the same song-sheet. The present focus on 'introduction into service' of the two new *Canberra* class amphibious assault ships from 2015 will provide the necessary impetus and a clear deadline to achieve this work.

- 1 Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuvre Warfare*, United States Marine Corps, Washington, November 2001.
- 2 Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Canberra, 2009, pp. 53-7.
- 3 Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Russ Crane, Keynote address presented at the RAN Sea Power Conference 2010, Darling Harbour, on 27 January 2010.
- 4 Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, Address at the RAN Sea Power Conference 2010, Darling Harbour, on 27 January 2010.
- 5 Chief of Air Force, Air Marshall Mark Binskin, Address at the RAN Sea Power Conference 2010, Darling Harbour, on 27 January 2010.
- 6 Summaries in: E Rhodes, '... from the Sea' and back again: Naval power in the second American century', *Naval War College Review*, vol. 52, 1999, pp. 13-55; and J Slater, 'The Maritime Contribution to Joint Operations', *RUSI Journal*, vol. 143, 1998, pp. 20-5.
- 7 For US Marine Corps expeditionary doctrine see <www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/mcdp3.pdf> (8 March 2010), and for the US Marine Corps Headquarters Concepts and Programs web site <www.marines.mil/unit/pandtr/Pages/candp.aspx> (8 March 2010).
- 8 An introduction to 'expeditionary operations' may be found within Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, Frank Cass, London, 2004, pp. 235-70, quote from p. 237.
- 9 The RAN definitions are respectively: 'Expeditionary Operation - A military operation which can be initiated at short notice, consisting of forward deployed, rapidly deployable, self-sustaining forces tailored to a clearly stated objective at a distance from a home base'. And 'Littoral - The areas to seaward of the coast which are susceptible to influence or support from the land and the areas inland from the coast which are susceptible to influence or support from the sea'.

