# The Operational Impacts of Joint Seabasing


**A Monograph**

**by**

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Exercising the strength of America's military requires the capability to project people, equipment, and supplies across the globe. The credible threat of military action demands the ability to thrust that power at will, with the necessary strength to locations and at the time according to our nation's choice. Achieving national policy objectives requires that America must continue to develop creative methods to deploy her military abroad in the execution of foreign policy. Unfortunately, the tyranny of distance combined with the security conditions at the destination are enough to create conditions which unhinge the support for deploying in the first place. This monograph proposes that Joint Seabasing may be able to provide the United States with a force projection capability which is able to meet the demands of the future operating environment, as long as the JSB is considered a component system of an overarching strategic mobility system. An analysis of the JSB concept must utilize a systems perspective in order to prevent creating vulnerabilities in component systems of the strategic mobility system in an effort to realize efficiencies in other systems. A systems perspective provides an appreciation of the complexities of the strategic mobility system. This monograph recommends that the Joint Seabasing debate continues before significant investment is made into building another deployment node at sea. In addition, improvements throughout the strategic mobility system are necessary before focusing on the Seabase in order to prevent the creation of vulnerabilities in component systems.

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# Abstract

THE OPERATIONAL IMPACTS OF JOINT SEABASING by Major Frederick L. Crist, U.S. Army, 48 pages.

Exercising the strength of America's military requires the capability to project people, equipment, and supplies across the globe. The credible threat of military action demands the ability to thrust that power at will, with the necessary strength to locations and at the time according to our nation's choice. Achieving national policy objectives requires that America must continue to develop creative methods to deploy her military abroad in the execution of foreign policy. Unfortunately, the tyranny of distance combined with the security conditions at the destination are enough to create conditions which unhinge the support for deploying in the first place. This monograph proposes that Joint Seabasing may be able to provide the United States with a force projection capability which is able to meet the demands of the future operating environment, as long as the JSB is considered a component system of an overarching strategic mobility system. An analysis of the JSB concept must utilize a systems perspective in order to prevent creating vulnerabilities in component systems of the strategic mobility system in an effort to realize efficiencies in other systems. A systems perspective provides an appreciation of the complexities of the strategic mobility system. This monograph recommends that the Joint Seabasing debate continues before significant investment is made into building another deployment node at sea. In addition, improvements throughout the strategic mobility system are necessary before focusing on the Seabase in order to prevent the creation of vulnerabilities in component systems.

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# I. Introduction

Exercising the strength of America's military requires the capability to project people, equipment, and supplies across the globe. The credible threat of military action demands the ability to thrust that power at will, with the necessary strength to locations and at the time of our nation's choosing. Achieving national policy objectives requires that America must continue to develop creative methods to deploy her military abroad in the execution of foreign policy. Unfortunately, the tyranny of distance combined with the security conditions at the destination are enough to create conditions which unhinge the support for deploying in the first place.

The future operating environment will present a number of strategic limitations which will inhibit the free and unencumbered deployment of U.S. military power. The concept of Joint Seabasing (JSB) may allow the U.S. Armed Forces to overcome these. The concept of JSB was introduced by the U.S. Navy in the early 1990's following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the absence of a naval peer competitor. The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of the search for Navy relevancy as the preeminence of the sea control mission disappeared with the demise of the Soviet navy. The peace dividends of the Cold War produced a Continental United States (CONUS) based military which would require an expeditionary capability to deploy to and forcibly enter distant trouble spots. The JSB received new attention following the attacks of September 11, 2001. The Navy framed the JSB concept as a component of *Seapower 21*, which sought to deliver unprecedented offensive power, defensive assurance, and operational independence to Joint Force Commanders (JFC). [1]

In August 2005, the Joint Staff captured the concept as a Joint Integrating Concept (JIC). According to the JIC, JSB allows the JFC to capitalize on the capabilities of forward deployed, pre-positioned and rapid response forces, in order to maximize operational tempo to seize the

[1] Vern Clark, "Sea Power 21 Series-Part I: Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (October 2002); available from

initiative without an operational pause. JSB also reduces force protection challenges ashore, especially during the early stages of a crisis, and increases joint force operational maneuver by exploiting the sea as a maneuver space. [2] The JSB concept is applicable in support of full-spectrum operations ranging from major combat operations, counterinsurgency operations, and humanitarian assistance operations.

Since the concept's initial proposal, numerous definitions and end states have been advocated which range along a spectrum from massive Mobile Offshore Bases (MOB) at one extreme to the conceptually creative employment of existing joint capabilities at the other. This monograph addresses Joint Seabasing as both an operational concept and as a physical entity in order to explore all aspects of the concept. The Seabasing JIC proposes a number of attributes for this future national capability. Socialization of the JIC has occasionally led each service to conduct internal discussions about future equipment and technology acquisitions in the name of fulfilling the Seabase vision. Regardless of what one thinks a future base at sea will be, it is imperative for JFCs and planners to embrace the concept for its operational potential to future combat and humanitarian operations. JSB has operational consequences with emphasis on operational reach, tempo, culmination and operational pause for joint forces deploying either from or through a Seabase.

This monograph proposes that Joint Seabasing may be able to provide the United States with a force projection capability which is able to meet the demands of the future operating environment, as long as the JSB is considered a component system of an overarching strategic mobility system. An analysis of the JSB concept must utilize a systems perspective in order to prevent creating vulnerabilities in component systems of the strategic mobility system in an effort

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http://www.usni.org/PROCEEDINGS/ARTICLES02/PROCNO10.HTM; Internet; accessed 23 October 2006.

[2] U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept*, (Suffolk: August 2005), 5.

to realize efficiencies in other systems. A systems perspective provides an appreciation of the complexities of the strategic mobility system.

Because the U.S. military already possesses an amphibious assault capability and has historically conducted forcible entry operations across the shore, is there a need to fix something that isn't broken? What would be the force to compel change? First, consider that a JSB operation is not an amphibious operation. The Defense Science Board Task Force on Sea Basing, which was chartered by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, addresses the difference of JSB as "more than simply traditional amphibious assault operations. It entails the projection of land forces substantially beyond the beachhead, independent of in-theater land bases. A seabase also needs to sustain such forces for prolonged periods." [3] Additionally, amphibious operations generally require an operational pause in order to build up combat power and supplies and then reorganize forces before conducting operations against inland objectives. Amphibious operations are also dependant upon suitable terrain, such as supporting beachheads or ports, to conduct initial landings.

A second consideration is America's reliance on port access and overflight rights to conduct military operations abroad which represents a strategic Achilles Heal. [4] Adversaries recognize the vulnerability while conducting reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOI) operations. Attacks at ports present a challenge that can force an operational pause or cause delays because of the necessity to employ further force protection measures. At the strategic level, these attacks may reduce public support for an operation if casualties are suffered early. Rapid assembly and employment of a joint force is thus a strategic necessity.

A third reason to investigate JSB is to consider the thoughts of the late Vice Admiral (ret.) Arthur Cebrowski, the former Director of the Office of Force Transformation, who saw JSB

[3] U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Science Board Task Force on Sea Basing*, (Washington, D.C.: August 2003), 12.

[4] Clark, *Sea Power 21 Series.*

through a lens that removed the parochial service domains of land, sea, and air. “The notion of sea basing has to be thought of, not as a base at sea, but rather about operational maneuver from the sea. Being able to use the sea as a joint maneuver space, not just a naval maneuver space.” [5] Thus, JSB is a national military capability, not just the province of the Navy and Marine Corps. Future expeditionary missions may entail Army as well as Marine operations from the sea and require Air Force intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, airlift and combat operations. [6] The final compelling point to begin exploring the JSB concept is America’s national security documents.

This monograph is organized into five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction and establishes the compelling need to investigate the operational impacts of JSB. Chapter Two explains the need for a JSB capability. This includes a description of the current operating environment in order to demonstrate the challenges that military planners face in developing options for deploying and employing joint forces. This chapter also highlights the vulnerabilities that have been created by assumptions made about the operating environment. Chapter Three provides the numerous definitions for JSB that have surfaced and describes the concept against the framework of operational design in order to identify the potential advantages and limitations. It also cites historical examples where Joint Seabasing has been employed and provides the military planner with experiences to draw from in order to craft future plans which employs elements of a JSB in the absence of standardized JSB doctrine. Chapter Four provides a net assessment of the JSB concept using the framework of a system of systems perspective. Chapter Five summarizes the findings of this research and offers recommendations.

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[5] Thomas Hone, "Sea Basing: Poised for Takeoff," *Office of Force Transformation Newsletter* (15 February 2005); available from http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/trends_372_Transformation_Trends_15_February_2005%20Issue.pdf#search=%22Seabasing%20Joint%20Integrating%20Concept%2; Internet; accessed 14 September 2006; 1.

[6] U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Science Board Task Force on Sea Basing*, 89.

# II. The Need for a Joint Seabasing Capability

## A National Requirement for a Joint Seabasing Capability

The nation's principal defense strategy documents assert that global power projection is central to America's national defense. The 2005 National Defense Strategy, the 2004 National Military Strategy and the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review all address the critical necessity of deploying forces worldwide and points the way forward to investigate both new deployment technologies and for creative approaches to solve force projection challenges. Deployment is a joint problem and requires joint solutions.

The 2005 National Defense Strategy (NDS) establishes four strategic objectives: secure the United States from direct attack, secure strategic access and retain global freedom of action, strengthen alliances and partnerships, and establish favorable security conditions. [7] Securing strategic access and retaining global freedom of action means having the ability to conduct operational maneuver from strategic distances to engage an adversary in sustained joint combat in and from austere locations to significant operational depths within the joint operating area (JOA).

To execute the strategy outlined in the NDS, the U.S. military will conduct a global realignment of the Armed Forces to improve its defensive posture. Prompt and flexible employment of military forces is achieved by basing rapidly deployable formations and prepositioned equipment abroad and consolidating heavier forces in CONUS. Global maneuver through strategic pivot points and remote locations will be facilitated by the establishment of main operating bases (MOB), forward operating sites (FOS), and austere cooperative security locations (CSL) throughout the world. The combined employment of a Joint Seabasing capability together with forward deployed units and service-generic prepositioned equipment will generate swift employment options. A global posture that is poised for rapid deployment to quick

employment is also necessary to support the NDS concept for global sourcing of forces to surge in support of the requirements of the Combatant Commanders. Because Combatant Commanders no longer own forces in their theaters, the allocation of forces will be sourced from anywhere in the world, requiring expeditionary capable forces and the development of improved deployment concepts.

The message of an expeditionary capable force is continued in the 2004 National Military Strategy (NMS) of the United States which serves to implement the strategy of the NDS. The NMS identifies supporting military objectives and joint operating concepts which focus concept development and military action. The supporting military objectives of the NMS are: protect the United States against external attacks and aggression; prevent conflict and surprise attack; and prevail against adversaries. [8] The Armed Forces must be prepared to swiftly defeat adversaries and win decisively, which requires the "assured strategic access as well as strategic and tactical lift systems robust enough to conduct and sustain multiple, simultaneous operations." [9] Swift action also requires being able to quickly conduct another campaign following reconstitution, reconfiguration, and redeployment to the next geographic location. Finally, the NMS addresses support to the global sourcing of forces for surge requirements by repeating the call for investigating adjustments to global force stationing, composition of prepositioned equipment and to the structure of military units towards greater expeditionary capability.

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) continues to emphasize flexible global sourcing to surge the Armed Forces in meeting the needs of the Combatant Commanders. The QDR identifies the characteristics of future force capabilities to guide defense transformation, which includes an emphasis on the conceptual development of Joint Seabasing.

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[7] U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, D.C.: March 2005), 6.

[8] U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, D.C.: 2004), 9.

[9] Ibid., 14.

The QDR capability focus areas of Joint Maritime Capabilities and Joint Mobility [10] specifically address the need for a global deployment capability which measures power projection based on the operational effects deployed versus the quantity of units moved. Also, response times will be measured in days and hours versus weeks. This can be achieved in the future by the combined employment of the Joint Seabase, existing Maritime Prepositioning Forces (MPF), and future Army Afloat Forward Staging Bases (AFSB) in conjunction with military forces which are organized for expeditionary operations.

## The Operational Environment

The U.S. Joint Forces Command's annual Joint Operational Environment (JOE) White Paper provides a common frame of reference by describing the characteristics of potential future threats and the environments in which the Joint Forces will operate. This document assists in determining future Joint Force capabilities and is a baseline with which to evaluate joint war fighting concepts. The JOE also provides insight to U.S. military vulnerabilities caused by gaps in existing capabilities or because of incorrect assumptions about the operating environment. Potential adversaries will exploit the gaps and incorrect assumptions to counter U.S. numerical or technological superiorities.

The JOE is an appropriate source to describe the future operating environment because it is a living document which is revised several times each year. The authors of the JOE consult with military, government, industry, and nongovernmental organizations and refer to a wide variety of studies, books, and assessments to develop the paper. On-line collaboration and numerous seminars throughout the year bring together contributors to continually inform the next version of the JOE White Paper. [11]

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[10] U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, D.C.: February 2006), 41.

[11] U.S. Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operational Environment*, (Suffolk: September 2006), v.

The attributes of the future operating environment which stand out in regards to global power projection and freedom of action are: increasing instances to disrupt or deny U.S. forces access to potential theaters of operation; the increasing urbanization of the globe; and foreign governments which are less inclined to overtly support U.S. foreign policy.

Future adversaries will design operations which will focus on limiting U.S. access to the region in depth. The adversary understands that military capability is not measured in terms of what a nation possesses, but rather what it can effectively bring to bear. [12] Actions will be taken to disrupt strategic lines of communications, threaten forward-based U.S. forces, prevent the use of foreign bases, and limit access to the contested region. These actions to disrupt or deny access to an area of operation, even temporarily, can significantly reduce U.S. military capability in the theater. The adversary can accomplish this militarily, as well as by intimidating U.S. allies and potential U.S. partners through information operations, diplomacy, or economic pressure.

Over 49% of the world's population, or 3.2 billion people, currently reside in urban areas. By the year 2025, that figure is expected to swell to 4.6 billion people, or almost 60% of the population. [13] Those urban areas are predominantly located along the coastal regions of the world, known as the littorals. Considering where the concentration of people reside leads to the conclusion that there is an increased probability for future military operations to occur in complex urbanized areas in the littorals. Urban areas provide adversaries with an operational area which minimizes U.S. technological superiority in intelligence and weapon systems as well as its numerical superiority.

History has shown that permission for the use of overseas basing and approval for overflight rights will not always be granted. Recent examples are Turkey's refusal to allow U.S. ground combat forces to disembark during the opening stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom in

[12] Ibid., 61.
[13] Ibid., 48.

2003, and France and Spain's refusal to permit U.S. overflight rights in support of Operation El Dorado Canyon's air strikes against Libya in 1986.

There are also natural barriers to access. Underdeveloped ports with shallow berths and unimproved piers prevent the entry of Large, Medium-Speed, Roll-On/Roll-Off (LMSR) ships for a pier-side offload. The alternative method of offload can be an in-stream discharge where small seacraft shuttle vehicles from ship to shore. This method drastically increases the deployment time and is subject to the changing conditions of the tide and weather, as well as enemy threats.

Future global access conditions will continue to deteriorate. The U.S. currently has a massive military infrastructure in the Middle East and Europe which provides a significant platform to launch operations from an existing base structure. However, when hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan end, there will be an inevitable draw down of troop levels and of supporting infrastructure. The U.S. will then have lost a springboard for future operations into other parts of the world or to return to the Middle East.

The National Military Strategy echoes the forecast of the future operating environment described by the JOE, in that the "United States will conduct operations in widely diverse locations – from densely populated urban areas located in littoral regions to remote, inhospitable and austere locations." [14] However, the NMS does more than just describe the challenging environment; it implies that the Armed Forces must possess a capability to project a Joint Force into complex environments with immediate lethality.

## Deployment Vulnerabilities in the Future Environment

The analysis of the operating environment by the U.S. to reduce vulnerabilities is also occurring by potential adversaries to leverage the same operating environment in order to exploit U.S. vulnerabilities. When JFCs and planners constantly seek to improve their understanding of the operating environment, they will ensure that previous assumptions have not been invalidated.

As an institution, the U.S. Armed Forces have made a number of assumptions about the operating environment in regards to power projection which influence planning and force structure. These assumptions are: safe, assured access is expected for major combat operations; reception, staging, onward movement, and integration tasks (RSOI) will occur ashore in the JOA; and allies will provide use of basing and overflight rights.

Strategic deployment operations are conducted using a combination of airlift, sealift and prepositioned assets, which constitute the Strategic Mobility Triad. [15] Each element of the triad has its own advantages and disadvantages. Airlift generally transports light, high priority forces, but is limited by the quantity of aircraft, foreign government cooperation for overflight rights and available air ports of debarkation (APOD). Sealift generally transports the equipment and supplies of the heavy combat forces and accounts for the majority of the total cargo delivered to a JOA. However, sealift is dependant upon suitable sea ports of debarkation (SPOD) for offload. [16] Finally, prepositioned stocks provide rapid placement of equipment and supplies into a JOA. Essential requirements for the successful employment of prepositioned equipment are deep-draft port facilities for multiple ship offload, steady sea state conditions, a suitable road network between the SPOD and APOD for joining personnel and equipment together, and time prior to initiating combat operations. [17]

The successful response to a JFC's request for forces is based on both the availability of strategic mobility assets for deployment and sustainment and more importantly facilities to receive those forces. The common vulnerability for each element of the strategic mobility triad is the dependence on secure SPOD/ APODs in the JOA. This dependence also prevents achieving

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[14] U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, 5.

[15] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-35: Joint Deployment and Redeployment Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: 7 September 1999), I-8.

[16] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 4-01.2: Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Sealift Support Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: 9 October 1996), I-2.

[17] U.S. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-17-1: Army Pre-Positioned Afloat Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: July 1996), I-3.

stated force closure goals [18] because anti-access environments inhibit generating momentum in force flow. The Joint Publication for Deployment Operations highlights this problem with the warning, "The worst case deployment scenario for deployment planners is conducting forcible entry operations in an area of the world with undeveloped or nonexistent port facilities." [19]

In regards to global power projection and freedom of action, key elements of U.S. national security, the JOE identifies a significant vulnerability in America's requirement for relatively permissive ports of disembarkation to introduce large formations of ground combat forces into an area of operation. Given that major combat operations typically first require a significant build-up of sustainment stocks in the theater supported by a distribution-based, just-in-time logistics system, the lines of communications, staging areas, and ports of debarkation will all be critical vulnerabilities for disruption and destruction.

Given that many urban areas are located along coastal areas, the Armed Forces will likely not have the opportunity to enter the JOA to conduct the traditional RSOI tasks where troops and equipment marry together. Units must arrive organized to face an adversary in an urban environment. Creating conditions for a secure environment for the reception of large formations, in the model of Desert Storm or Operation Iraqi Freedom, is now unrealistic. Forces must be able to arrive in theater, organize into combat formation, and deploy ashore without the use of ashore APOD/ SPODs, at least until initial forces have secured additional debarkation sites follow-on for forces.

The previous examples demonstrate that any assumption that the U.S. makes in regards to receiving overflight/ access rights without planning for alternate approaches is incorrect. Allies or

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[18] U.S. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 4-01.011: Unit Movement Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: October 2002), i. The Army deployment goal is for a brigade combat team to be on the ground within 96 hours of deployment, a division within 120 hours, and five divisions in 30 days. This is potentially an unachievable standard. Although strategic airlift may be able to fly a brigade to the joint operating area within 96 hours, that unit may not be configured to fight in 96 hours. Onward movement to the objective is dependent upon such things as SPOD/APOD capability to receive forces and road clearance capacity.

[19] U.S. Department of Defense, *JP 3-35: Joint Deployment and Redeployment Operations*, III-10.

coalition partners will not always support U.S. operations abroad because they may be vulnerable to political or economic pressure by U.S. adversaries, or they are just not supportive to U.S. endeavors, especially when the U.S. is compelled to act unilaterally.

Using the JOE White Paper to describe the future operating environment, it is clear that the Armed Force's current deployment thinking has made assumptions about how the U.S. will project power. The current deployment paradigm was written following the end of the Cold War and the success of Desert Storm, where it was feasible to have a slow, secured start and to expect assured access. Even in Operation Iraqi Freedom there was a rolling start to the conflict that utilized existing improved port facilities in Kuwait. Unfortunately, the current paradigm is not flexible enough to support future military operations in anti-access environments.

A change of thinking is desperately needed which embraces the principles of the Seabasing JIC in enabling operational art through the elements of operational design. When one appreciates the problems that the future operating environment presents to challenge the current strategic mobility system, a better way is clearly needed to project forces across the globe. Joint Seabasing is proposed as a way ahead.

# III. Defining Joint Seabasing

## The Roots of Joint Seabasing

There are a number of sources which define Joint Seabasing: the Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept (JIC) Version 1.0; Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, The Department of Defense (DOD) Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms; JP 3-02, the Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations; and the U.S. Navy's series of operational concept papers. These sources generate a general confusion about the term "Seabasing" because Seabasing can be both a physical entity as well as a theoretical construct to develop creative solutions to deployment problems. A review of the literature reveals that a physical JSB can mean something as small as staging the elements of an amphibious landing force off-shore, to something as large as the future fielding of Mobile Offshore Bases. In the conceptual context, it means using the sea as a maneuver space to seek positional advantage against inland objectives. The two perspectives for the same concept have been cleanly divided by Mr. Robert Work, Vice President for Strategic Studies of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. He proposes that naval proponents see JSB as a replacement to land bases. A maritime proponent will see the JSB as a temporary base of operations at sea for sustained maneuver. [20] To appreciate the diversity of thought about JSB, one must review the literature that precedes the Seabasing JIC.

The idea of exploiting the oceans as a maneuver space for actions against inland objectives was first theorized as an operating concept by Admiral Frank Kelso II, a former Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), in 1992. In *From the Sea*, Admiral Kelso proposes that maneuver from the sea can be considered the tactical equivalent of maneuver warfare on land, which can provide an additional capability for a JFC to build combat power while reducing the uncertainty

[20] Robert O. Work, *Seabasing: All Ahead, Slow*, (6 February 2007); available from http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/S.20070206.Seabasing__All_Ahe/S.20070206.Seabasing__All_Ahe.pdf; Internet; accessed 15 March 2007; 4.

of receiving approval for transit or overflight rights from foreign governments. [21] The major idea is that the freedom of navigation naturally offered by the seas translates to the ability to deploy globally and provide the JFC with options on how to introduce forces into a JOA. *From the Sea* makes an assumption that the U.S. will have command of the seas because the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the global balance of power in favor of the U.S. This marked a change in the Navy's role from a blue water Navy to one that must turn its attention towards projecting power into the littorals. *From the Sea* was followed in 1994 by *Forward…From the Sea*, former-CNO Admiral J. M. Boorda's amplification of the Navy's transformation towards facing regional threats in the 21st Century. References to JSB in these early papers are in the context of persistent forward U.S. presence and the ability to deploy embarked Marines ashore to seize APOD/ SPODs for follow-on force arrival. When these operational concepts were written during the 1990's, the strategic concept was one of command of the seas and assured access to ports of debarkation to conduct operations ashore.

Admiral Vern Clark, the CNO from July 2000 to July 2005, expanded upon the JSB concept to consider its operational-level potential in *Sea Power 21*, published in 2001. *Sea Power 21* is "the evolution of U.S. naval power from the blue-water, war-at-sea focus of the "*Maritime Strategy*" (1986), through the littoral emphasis of "*From the Sea*" (1992) and "*Forward…from the Sea*" (1994), to a broadened strategy in which naval forces are fully integrated into global joint operations against regional and transnational dangers." [22] Admiral Clark's paper is the guide for naval transformation in the 21st Century ensuring naval power is integrated into joint operations.

*Sea Power 21* consists of three pillars: Sea Strike, Sea Shield, and Sea Basing. These concepts are bound together by ForceNet, an information technology framework of command and

[21] U.S. Department of the Navy, …*From the Sea*, (September 1992); available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/navy/fts.htm; Internet; accessed 13 March 2007.

[22] Clark, *Sea Power 21 Series*.

control to connect leaders, units, sensors, and weapon systems. Sea Strike is the "application of persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; time-sensitive strike; ship-to-objective maneuver; information operations; and covert strike to deliver devastating power and accuracy." [23] Sea Shield is the projected defense for joint forces afloat and ashore. Sea Strike and Sea Shield are enabled by Sea Basing, which provides the infrastructure to exercise these concepts. Sea Basing provides the JFC with enhanced afloat positioning of joint assets; offensive and defensive power projection; command and control; integrated joint logistics; and, accelerated deployment and employment timelines. [24] *Sea Power 21* initiated an intellectual investigation of the Sea Basing concept and contributed to the drafting of the Sea Basing Joint Integrating Concept in 2005.

The joint publications address JSB from a narrower tactical perspective. JP 1-02, DOD's reference for military terms defines JSB as "a technique of basing certain landing force support functions aboard ship which decreases shore-based presence" [25] during the conduct of amphibious operations. The joint document for the conduct of amphibious operations, JP 3-02, expands upon the above definition in that JSB is able to increase the maneuver options by reducing the command and control (C2) and logistics footprint ashore. [26] These joint definitions focus on the concept's defensive advantages whereas the Marine Corps appreciates the JSB's offensive capability.

Seabasing is an enabling concept for the Marine Corps and is nested within the larger concepts of Operational Maneuver from the Sea and Ship-to-Objective Maneuver. By basing the sustainment, fires and C2 functions at sea and landing only minimum mission essential forces, Seabasing can generate overwhelming tempo and momentum during amphibious operations

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, D.C.: 12 April 2001 [As Amended Through 5 January 2007]), 472.

against inland objectives with the goal of avoiding an operational pause to build combat power ashore. [27] Seabasing also increases the number of possible landing sites which provides flexibility for the JFC and creates uncertainty for the adversary. This offensive and flexible orientation of JSB is noticeable in the JIC.

In January 1996, Headquarters Marine Corps published the concept paper "Operational Maneuver from the Sea" (OMFTS) to start the professional dialogue to bring together maneuver warfare with naval warfare at the operational level of war. By combining the understanding of the dynamic nature of war fighting and the necessity for decisive objectives with the advantages of sea-borne movement and sea-based logistics, the Marine Corps white paper sought to conceptually blur the line where sea meets land.[28] This paper initiated the exploration of the tactical perspective of maneuvering from the sea called, "Ship-To-Objective Maneuver".

The Marine Corps Combat Development Command published the "Ship-to-Objective Maneuver" (STOM) concept paper in 1997 which describes how to address the challenges and opportunities of applying maneuver warfare to amphibious operations at the tactical level. With STOM, "a landing force will be capable of seamless maneuver from over the horizon directly against objectives deep inland" [29] without an operational pause.

Together, OMFTS and STOM creates advantages by increasing the speed of deployment and operations, generating uncertainty for an enemy unable to predict friendly action over larger spaces, and leaving him vulnerable to defeat in covering a number of friendly maneuver options.

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[26] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-02: Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: 19 September 2001), XIV-8.

[27] U.S. Department of the Navy, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0, Marine Corps Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: 27 September 2001), 2-15.

[28] U.S. Department of the Navy, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, (Washington, D.C.: 4 January 1996); available from http://www.dtic.mil/jv2010/usmc/omfts.pdf; Internet; accessed 19 February 2007; 14.

[29] U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Ship-To-Objective Maneuver*, (Quantico: 25 July 1997), II-24.

[30] Both concepts require a Seabase to launch, control, and sustain operations from and is the critical node in conducting forced entry operations from the sea.

## Mobile Offshore Bases

A discussion about JSB's future composition must also include the concept of Mobile Offshore Bases (MOB). A MOB is a massive, mobile, floating platform up to 5,000 feet long that is able to launch and recover land-based aircraft. It would be composed of bringing together several large modules, similar to oil platforms. The MOB concept gathered momentum in the 1990's with the backing of Admiral William Owens, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1994 to 1996. Admiral Owens promoted the argument that with the end of the Cold War, the Pentagon had an opportunity to divert funding away from the Services for increased research and development of technologies to revolutionize the Armed Forces for the 21st Century. [31]

The MOB could be maneuvered into JOAs with limited port infrastructure for a period of time to support operations ashore or reside semi-permanently off the shores of potential adversaries in international waters. This capability would create persistent U.S. presence representing U.S. sovereign territory; or as Admiral Owens describes as a "moveable American island." [32]

A nation that possesses a MOB capability has the potential to change the global balance of power. That nation may be perceived as a direct threat to another country's sovereignty when a MOB is stationed within striking range, although located in international waters. The presence of a MOB or the movement of a MOB into or out of a theater sends clear messages of national resolve or indifference. A MOB on station in dangerous waters also represents a commitment of

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[30] Congressional Budget Office, *The Future of the Navy's Amphibious and Maritime Prepositioning Forces*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, November 2004), 11.

[31] Michael R. Gordon, "Admiral with High-Tech Dreams has Pentagon at War with Itself" *New York Times*, 12 December 1994, A-1.

[32] Work, *Seabasing: All Ahead, Slow*, 21.

lives, international reputation, and money which must be protected by the owning nation. This prompts the owner to develop means to defend and maintain the MOB abroad. The MOB also prompts the threatened nation to develop a counter-capability to defeat a MOB, thereby escalating into an arms race.

## Joint Seabasing's Current Definition

Two documents provide the framework for the current debate about JSB. The first is the *Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept* (JIC), written by the Joint Staff's J7—Joint Experimentation, Transformation, and Concepts Division (JETCD). The second source is the 2006 *Naval Operations Concept* which describes how the Navy and Marine Corps will contribute to the defense of the United States.

A JIC is a description of how a JFC will integrate capabilities to generate effects in order to achieve an objective, 10-20 years in the future. The methodology to develop future warfighting concepts is delineated in the *Joint Concept Development and Revision Plan* (JCDRP). This plan synchronizes joint concept developers to link strategic guidance to the development and employment of future capabilities. [33] The JCDRP process begins with an overarching description of how the future joint force will operate in 10-20 years, called the Joint Operations Concept. The Joint Operations Concept is divided into a series of concepts which describe how a JFC will perform specific military functions called Joint Functional Concepts (JFC). It also describes concept of operations to accomplish strategic objectives called Joint Operating Concepts (JOC). Specific areas of JFCs and JOCs that deserve narrowly-focused investigation are identified as Joint Integrating Concepts (JIC).

The *Seabasing JIC* is the standing primary source document to describe the expected capabilities and potential employment options for the JSB concept. The *Seabasing JIC* is

[33] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Concept Development and Revision Plan*, (Washington, D.C.: March 2004), 5.

influenced by the U.S. Navy's series of operational concept papers from the early 1990's to present, the Marine Corps' operational concept of Operational Maneuver from the Sea and Ship-to-Objective Maneuver, and, the works of various committees studying the JSB concept. According to the *Seabasing JIC*, JSB is defined as:

> "…the rapid deployment, assembly, command, projection, reconstitution, and re-employment of joint combat power from the sea, while providing continuous support, sustainment, and force protection to select expeditionary joint forces without reliance on land bases within the Joint Operations Area (JOA). These capabilities expand operational maneuver options, and facilitate assured access and entry from the sea." [34]

It is noticeable that the JIC definition describes both the tactical employment and operational advantages of JSB because its roots are derived from both the U.S. Navy's strategic vision for operations in the 21st Century and from the tactical amphibious operations doctrine. Tactically, JSB rapidly deploys combat forces and is capable of receiving follow-on forces at sea for employment ashore, while providing C2 and sustainment from the sea. Operationally, JSB provides the JFC with a number of deployment options to project forces and sustainment from the sea into operating areas that do not contain assured access points. The JIC's definition of Seabasing contributes to the confusion over JSB because it can refer to both the physical (Naval) or theoretical (Maritime) perspective of JSB, depending on one's agenda.

A better way to understand JSB from the maritime perspective is to refer to the principles of Seabasing as defined by the JIC. These describe the characteristics of future Seabased operations and are worth noting in developing any deployment options. They do not attempt to imply a size or structure requirement, but rather focus on its operational capabilities. The principles are: [35]

Use the sea as maneuver space
Leverage forward presence and joint interdependence
Protect joint force operations

[34] U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept*, 5.
[35] Ibid., 6.

Provide scalable, responsive joint power projection
Sustain joint force operations from the sea
Expand access options and reduce dependence on land bases
Create uncertainty in our adversaries

In visualizing the international waters of the globe as a maneuver space, JSB exploits the freedom of the high seas to conduct operational maneuver relatively unconstrained by political and diplomatic restrictions. [36] Seabased operations provide the JFC with an operational flexibility to support the rapid deployment, immediate employment and continued sustainment of forces across the JOA unencumbered by overflight permission or basing rights. In addition to maneuverability, the high seas also reduce vulnerabilities associated with basing forces ashore.

JSB also provides a large measure of force protection derived from a combination of joint platforms (surface, sub-surface, and air) and the freedom of operational maneuver in a maritime environment. Together, these provide a shield for forces at sea and ashore as well as degrades the enemy's ability to engage friendly forces. This freedom of maneuver also has a deterrent effect in shaping the environment before forces are actually needed to be committed to action ashore.

When joint forces are operating from a JSB in conjunction with other globally based forces which are able to be deployed into the JOA via the JSB, the JFC has an on-scene, credible offensive and defensive capability during the early stages of a crisis. [37] This forward deployed posture helps to deter a crisis or enable the subsequent introduction of additional forces, equipment, and sustainment at the JFC's choosing.

The JSB also provides the JFC with the ability to rapidly scale and tailor forces to the mission as they arrive from throughout the globe by air, surface or sub-surface vessels. The JFC can mass, disperse, or project joint combat power throughout the JOA at multiple points at the desired times to place the adversary in a dilemma. [38] "Seabasing integrates global and sea-based

[36] Ibid., 21.
[37] Ibid., 22.
[38] Ibid., 23.

power projection capabilities to provide the JFC with multiple access options to complement forward basing in the JOA, and reduces reliance on forward basing when the security environment dictates. This includes theater access capabilities at improved and unimproved ports and airfields." [39]

The 2006 *Naval Operations Concept* (NOC) is the second source document one can refer to for a description of JSB. The NOC represents the current CNO Admiral Michael Mullen's vision for Navy and Marine Corps relevancy in the 21st Century and also provides broad guidance to spark creativity within the fleet to tackle the challenges of the future. As the primary visionary document for the Navy, it supersedes previous operating concepts, such as …*From the Sea* and *Forward…From the Sea*.

Because the NOC is intended to spark an "intellectual renaissance" [40] in meeting the challenges of the joint operating environment much of the document is deliberately written broadly in order to facilitate debate. A particular example of a broad definition is the concept of Seabasing. According to the NOC, Seabasing is a capability that provides "operational maneuver and assured access to the joint force while significantly reducing our footprint ashore and minimizing the permissions required to operate from host nations." [41] Such a definition permits continued exploration to determine what it is and what it should consist of. The overarching intent of JSB in the NOC is to base a sustainable logistics tail at sea, in the assumed safety of international waters.

A developing concept derived from the JSB debate is the Global Fleet Station (GFS). The GFS is reminiscent of the MOB dialogue of the 1990's, in that it is a persistent seabase of operations within a regional area of interest. [42] It is capable of providing C2 for regional

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[39] Ibid., 22.

[40] U.S. Department of the Navy, *Naval Operations Concept 2006*, (Washington, D.C.: 14 September 2006), 2.

[41] Ibid., 30.

[42] Ibid., 30.

operations plus has the capacity to conduct combat service support functions such as maintaining ships and aircraft and providing medical treatment.

A review of the literature reveals that Joint Seabasing is currently an indeterminate concept. It is both a future physical entity with a size and scope to be determined, and it is a concept for operational maneuver across strategic distances. This status fits well because it does not limit concept developers to a particular course of action. Unfortunately, the debate over JSB may be too narrowly focused on a single element of the strategic deployment system—the Seabase, itself. In order to elaborate on the JSB concept and its fit in the strategic mobility system, it is helpful to consider the JSB concept framed against selected elements of operational design.

## Joint Seabasing and Operational Design

The advantages of thinking about force projection from a perspective which embraces the principles of Joint Seabasing becomes apparent when considered in conjunction with the elements of operational design. The elements of operational design help commanders and staffs visualize the arrangement of joint capabilities in time, space, and purpose to accomplish assigned missions. [43] The design elements which JSB can have the greatest impact upon are operational reach, tempo, culmination, and arranging operations.

Operational reach is "the distance and duration across which a unit can successfully employ military capabilities." [44] Reach is heavily influenced by geography as well as political and diplomatic operational limitations of overflight and basing rights, which in turn influences the combat power and capabilities that a JFC can generate in the JOA. Given the importance of basing to generating combat power, adversaries will seek to deny access in order to prevent the build up of forces through a combination of direct attacks against assault and sustainment forces

[43] U.S. Department of Defense, *JP 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 391.

or through indirect political pressure to dissuade allies or potential coalition partners from granting access rights. Basing, whether from a Seabase or from nearby land bases, also allows the JFC to control the tempo of operations by carefully timing the employment of forces into the operation.

Operations in southern Afghanistan during the fall of 2001 demonstrate the options that a Joint Seabased force can provide to extend operational reach. Faced with the problem of deploying forces into southern Afghanistan, the JFC employed a creative mix of capabilities to project forces into the most inaccessible terrain on earth. An amphibious task force (TF), an aircraft carrier, and Special Operations Forces (SOF) were assembled in the Indian Ocean to open a southern front for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The *USS Kitty Hawk*, minus its habitual air wing, embarked U.S. Army SOF and helicopters. Two amphibious ready groups, built around the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) [MEU (SOC)] and 26th MEU (SOC) would form TF 58 and conduct the deepest amphibious operation in Marine Corps history—over 400 miles from its Seabase, to seize an airstrip and establish Forward Operating Base (FOB) Rhino. [45] By opening a southern front, the U.S. was able to press the Taliban forces from two directions and speed their defeat.

The freedom of maneuver together with assured access points, such as one provided by a Seabase, permits the JFC to dominate the action by remaining unpredictable and operating beyond the adversary's ability to react. By controlling maneuver, the JFC controls tempo and is able to influence the actions of combat forces and logistics to prevent culmination.

A JSB provides the JFC with an ability to control the tempo of both combat and humanitarian operations. Following the end of Liberia's civil war in 2003, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) mobilized to implement a peace agreement to

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[44] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, (Washington, D.C.: December 2006), IV-23.

end 25 years of fighting. Speed was essential in establishing security for Liberia's citizens and facilitating follow-on humanitarian relief efforts. In July, the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force (SETAF) was directed to establish JTF Liberia in order to support the ECOWAS military forces.

The JTF consisted of elements from each service and totaled over 5,000 personnel. JTF Liberia's command group was based aboard the USS *Iwo Jima* and was connected with its main headquarters facility located in Vicenza, Italy via advanced reachback capability. The forward command post provided C2 for JTF forces operating in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal. During JTF Liberia's two-month deployment, a peace agreement was implemented, APODs/ SPODs were reopened for humanitarian relief efforts to resume averting a humanitarian crisis, and the mission was successfully transitioned to United Nations peace-keeping forces. [46]

The third element of operational design which JSB can impact is culmination. A culminating point is reached when a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operation, whether offensive or defensive. [47] Culminating points are avoided by synchronizing logistics with combat operations and controlling the overall tempo of the operation. Critical to this is the positioning of logistic units and supplies at the right place and time to sustain operations through mission accomplishment. Seabasing can delay reaching a culminating point prior to achieving the objective by providing a secure source for sustainment off shore. Because the design of an operation demands arranging forces and capabilities to reach the right mix for mission accomplishment, there may be a requirement to plan for a pause in the operation in order to generate additional combat power or logistic capability for continued operations.

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[45] U.S. Marine Corps Institute, *Afghanistan: An Introduction to the Country and People*, (Washington, D.C.: 21 February 2007), 29.

[46] Thomas W. Collins, "Joint Efforts Prevent Humanitarian Disaster in Liberia," *Army Magazine*, February 2004, available from https://ausa.org/webpub/DeptArmyMagazine.nsf/byid/CCRN-6CCSBZ; Internet; accessed 15 December 2006.

[47] U.S. Department of Defense, *JP 1-02: DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 136.

The JSB's ability to base the logistics tail at sea contributes to enhancing initiative and delaying operational pauses. Prior to initiating major combat operations, it is necessary to establish the necessary logistics stocks and bases ashore to sustain the fight ahead. The creation of an iron mountain takes time and risks ceding the initiative to the adversary. Then, during the execution of combat operations, an operational pause may be required to regenerate combat power or augment sustainment and forces for the next phase which will extend the duration of an operation or campaign. [48] By basing the logistics tail of the joint force at sea, the JSB can facilitate the execution of an operation by first avoiding the need to delay initiating hostilities in order to build the iron mountain ashore. And second, the JSB prolongs the duration of sustained operations by delaying the conditions which trigger an operational pause by acting as a constant sustainment source off shore. Finally, the JSB functions as the reception and staging base to receive follow-on forces at sea for integration into forces already engaged in operations ashore.

This theory was demonstrated in 2005 when JTF Katrina was established to coordinate the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts throughout America's Gulf Coast. The JTF was initially based ashore at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Quickly following the hurricane's landfall, the JTF headquarters transitioned to the USS *Iwo Jima*, which was positioned off of New Orleans. The JTF was able to quickly transition from disaster preparation to disaster relief operations without a pause because facilities to conduct C2 were immediately available at the center of the destruction.

The advantages of the Seabasing concept are also apparent when compared against the actions that typically occur during each phase of a notional operation plan. A campaign or major operation is generally divided into six phases: Shape, Deter, Seize the Initiative, Dominate, Stabilize, and Enable Civil Authority. Seabasing has a role during all phases of a joint campaign, especially through the Shaping to Stabilizing Phases.

[48] U.S. Department of Defense, *JP 5-0: Joint Operation Planning*, IV-32.

Shape Phase activities are performed to "dissuade or deter potential adversaries and to assure or solidify relationships with friends and allies." [49] A Combatant Commander or JFC can employ JSB to maintain access in operational areas where they are likely to operate by including it in security cooperation exercises.

The Deter Phase seeks to "deter undesirable adversary action by demonstrating the capabilities and resolve of the joint force." [50] By positioning the elements of a Seabase in international waters near a potential JOA, a JFC makes a clear demonstration of force projection capability. Because a potential adversary understands the obvious impacts that terrain and access rights have on friendly force generation activities, he will conduct anti-access operations. A JSB offers a capability to operate in conditions and environments which would impair current deployment practices. This presents the adversary with uncertainty about friendly action, thus possibly deterring effective hostile activity.

The next phase is to seize the initiative by conducting offensive operations at the earliest time possible. Rapid application of joint combat power is possible by deploying forces from the JSB to seize multiple SPODs/ APODs for follow-on forces. This forcible entry force may consist of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade or an air assault of light Infantry. The Seabase also provides the JFC with a C2 infrastructure afloat.

"The Dominate Phase focuses on breaking the enemy's will for organized resistance or, in noncombat situations, control of the operational environment." [51] The JSB supports Dominate Phase actions by providing a staging base for forces to follow the forcible entry echelon, which closes the gap between the initial assault and sustained combat action. As additional SPODs/ APODs are seized and new access points are established, the adversary faces overwhelming joint forces, which could drive him to culmination earlier.

[49] Ibid., IV-35.
[50] Ibid., IV-36.
[51] Ibid., IV-37.

The final element of the JSB definition is “reconstitution” and “reemployment” of joint combat power. During the Stabilize and Enable Civil Authority Phases, the JSB reconstitutes forces by functioning as the reception point for incoming personnel replacements, equipment, and supplies bound for forces ashore. The JSB is then able to reemploy forces by either repositioning forces from a major engagement area to another or to realign forces to begin stability operations. Finally, redeployment is conducted through newly secured SPODs/ APODs ashore and through the Seabase itself.

The preceding examples of JTF-Liberia, JTF-Katrina, and OEF are cases of limited JSB employment. It would be wrong to conclude that because the employment of a seabase produced a successful outcome in one situation that it will be able to do the same for a larger scale problem. The success of sustaining a brigade-sized task force in Liberia or Afghanistan for a few months cannot be expected to be repeated when sustaining a major combat operation for prolonged periods of time. However, the examples do appear to show that JSB is able to improve operational reach for limited-scale operations, but limitations in other components of the strategic mobility system may limit the effectiveness of a JSB.

# IV. Net Assessment of Joint Seabasing

Joint Seabasing is a complex system made up of component systems. Thus, the best way to analyze the JSB concept is to approach it from a system of systems perspective. A systems perspective allows one to appreciate the internal complexities of the JSB as well as how it functions as a component of the strategic mobility system. It may be convenient to consider what the future JSB can do as a single entity, but to ignore either the inter-relatedness of the components of the JSB or the greater strategic mobility system creates an incomplete picture. A partial listing of the components of the strategic mobility system are: defense funding, U.S. strategic policy, CONUS bases, ports of embarkation, inter-theater lift (strategic sealift and airlift), prepositioned equipment, ports of debarkation, the Joint Seabase, overseas land bases, intra-theater lift, force protection, friendly force composition (personnel, equipment and supplies), the environment, allied and neutral nations, and the enemy.

A system is described in JP 3-0, Joint Operations, as a functionally related group of elements forming a complex whole. A systems perspective strives to provide an understanding of interrelated systems relevant to a specific operation. [52] Characteristics of complex system of systems are: that the overarching system is actually an interoperating collection of systems; each sub-system is in a different stage of development; and there is no opportunity to develop a completely new system of system because you must build upon what is exiting to get something better. Understanding the component systems and how they interact with one another allows one to see how improvements or degradation within a sub-system can affect the other systems, and ultimately to the overarching system itself.

The systems perspective was advocated by Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William Owens, also the proponent for the MOB, in the 1990's. The systems perspective provided an approach to highlight the interrelated aspect of joint force capabilities. It also

improved the joint warfighting concept development process by linking the warfighting requirements of the joint combatant commanders to the system development and acquisition process of the Department of Defense and the military services. [53] This approach of a systems perspective was predominantly technologically oriented, which mirrored the post-Cold War thinking of the 1990's that properly applied technology can overcome any conceivable threat. This monograph uses the systems perspective with the addition of addressing the non-technological aspects of a system, such as politics and budgeting.

Much of the current discussion about JSB is narrowly focused on the Seabase itself. Proponents of JSB emphasize what it can do and what it would consist of. That approach is too short-sighted and leads to a applying technical solution to a complex deployment problem. Because the ultimate requirements for the JSB are indeterminate at this time, the debate must not be focused on how best to create a new node in the ocean, but focus on each component system, such as how to improve strategic transportability of the Army and Marine Corps. This section will discuss the strategic implications of a JSB capability, protecting the JSB, and strategic lift connecting the JSB to CONUS. The intent is to demonstrate that creating a JSB capability may generate new problems or may not achieve desired effects because of inadequate investment in the component systems of the strategic mobility system.

## Strategic Implications of Possessing a Joint Seabasing Capability

The development of a new capability cannot be conducted in isolation of the strategic environment that it must exist in. A state that possesses a JSB capability must be prepared for the response of potential adversaries, as well as allies and neutrals. Potential adversaries may feel that

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[52] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: 17 September 2006), II-21.

[53] Ronald R. Luman, *Upgrading Complex Systems of Systems*, (Georgia Institute of Technology, 3 November 2004), 5; and William H. J. Manthrope, Jr. "The Emerging Joint System of Systems: A Systems Engineering Challenge and Opportunity for APL," *Johns Hopkins APL Technical Digest*, (July-September

the JSB is designed directly to threaten them. Allies and neutral states may react similarly. This capability can be interpreted as a threat to their sovereignty which elicits a response to develop a JSB defeat capability or push neutral states closer to potential adversaries in order to partner resources in protecting themselves against the JSB. This then prompts the Seabased state to develop systems to enhance the defense of the JSB and defeat anti-JSB technology.

This spiraling effect is an example of a security dilemma. John Mearsheimer writes that the "essence of the dilemma is that the measures a state takes to increase its own security usually decreases the security of other states. Thus, it is difficult for a state to increase its own chances of survival without threatening the survival of other states." [54] In developing the JSB concept, especially if it were to grow to MOB proportions, consideration must be given to the future strategic impact of having such a capability in the first place.

Following 9/11, the policy of preemption has generated resurgence of interest for the JSB concept, especially its promise to project power unconstrained by sovereign borders and airspace. However, the debate over JSB must acknowledge that this preemptive capability raises a number of questions which consider the capacity to act unilaterally with the reality of being a unilateral actor. For how long would the U.S. be able to conduct sustained combat operations ashore from a JSB when it is acting unilaterally? How deep can those operations penetrate to objectives far inland when the logistics hub is based at sea? Promising an ability to act unilaterally does not mean that it is the practical course to take, nor does it mean that the U.S can maintain unilateral action for an unspecified period of time. Thus, does a JSB really offer more than what our present amphibious capability to seize APOD/ SPODs for follow-on operations already provide?

A final consideration for developing a JSB capability is how closely is it nested with stated national policies? Having a capability that allows the U.S. to operate indiscriminately from

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1996); available from http://www.jhuapl.edu/techdigest/td1703/index.htm; Internet; accessed 25 March 2007.

the safety of international waters perpetuates the perception that diplomacy is an afterthought for a superpower that has a demonstrated capability for unilateral action. [55] One could argue that continued propensity for U.S. unilateralism sets the conditions for failed coalition building in the future. This thinking contradicts an emerging policy of engagement and partnership, notably, the CNO's *1,000 Ship Navy*.

The NOC acknowledges that maritime security operations exceed the capability of any one nation, including the U.S., thus, it is necessary to partner with multinational, federal, state, local, and private sector entities. However, a JSB capability appears inconsistent with Admiral Mullen's concept of international cooperation in his concept of the *1,000 Ship Navy*. The *1,000 Ship Navy* acknowledges that globalization has created economic and security interdependencies between nations, and that no nation can go it alone. [56] Building partner capacity will promote regional stability and promotes future coalitions. However, a capability that is designed to work around anticipated lack of cooperation from allies demonstrates distrust, which the *1,000 Ship Navy* seeks to prevent.

## Funding the Joint Seabase

The Congress has begun funding elements of the Joint Seabase in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 National Defense Authorization Act although the military still lacks a clearly defined vision for what a JSB will be. For now, the Navy has broadly described what a JSB may be capable of doing in the NOC and interestingly nested the characteristics of a JSB into the Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) (MPF (F)) concept, an idea which is to be the follow-on of the successful Prepositioning Program.

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[54] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: Norton and Company, 2001), 36.

[55] John Klein and Rich Morales, "Sea Basing Isn't Just About the Sea." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (January 2004); available from http://www.usni.org/proceedings/Articles04/PRO01klein.htm; Internet; accessed 23 October 2006.

[56] U.S. Department of the Navy, *Naval Operations Concept 2006*, 26.

The Military Sealift Command's Prepositioning Program is an essential element of the nation's ability to project military power. The program consists of ships pre-loaded with military equipment and supplies which remain at sea to support the Joint Force during the conduct of contingency operations. The program has three components: the Army Prepositioned Stocks-3 (APS-3) ships; the Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) which supports the Marine Corps; and the Navy, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and Air Force Ships which supports the Navy, DLA, Marine Corps and Air Force.

Both the Navy and the Army are reviewing the Prepositioning Program fleet to upgrade its capability to meet their future requirements. The Navy is ahead on defining its vision for an improved MPF with the Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) (MPF (F)) concept. The MPF (F) is expected to be the main platform for the JSB and will provide capabilities over the present MPF, such as at-sea phased arrival and assembly of expeditionary forces; Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) Interoperability; sea-based sustainment of expeditionary forces; and at-sea reconstitution and redeployment of the expeditionary force.[57] These performance criteria are identical to the JSB JIC, so that in describing the MPF (F) one is also describing a JSB.

Although the FY 2007 National Defense Authorization Act includes $14.5 billion for the development of the MPF (F) with procurement to begin in FY 09, there are two points which hint that the way ahead will not be certain. First, despite providing funds for the MPF (F), the Congress is not completely wedded to the concept. A condition for submitting the FY 08 budget request is for the Secretary of the Navy to submit a report to the congressional defense committees about the Navy plan for MPF (F). This report must include a Seabase concept of operation for the MPF (F) ships; the requirements to defend MPF (F) ships against diesel submarines, anti-ship cruise missiles, and asymmetric threats such as swarming boats; and expected ship costs, among others. Second, the MPF (F) represents only one service's view on the

future of the prepositioning force, although the Army relies heavily upon its portion of the MPF, the APS-3.

The National Defense Authorization Act also includes $127.7 million for the Navy to continue developing the concept of operation and technologies for a Seabase capability. [58] But again, there is only one service funded to expand upon this Joint capability. Clearly there is potential for skewing the JSB concept of operation to narrowly focus on developing Seabase platforms rather than a holistic perspective of all of the component systems which the JSB requires to function as promised.

## Strategic Lift to the Joint Seabase

The sub-system of the strategic mobility system which has received attention during the JSB debate has been about the development of the connector ships and aircraft which will move equipment and personnel from the JSB to shore. However, there is little discussion about improving the strategic lift from CONUS to the deployed JSB. This lack of discussion is distressing because unless there is a significant increase in throughput capacity from CONUS to the JSB, there will only be marginal gains in what can be projected ashore. The JSB becomes another distribution node with similar throughput limitations of land-based APODs/ SPODs. Improvements to today's existing inter-theater connectors are necessary to achieve more than trivial advantages from the JSB.

Strategic mobility is oftentimes a secondary effort to developing lethal capabilities, which are believed to make a service more relevant and therefore more appealing to receive funding. Unfortunately, sealift is not an instant gratification investment although immensely important,

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[57] Program Executive Office Ships Website; available from http://peoships.crane.navy.mil/pms325/mpff.htm; Internet; accessed 26 March 2007.

[58] U.S. Congress, Senate, "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007." available from http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&sid=cp109AH543&refer=&r_n=sr254.109&db_id=109&item=&sel=TOC_253717&; Internet; accessed 26 March 2007.

especially when compared with the lift capability of aircraft. A single Large, Medium-Speed, Roll-On, Roll-Off (LMSR) vessel can carry the equivalent of 200 C-17 Globemaster IIIs or 220 C-5A Galaxies. [59] The benefits of increasing the nations capacity to transport more cargo further and faster is not as easily visible or exciting as the immediate reward of capturing or killing terrorists. An example of this is the 2006 NOC which lists the thirteen naval missions in which the Navy and Marine Corps' will contribute to national security. [60] Conspicuously absent in the mission set is strategic sealift. [61] When a service does not prioritize a mission, it does not receive the funding for research to seek improvements or for acquisition programs.

Dr. Jacob Kipp and LTC (Ret) Lester Grau's essay in Military Review titled "The Tyranny of Time and Distance: Bridging the Pacific" highlights the nominal gains in sailing times that strategic sealift has made over a century and argues for creative approaches to improve deployment timelines. The essay cites the sailing time from California to the Philippines in 1898 was 36 days whereas a recent deployment of Marines from California to the Philippines took 21 days. [62] Improvements in ship loading methods, from cranes lifting nets of break bulk cargo to the current roll-on/roll-off ramps and containerized cargo, has decreased out load times. However, given over 100 years that have separated these two missions little gain has been made in transit times. Today, air transport is measured in hours but sealift is still measured in days and weeks. Clearly, the emphasis on improving strategic mobility and operational reach should be

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[59] U.S. Department of the Navy, *Military Sealift Command Command Briefing*, (Washington, D.C.), available from http://www.msc.navy.mil/mediacenter/default.asp?page=backgrnd; Internet; accessed 22 March 2007; 18.

[60] U.S. Department of the Navy, *Naval Operations Concept 2006*, 11. The NOC lists the Navy's mission set as the following: forward naval presence, crisis response, expeditionary power projection (amphibious operations, strike warfare, information operations and naval special warfare), maritime security operations, sea control, deterrence, security cooperation, civil-military operations, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, counter-proliferation, air and missile defense, and information operations.

[61] Sandra I. Erwin, "Naval Officials Seek 'Intellectual Renaissance' in the Sea Services," *National Defense*, November 2006, available from http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/issues/2006/November/NavalOfficials.html; Internet; accessed 21 March 2007.

focused on the sealift to move forces rather than solely on the creation of a base at sea to receive those forces. It is necessary for the U.S. to continue seeking advances for sea lift speed in parallel with seeking advances in overall force deployment speed. A JSB alone is a technical solution to a complex problem that involves far more than just getting a small force somewhere faster.

## Protecting the Joint Seabase

The Seabasing JIC assures joint access from the sea in almost any operational environment. [63] A promise made by many Seabasing advocates is that since the JSB will be positioned over-the horizon it will be invulnerable to attack and access is all but guaranteed. This is predicated on the assumption that the Sea Shield, one of the components of *Seapower 21*, can defeat all anti-access measures an adversary can present such as anti-ship missiles and small boats laden with explosives. Without carefully considering all of the potential threats, the JSB may become as vulnerable as any land-based logistics node. This begs the question whether there are significant gains to be made by moving the logistics hub and C2 for land operations into the sea?

A JSB requires a functioning Sea Shield to protect it. Components of the Sea Shield concept are aircraft carriers and Expeditionary Strike Groups (ESG). What remains to be articulated for either Sea Shield or the JSB is the cycling of the eleven aircraft carriers in the Navy's current inventory to dedicated support of future JSB protection missions when their mission rotation is already tightly managed. With every carrier either deployed, in maintenance, or training for deployment, there is little flexibility to commit one to protecting a JSB. This point is equally true for ESG deployments where at any given time, 15 to 20 percent of this force is in for maintenance or overhauls. [64]

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[62] Lester W. Grau and Jacob W. Kipp, "The Tyranny of Time and Distance: Bridging the Pacific," *Military Review* Vol. 80, Issue 4 (July-August 2000), 71.

[63] U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept*, 17.

[64] National Research Council of the National Academies, *Sea Basing—Ensuring Joint Access from the Sea*, (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2005), 37.

A second theme for further research is the ability to absorb a loss of a carrier in protecting a JSB. There are presently eleven carriers with a future vessel to be commissioned in 2014 and 2016. Given the high probability of having to protect the JSB against low technology threats, such as mines and diesel submarines, and asymmetric threats, such as swarming speed boats, what is the tolerance for losing a carrier in the defense of a JSB? The question to consider before investing in a JSB is whether it is more advantageous to defend the logistics and C2 base at sea, with the risk of losing one of the eleven carriers, rather than defending it on land?

A recent Strategic Studies Institute monograph proposes three factors that must be considered in protecting the JSB. These factors highlight the importance of a systems approach to the JSB debate because they involve measuring the long-term strategic vulnerabilities that can be generated from short-sighted advancements of concepts. First, security of both the embarking and debarking ports is essential. Control of the high seas is negligible if a nation is unable to safely deliver personnel and cargo in theater or even able to leave its own home ports. Secondly, emphasis on littoral defense cannot overshadow the need to be able to rival an emergent maritime power, such as China or Russia. Finally, naval forces must be able to defend against unsophisticated attacks in the littorals, such as mines, diesel submarines, or small boats. Protecting the JSB and the forces it has projected ashore requires a force protection perspective that includes both a littoral and blue-water view. Protection of the JSB will require achieving a balance in capabilities which provide for control of the seas with littoral defense. Although the short-term focus turns toward littoral warfare, the need to defend the fleet and maintain sea lines of communications remains the same and cannot be sacrificed.

# V. Conclusion

## Summary

The Joint Seabase has a role in the strategic mobility system, however, improvements to strategic lift and diplomatic efforts are critical to improving strategic mobility, which also improves a JFC's ability to extend operational reach. Strategic lift, particularly sealift, is what gets a force into a theater faster with more capability, not the JSB, which essentially becomes another node in the overall mobility system. Mitigating access problems is a very important issue that deserves constant attention, but the JSB is not the primary answer. The U.S. already possesses a forced entry capability in the Marine Corps, Army Rangers, and Army Airborne forces which can seize APODs and SPODs for follow-on force flow. The second focus area must be on diplomatic efforts throughout the world to be able to facilitate negotiating for access to states which neighbor JOAs for the establishment of temporary intermediate staging bases or the establishment of persistent warm-based cooperative security locations.

Joint Seabasing, as part of the strategic mobility system, does have the potential to change the way that the Armed Forces of the United States operate. The most important potential advantages are assurance of operational access, enhanced forward posture and immediate response capability, rapid initiation of joint C2, and a very rapid transition from crisis to joint forcible entry capability. [65] These advantages have a direct bearing on operational design, specifically the elements of operational reach, tempo, culmination, and arranging operations. However, the Joint Seabase itself will not make significant improvements to operational reach for long-term operations without corresponding advancements to each component system of the strategic mobility system and in particular, strategic sealift.

[65] National Research Council of the National Academies, *Sea Basing: Ensuring Joint Force Access from the Sea*, 3.

It is clear that funding plays an important role in the future of a functional JSB. Appropriations to a single service to continue the development of the JSB concept may prohibit a broad perspective necessary to consider the entire strategic mobility system and JSB's role within it. Achieving a JSB will depend on what each service is willing to spend their appropriations on to contribute to the JSB or rather, what they are willing to sacrifice.

A positive note is that the JSB has not been defined in total yet. This allows concept developers to address the concept from a physical perspective and a conceptual perspective. Unfortunately, one outcome of not defining the term is that concept developers have become focused on proposing a physical end state for the JSB alone without advancing the entire strategic mobility system. Building a JSB becomes the goal instead of improving the overall strategic mobility system to increase operational reach.

A second positive aspect of the ongoing JSB debate is that it has influenced the way planners conceptualize the joint battle space and how capabilities can be brought to bear. JFCs and planners that consider the creative and holistic employment of the joint force to maneuver across time and space will see the world differently. Unseen deployment options will become apparent, such as employing an aircraft carrier without its normal complement of aircraft to base Army SOF on for operations hundreds of miles inland, as during the opening stages of OEF. Another example is the case of JTF-Liberia, where a naval vessel was the command platform for an Army-led JTF to C2 Marines and Airman ashore. "Operational art begins in the mind and character of the commander. A joint force commander cannot achieve what he cannot conceive." [66]

## Recommendations

Joint Seabasing deserves thoughtful consideration from every service because the concept has the potential for significant improvement to operational reach if a systems perspective is

utilized during concept development. This monograph makes the following recommendations: properly frame the debate; continue the debate; consider financial constraints; ensure the jointness of JSB; conduct a Red Team analysis; continue long-term global engagement; and seek advancements in strategic lift.

It is necessary to properly frame the debate about Joint Seabasing by using a systems perspective. This provides a thorough approach to consider the strategic mobility system and its component systems. It also allows concept developers to identify vulnerabilities that are generated from an overemphasis in certain areas at the detriment to others. The key word in Joint Integrating Concept is "Integrating". All component parts of the global mobility system must be functional in order for the JSB system to function as promised. The interoperability of each component system must be considered. Are the systems being funded to mature and to function properly as part of a system? If a system is delayed or under-funded, then are there gaps in the system? A systems perspective is intended to provide a framework where all elements of the strategic mobility system are considered at once, without leaving anything out.

The debate about JSB must begin with the Seabasing Joint Integrating Concept as the baseline source for discussion and experimentation. As noted by observations made in an after action review from *Unified Quest '05*, confusion existed among exercise participants who were to include Joint Seabasing concepts in their courses of actions. Because of misunderstanding about what JSB is, policies and definitions must be clarified so that each service concept complements the joint concept. [67] The JIC thoroughly describes the concept and provides a framework for employing JSB within the context of a campaign plan and permits the Services to continue socializing the concept.

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[66] U.S. Department of Defense, *Major Combat Operations Joint Operating Concept*, (Washington, D.C.: September 2004), 7.

[67] U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, *Unified Quest 2005 War Game After Action Report*, (Quantico), 11.

It is necessary to continue the debate about JSB. Much of the current dialogue consists of the advantages of a JSB capability. What is really needed is more dissenting views about the JSB instead of stirring promises of assured success through technological superiority. As mentioned earlier, this debate must consider the strategic mobility system with a holistic perspective. Advances in one element of the deployment model lead to marginal overall gains and are short-sighted. The debate must also consider the geo-political ramifications of possessing such a capability. A new capability cannot be developed in absence of the geo-political environment in which it will operate, inadvertently creating a security dilemma condition for rival countries.

Each service must continue to explore JSB's potential for operations from their perspective. Because the concept is still indeterminate, each service has an opportunity to include its requirements into the continued framing of the physical end state capabilities. JSB has a remarkable potential as a deployment option for full spectrum operations. JFCs and planners must understand the concept's capabilities and limitations and join the dialogue in finding creative joint solutions to deployment problems.

The initial debate over Joint Seabasing must not be allowed to become a debate over resources. [68] The joint community must not abandon the JSB discussion on the grounds that it is too expensive or too technologically challenging in exchange for limited gains in capability. Including the concept in future joint exercises, actual training events, and in the conduct of limited scale combat operations is essential.

The other aspect of funding is that the Services are now faced with present requirements to build and sustain the force, which can discourage investing in a future capability. First, the Marine Corps will grow an additional 27,000 active-duty Marines and the Army will grow 65,000 active-duty Soldiers by 2011. The Marine estimate to grow the force to meet the 2011 goal, which consists of enlisting 5,000 new Marines each year, will require an additional $5 billion annually

[68] Hone, *Office of Force Transformation Newsletter,* 6.

to cover the costs of training, additional barracks, and personnel costs. Secondly, the Services are seeking an additional $13.7 billion for repairing war-damaged equipment and buying upgraded equipment with enhanced force protection qualities. [69]

Because JSB will be a joint capability, all services must be able to operate from the JSB platform. This is especially important in terms of common logistics items, which Joint Vision 2020 emphasizes the mandate for interoperability. [70] Not only must supplies be configured to be shipped and handled by all services, but common equipment is necessary for common consumption of repair parts and fuel. Common equipment is also necessary to move towards achieving service-immaterial prepositioned stocks. JSB must be an option for all service Special Operations Forces, interagency personnel, or other governmental agencies to consider as a staging platform in environments that demands a small footprint ashore or where there is low tolerance for public U.S. presence.

Despite the significant positive writings about the JSB concept, there is a need for constant Red Team analysis to determine potential vulnerabilities, shortcomings and incorrect assumptions. Only a party that is not emotionally tied to the concept as a means of maintaining future relevancy or seeking an additional funding source can be expected of providing honest feedback. The Defense Science Board Task Force on Seabasing points out that the U.S. has not conducted a major forcible entry operation from the sea since the Inchon landing. Continual testing of the JSB concept against realistic Red Team opposition will ensure that concept and technology development remain relevant to the operating environment. This is particularly significant considering that the Marine Corps deployment cycle to Iraq and Afghanistan has

[69] James T. Conway, "Shock Troops," Interview by Greg Grant, *Government Executive*, (1 March 2007); available from http://www.govexec.com/features/0307-01/0307-01s1.htm; Internet; accessed 25 March 2007.

[70] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020*, (Washington, D.C.); available from http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/jvpub2.htm; Internet; accessed 25 October 2006; 15.

created a great counterinsurgency force but has dwindled away training time for sharpening amphibious assault tasks. [71]

The U.S. must emphasize the need to develop international relationships for long-term engagement. The U.S. military accomplishes this in its investment of time and money towards theater security cooperation (TSC) plans. These TSCs must be synchronized among the Geographic Combatant Commanders, prioritized at the national level, and resourced with money and troops. Synchronization between COCOMs ensure that initiatives do not fall between the seams of GCCs.

Unfortunately, the JSB may contradict certain guidance. Developing a JSB capability says that the U.S. is willing to go it alone, thus not enhancing allied relationships; contradicting the goal of the CNO's *1,000 Ship Navy*. Also, this capability assumes that there will be severely limited access to foreign ports, but the NDS states that the U.S. will establish main operating bases, forward operating sites, and cooperative security locations world-wide. An endeavor such as this requires maintaining long-term relationships with the international community. Relationships with partners are a risky approach, but can lead to the U.S. as being recognized as a coalition builder rather than a unilateral actor.

Finally, it is necessary to continue seeking advancements in strategic lift. Recognizing that strategic lift is a component system of the strategic mobility system, the advantages of the JSB cannot be realized until equipment, people, and supplies can travel to the JSB faster than current speeds. This is a very relevant problem for the Army which is chartered to fight and win the nation's wars by conducting sustained land combat. The Army must increasingly be able to get to the fight faster, but does not control the strategic lift assets or the money for the research or procurement of those assets.

[71] Conway, "Shock Troops".

The Joint Seabase has potential as a both a physical platform to project joint power from the sea and as a concept for conducting maneuver from strategic distances. This monograph hopes that the debate over its future leads to improvements in the overall strategic mobility system and an intellectual dialogue over force deployment. The nation's joint force is increasingly CONUS-based so efficient and effective force deployment is critical to national security and serving vital national interests world-wide. A Joint Seabase may not be what the Joint Force should build from scratch; however, it could represent a more effective employment of the existing force.

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