

6 June 2018

SUBJECT: Joint Combined Australian and American Amphibious Operations Executive Summary (EXSUM)

1. Purpose: Conduct a wargame to assess the capabilities and limitations with regards to combined United States Marine Corps (USMC), United States Navy (USN), and Australian Defense Force (ADF) littoral operations in a contested environment (LOCE). The sponsor specifically requested examining interoperability of U.S. Marines from a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) amphibious platform during phase 0 (shaping) operations.

2. Background:

a. Interoperability refers to the ability of different national military organizations to conduct combined operations. This operational concept represents a measure of the degree to which various organizations can operate together to achieve a common objective.

b. This team designed a scenario to explore the interoperability of a task organized ADF Amphibious Ready Element (ARE) augmented with U.S. Marines focused on conducting a Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO). The scenario assesses the impact various assets and captures complexities associated with interoperability.

c. While the findings do not apply globally given the size of the force structure employed, the locale and scenario, they provide the insight necessary to recommend further exploration of critical issues in more intricate and classified wargames.

3. Study Methods:

a. The Data Collection and Management Plan (DCMP) focused collecting data from Socratic discussions and operational planning teams focused on the following key issues:

1) Interoperability of Marines from RAN amphibious platforms.

2) Logistical support for USMC aboard RAN platforms, specifically tailored to planning and execution of small scale NEO.

3) Construct of command and control for joint combined US/ADF operations.

4) Identification of key enablers and points of friction and their impact on combined operations in support of LOCE.

4. Key Findings:

a. Identified a combined US/ADF force structure that integrated a USMC infantry company and MV-22 aviation detachment into an ADF Ground Combat Element to support a NEO mission in the SCS.

b. Identified planning and command and staff augmentation requirements necessary for the effective integration of the USMC ground and aviation forces.

c. Verified that logistics support of a USMC infantry company is feasible with ADF shipboard logistics but the ACE detachment would need to provide their own logistics support personnel and equipment.

d. In the previously identified combined force structure, organic fire support is available.

e. Intelligence products can be shared post-analysis between forces.

f. Identified key enablers required to support the NEO operation utilizing the specified combined USMC and ADF force structure.

5. Areas for Further Analysis:

a. Combined Loading Exercises and Certification Exercises between Marine Rotational Forces Darwin and the ARE would generate data to allow a more in-depth analysis of specific interoperability requirements.

b. Both countries must collectively partner to maintain this data and develop the tools necessary to plan specific missions.

c. Examining a combined operations where the ADF augments a U.S. ARG/MEU would highlight additional interoperability requirements as the force constructs and operational concepts each country uses to conduct amphibious operations are significantly different.

6. Conclusion: Integration of ADF and U.S. forces provides an opportunity to enhance the relationship between the two nations and an opportunity to become familiar with each organizations' unique capabilities. The successful conduct of combined operations requires further analysis and the development and maintenance of lasting tools and relationships. This wargame highlighted, from a broad level, both the challenges and opportunities that combined operations present. Specifically, the feasibility of future combined operations still requires further analysis pertaining to logistic supportability, embarkation and communications networks.

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