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POSITION PAPER

Subj: JOINT FORCIBLE ENTRY OPERATIONS (JFEO) IN THE AGE OF ANTI-ACCESS/AREA DENIAL (A2/AD)

- Ref: (a) Heinl, Robert D. "The Inchon Landing: A Case Study in Amphibious Planning." *The Naval War College Review* (Vol. 51, No. 2: Spring 1998).  
(b) Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. "38<sup>th</sup> Commandant's Planning Guidance."  
(c) Joint Chiefs of Staff. "JP 3-18: Joint Forcible Entry Operations."  
(d) Smeets, Max. "The Strategic Promise of Offensive Cyber Operations." *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Fall 2018).  
(e) Ou, Si-Fu. "China's A2AD and its Geographic Perspective." *Asia Pacific Research Forum* (2014).

1. Problem. As A2/AD technology and strategic goals have evolved, the ability to conduct JFEO is in question.

2. Recommended Position. In today's environment of great power competition, JFEO is an irrelevant capability that is unlikely to be employed. The financial burden of maintaining a credible JFEO capability would be better utilized elsewhere.

3. Opposing Viewpoints. Those concerned with the existential future of the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) may tout the deterrent advantages inherent in maintaining a JFEO capability, citing examples of its efficacy in previous conflicts—to include World War II and the Korean War, per ref (a).

4. Rationale. The USMC has built a legacy of successful JFEOs, which include the island-hopping campaign of WW II as well as the successful operations in the Korean War, Grenada, and beyond. However, those successful operations did not include the exquisite A2/AD challenges faced by modern combatant forces. Concurrently, the revolutionary offensive capabilities resident in the cyber, air, surface, and subsurface domains have far outpaced JFEO capabilities. These developments have led even the most historically vocal JFEO proponent, the USMC, to undergo a strategic shift away from JFEO and towards a new identity as a force supporting the joint naval campaign in a great power conflict, as seen in ref (b).

The doctrinal goal of JFEO, as stated in ref (c), is to seize a lodgment to provide maneuver space for subsequent operations. While this may have been a logical first step to previous campaigns, technological advancements have negated the necessity of seizing territory to conduct operations further inland. For example, ref (d) outlines the fact that offensive cyber operations have the potential to impact a great power adversary in ways that kinetic conflict cannot, and could bring that adversary to the negotiating table faster and with less bloodshed than would result from a JFEO.

Additionally, the operational obstacles to conducting a JFEO in today's evolving A2/AD environments against a great power adversary merit consideration. The enduring JFEO model involves a large force, amphibious or otherwise, approaching a country and launching an assault

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to seize a lodgment. Considering modern facets of warfare, including signature detection, space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), as well as the layered kinetic A2/AD capabilities possessed by the United States' likely adversaries, it is incredibly unlikely that our military would be able to successfully undertake such an operation, per ref (e).

Although proponents of JFEO may cite previous examples of its efficacy, to include successful operations in WW II and Korea, those operations did not have to counter the exquisite A2/AD capabilities that exist today. Additionally, JFEO campaigns to seize territory were likely among the only options available to military planners at the time. Today's environment offers multiple alternatives, including offensive cyber operations, that do not result in bloodshed and have the potential to be just as effective as a JFEO. The strategic pivot of the USMC towards supporting joint campaigns outside of JFEO should serve as a bellwether for the direction the Department of Defense (DoD) should pursue for the development of future warfighting concepts.

5. Recommendation. Despite the historical significance of JFEO within the DoD, the Joint Force should develop future warfighting concepts that negate the need to conduct JFEOs. Divestment of this capability will result in cost savings that can be applied elsewhere to ensure victory in a future conflict.

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