

POSITION PAPER

Subj: THE FUTURE OF JOINT FORCIBLE ENTRY OPERATIONS

Ref: (a) Joint Concept for Entry Operations
(b) CSIS Missile Defense Project

1. Problem. Technological improvements capable of denying access to or freedom of maneuver in an area of operations make Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO) increasingly more complex while involving a greater level of risk.

2. Recommended Position. The Joint Force must maintain the capability to conduct JFEO as a core competence. Abandoning JFEO capabilities severely limits the United States' capacity to project power while also restricting U.S. decision maker's options for employing military force.

3. Opposing Viewpoints. Opponents of JFEO argue that U.S. adversaries have developed Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities which render it irrelevant. This viewpoint contends that these defensive capabilities, specifically improvements to long-range anti-ship missiles and integrated air defense, increase the risk of forceable entry to an unacceptable level.

While this viewpoint accurately depicts current defensive capabilities, its fundamental premise is ultimately flawed. It hypothesizes highly technical and expensive A2AD capabilities will proliferate to all our adversaries and the threats posed by these systems cannot be mitigated through doctrinal and technological advances. Further scrutiny demonstrates both these assumptions false.

4. Rationale. While some U.S. adversaries have acquired A2/AD weapon systems, very few employ an integrated and robust enough system to mount a successful defense against a U.S. conducted JFEO. Due to the cost, expertise, and risk associated with these types of capabilities, most nations can ill afford to acquire a system vigorous enough to counter U.S. strategic advantages. Furthermore, only China and Saudi Arabia possess hypersonic Anti-ship ballistic missiles capable of sinking a U.S. Supercarrier thereby posing a threat to JFEO from the sea. Ultimately, forcible entry operations remain a viable and risk-appropriate option for the U.S. military in most locations in the world.

Additionally, assumptions that A2/AD systems render JFEO irrelevant are short-sighted and fail to draw appropriate lessons from history. Time and again, leaps in military innovation can weight the advantage toward a particular form of maneuver, but this type of dominance never lasts. The unrelenting progress of technological advancement will result in a counter to these capabilities. The resulting shift of momentum back to the offense must be anticipated and harnessed through forethought and preparation.

Lastly, forceable entry capability bolsters the U.S. military's credibility amongst its allies and serves as a genuine deterrent to its adversaries. The ability to rapidly project power is a key tenant of American military power that must be maintained. Moreover, JFEO capability compels adversaries to develop force structure and technologies to counter this threat – diffusing defense budget spending and priorities. Abandoning this capability emboldens U.S. adversaries and

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allows them to further develop other capabilities in greater capacity. A reduction in this capability may also signal a reduction in commitment to our allies, and precipitate negative diplomatic effects.

5. Recommendation. The Joint Force must adopt both a short-term and long-term approach to JFEO. In the short term, the military must retain the structure and core competencies required to conduct large scale JFEO. It must further develop and refine current tactics, techniques, and procedures to integrate emerging capabilities into the Joint Force concept. Additionally, it must seek ways to conduct operations through disaggregating and dispersing military forces which complicate enemy targeting solutions and disrupts their kill chain process.

In the long term, the Joint force must develop new force structure and technologies that overcome adversary advantages from A2/AD systems. Foremost must be the priority to gain and maintain air and maritime superiority which enables the time and space required to conduct these types of operations. This is critically important to JFEO as contested local superiority in either domain can significantly complicate operations. Concurrently, the Joint Force must retain unlimited access to the space, information, and cyber domains during these operations to provide maximum options.

Simultaneously, the Navy-Marine team must also transform to better confront maritime A2/AD threats. U.S. Navy ships must be fitted with either kinetic or non-kinetic defensive systems capable of countering hypersonic anti-ship missiles. The Marine Corps must develop a more robust long-haul ship to shore connector capability that takes advantage of the air, surface, and subsurface. Additionally, it must develop methods to disperse multiple small forces that can rapidly aggregate effects onto single objectives. This precipitates improvements and additions to small unit capabilities including assets for UAS, intelligence, communications, and fires.

Furthermore, the Joint Force must reimagine its air deployable forces. Currently too light and dependent on vulnerable lift, the concept for the Army's airborne division must shift. Airborne forces must find methods of delivery that bypass enemy air defense systems to penetrate deep into adversary territory while gaining increased speed and mobility capabilities to rapidly close on an objective. These forces must be light, rapidly deployable, and maintain the lethal and non-lethal armaments that address emerging hybrid threat adversaries.

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