Marine Corps Strategy 21

"For the strength
of the Corps
is the Marine
and the strength
of the Marine
is the Corps."
-Gen J.L.Jones
Commandant's Guidance
July 1999

Department of the Navy
Headquarters United States Marine Corps
Washington, D.C. 20380-1775

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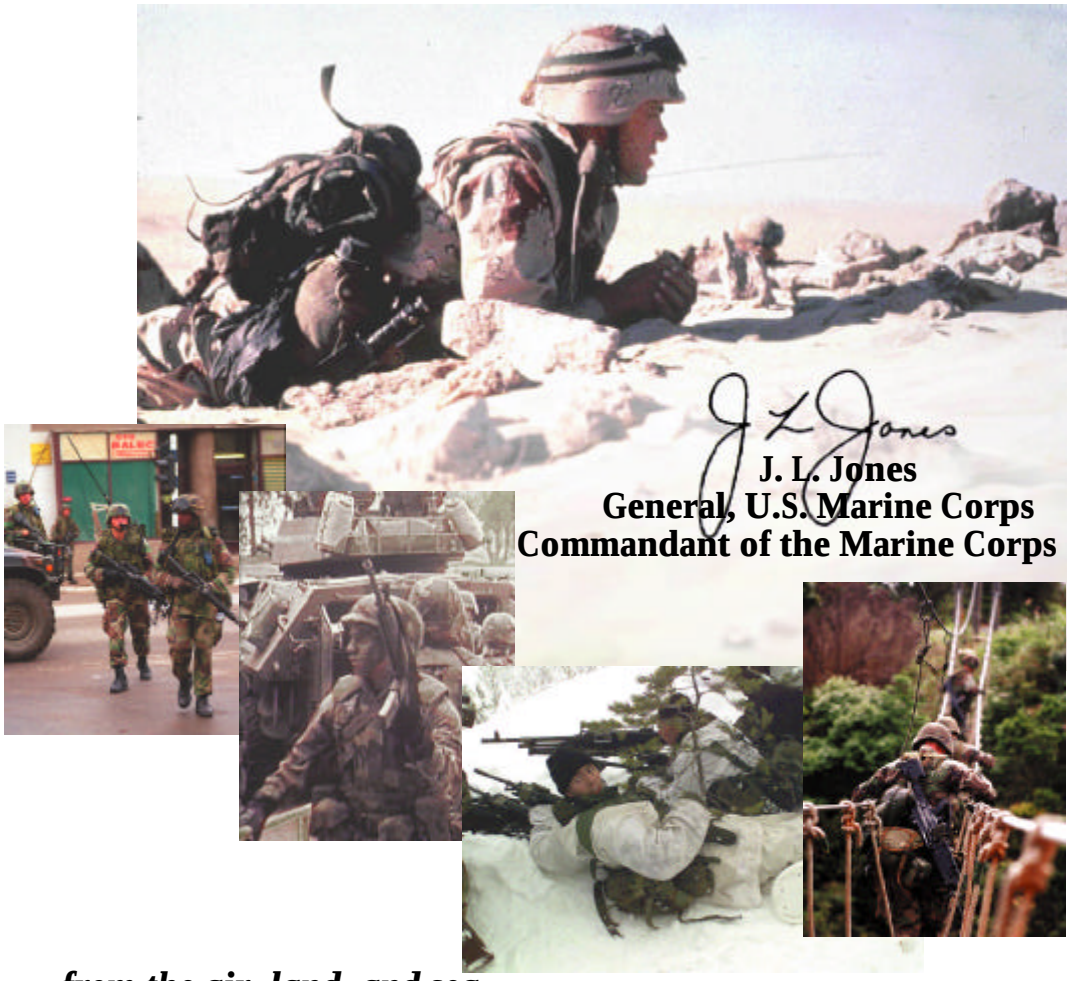
Marine Corps Strategy 21 is our axis of advance into the 21st century and focuses our efforts and resources toward a common objective. It is by design a broad axis, that will adapt to changes in the strategic environment. This strategy enables the Marine Corps to build upon its foundations of heritage, innovation, and excellence to move beyond the objective and succeed on tomorrow's battlefields.

Marine Corps Strategy 21 provides the vision, goals, and aims to support the development of future combat capabilities. It provides our strategic guidance to the active and reserve Marines, sailors, and civilian personnel who will *make America's Marines, win our Nation's battles, and create quality citizens* by optimizing the Corps' operating forces, support and sustainment base, and unique capabilities; and capitalizing on innovation, experimentation, and technology.



J. L. Jones
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

. . . from the air, land, and sea
and in every clime and place!

VISION

America's Marines stand ready to answer the call in the 21st century.

As the premier expeditionary "Total Force in Readiness," the Marine Corps will be tailored to answer the Nation's call, at home or abroad.

Opportunities and challenges in the world's littoral regions will increase America's reliance on the continuous forward presence and sustainable maritime power projection of Naval expeditionary forces. Those forces will promote national interests, influence vital regions, and fight and win the Nation's battles.

The Marine Corps will enhance its strategic agility, operational reach, and tactical flexibility to enable joint, allied, and coalition operations and interagency coordination. These capabilities will provide the geographic combatant commanders with scalable, interoperable, combined-arms Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) to shape the international environment, respond quickly to the complex spectrum of crises and conflicts, and gain access or prosecute forcible entry operations.

Fundamental to this vision, we will—

- Make America's Marines to win the Nation's battles and create quality citizens.
- Optimize the Corps' operating forces, support and sustainment base, and unique capabilities.
- Sustain our enduring relationship with the U.S. Navy.
- Reinforce our strategic partnerships with our sister Services.
- Contribute to the development of joint, allied, coalition, and interagency capabilities.
- Capitalize on innovation, experimentation, and technology.

As we have since 1775, the Marine Corps will stand ready to promote peace and stability and to defeat our Nation's foes.

Our Vision Builds on Our Core Values, Core Competencies, and Signature Characteristics

CORE VALUES

HONOR

CORE VALUES

COURAGE

CORE VALUES

COMMITMENT

CORE VALUES

Core Competencies

Ready to Fight and Win
Every Marine and Marine unit is ready to rapidly task organize, deploy, and employ from CONUS or while forward-deployed to respond and contain crises or, if necessary, to immediately engage in sustained combat operations.

Expeditionary Culture
Marines are prepared to deploy into diverse, austere, and chaotic environments on short notice and accomplish assigned missions using our unique command, control, and logistic capabilities to operate independently of existing infrastructure. These unique capabilities allow Marine units to enable joint, allied, coalition operations, and inter-agency coordination.

Combined-Arms Operations
Marines fight as air-ground task forces—integrated organizations of air, ground, and logistic forces under a single commander. The MAGTF commander fights a single battle that unites and enhances the capabilities of his force, whose whole is exponentially greater than the sum of its parts.

Task Organized
MAGTFs provide combatant commanders with forces that are tailored to meet specific mission requirements from forward presence and peacetime engagement to sustained operations ashore in a major theater war. Every MAGTF is a scalable force, possessing the ability for today's fight and to rapidly reconfigure based on a changing situation to provide the right force for the next fight.

Reserve Integration Expertise
Ready, rapidly responsive Marine Reserve forces are a vital part of the Marine Corps and provide depth, flexibility, and sustainment. They are fully integrated into the active forces for mission accomplishment across the complex spectrum of crises and conflicts.

Forcible Entry From the Sea
Together, the Navy and Marine Corps provide the Nation with its primary capability to project and sustain power ashore in the face of armed opposition. Amphibious forces reinforced, if required, by maritime prepositioning forces allow the United States global access to protect our interests and reassure allies that we have the ability to come to their aid.

Marines are Naval in Character
In customs, traditions, and language, the Marine Corps' heritage and future are tied closely to the Navy. We are equally at home ashore or afloat, in combat, or in other expeditionary operations.

Joint Competency
Whether first-on-the scene, part of, or leading a joint or multinational force, Marines instinctively understand the logic and synergy behind joint and multinational operations. Based on our experience operating as combined-arms, multidimensional MAGTFs, Marines seamlessly integrate into and operate as part of a joint or multinational force.

Signature Characteristics of Our Vision

The Nation's Premier Expeditionary "Total Force in Readiness"

Capable of a Multitude of Missions Across the Spectrum of Conflict

Shall Perform Such Other Duties as the President May Direct

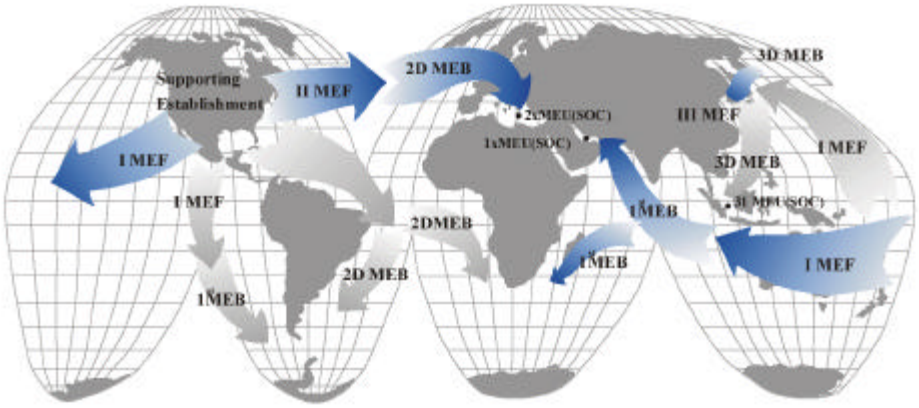
Scalable to Meet Combatant Commanders' Requirements

Enable Joint, Allied, and Coalition Operations

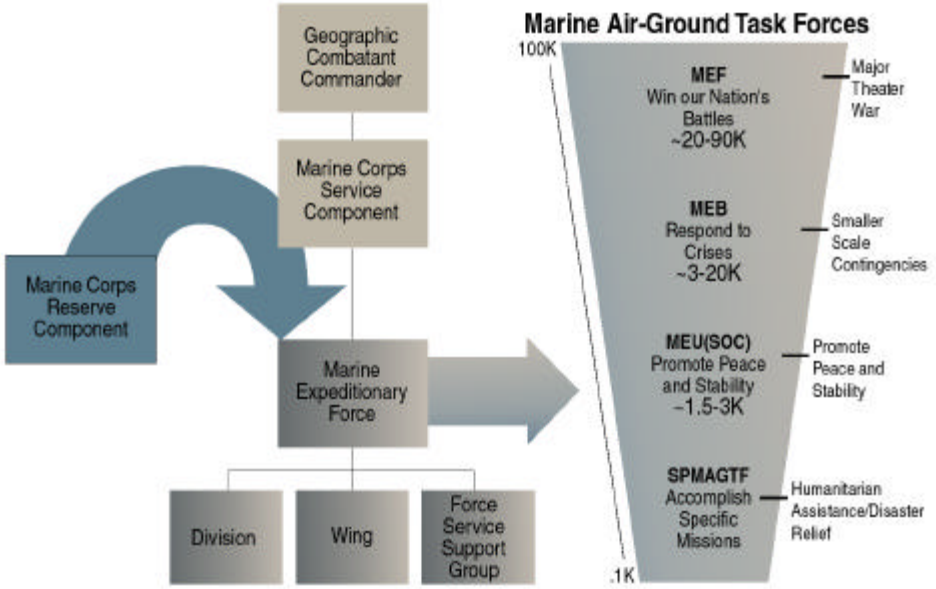
THE PREMIER EXPEDITIONARY "TOTAL FORCE IN READINESS"

SCALABLE MARINE FORCES: MEF TO MEB TO MEU(SOC)

Throughout our Nation's history, Marines have responded to national and international brushfires and crises and, when necessary, war. The Marine Corps operates as Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs), integrated, combined-arms forces that include air, ground, and combat service support units under a single commander. MAGTFs are organized, trained, and equipped from the operating forces assigned to Marine Corps Forces, Pacific; Marine Corps Forces, Atlantic; and Marine Corps Forces, Reserve. The Commanders of Marine Corps Forces Pacific and Atlantic provide geographical combatant commanders with scalable MAGTFs that possess the unique ability to project mobile, reinforceable, sustainable combat power across the spectrum of conflict. Marine Corps Forces, Reserve provides ready and responsive Marines and Marine Forces who are integrated into MAGTFs for mission accomplishment.



Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) are task-organized to fight and win our Nation's battles in conflicts up to and including a major theater war. **Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs)** are task-organized to respond to a full range of crises, from forcible entry to humanitarian assistance. They are our premier response force for smaller-scale contingencies that are so prevalent in today's security environment. **Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) (MEU[SOC]s)** are task-organized to provide a forward deployed presence to promote peace and stability and are designed to be the Marine Corps' first-on-the-scene force. **Special Purpose MAGTFs (SPMAGTFs)** are task-organized to accomplish specific missions, including humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, peacetime engagement activities, or regionally-focused exercises. **MAGTFs**, along with other Marine Corps unique forces, such as Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Teams (FASTs) and the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF), represent a continuum of response capabilities tethered to national, CINC, and naval requirements. Whether coming from amphibious ships, marrying up with maritime prepositioning ships, arriving via strategic airlift, responding to terrorist attacks, or handling calls for consequence management, they provide a scalable and potent response.



Forward-deployed MEUs serve as advance echelons of MEBs, which in turn serve as advance echelons of MEFs.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As the Nation's premier expeditionary total force in readiness, we are prepared to operate anywhere our national interests require. Our operating forces respond across the spectrum of conflict in the littorals and, as part of a joint force, in the execution of sustained land operations. Because the Navy-Marine Corps team operates from the sea, we are less encumbered by the political constraints often encountered by forces tied to land-based infrastructure. The only invitation we require to move to a crisis area is a request from the geographic combatant commander and an order from the National Command Authorities. Amphibious and maritime prepositioning forces play an ever-increasing role in supporting the attainment of our national objectives while protecting our national interests. As our operational reach increases so do the depth and degree to which we can influence events ashore. Whether supporting stability through forward presence and engagement, reducing human suffering due to natural or manmade disasters, or winning battles, our unique capabilities offer the Nation an unparalleled ability to seize opportunities and respond to challenges.

Opportunities and challenges lie ahead with the strategic environment shaping our future Corps. Marine Corps Strategy 21 *fosters an organization that is proactive and adaptable to take advantage of opportunities, overcome challenges, and prudently employ the men, women, and resources entrusted to us.*

ADVERSARIES

As we begin the 21st century, regional powers, rogue elements, and non-state actors will pose security challenges embracing conventional military and non-traditional capabilities. Regional and internal instability will create situations where ethnic, economic, social, and environmental stresses accentuate violence. Multiple belligerents and a blurring of the distinctions and national affiliations among terrorist groups, subnational factions, insurgent groups, and international criminals will complicate an environment where a direct attack is often the least likely course of action. As an expeditionary, task-organized, combined-arms force with superb small-unit leaders, we are prepared to promote peace and stability or, if required, defeat our Nation's adversaries whether they possess conventional or unconventional capabilities.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, TERRORIST ACTS, AND INFORMATION ATTACKS WILL EXACT AN INORDINATE PRICE FOR SMALL LAPSES IN THE PREPARATION OF THE BATTLESPACE.

THE MARINE CORPS OPERATES AS PART OF A LARGER JOINT FORCE

The Marine Corps is ideally suited for joint, allied, and coalition warfare. We are the only Service specifically tasked by Congress to operate as an integrated combined arms force providing a joint force enabler in three dimensions—air, land, and sea. With our experience in coordinating the multidimensional elements of our air-ground task forces and our close relationship with the Navy, Marines instinctively understand the need for, and the logic and synergy behind, joint and multinational operations.

Marine Corps Strategy 21 guides a Marine Corps capable of accomplishing its specified and implied tasks derived from the guidance in the National Security Strategy, the National Military Strategy, and other strategic documents. We provide the National Command Authorities and combatant commanders with Marine forces that promote peace and stability through forward presence and peacetime engagement, respond across the complex spectrum of crises, and, as part of or leading a joint or multinational force, defeat our Nation's adversaries.

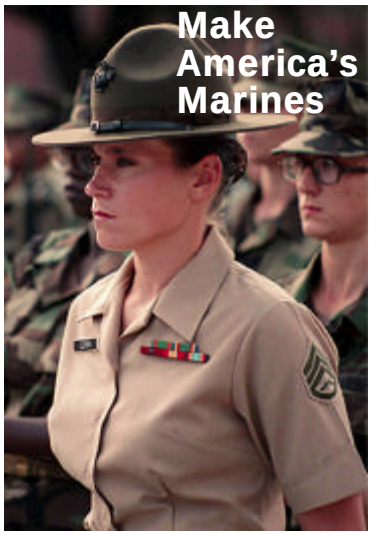
Marine Corps Strategy 21 also supports *Joint Vision 2020*, which builds upon and extends the conceptual template established by *Joint Vision 2010* to guide the continuing evolution of the Armed Forces. Marines must analyze and influence this evolution. U.S. Joint Forces Command, through training and experimentation, plays a vital role in this endeavor; and we will support, participate, and provide input to their efforts. We must capitalize on innovation, experimentation, and technology and contribute to the development and enhancement of joint capabilities. Our operational concept of *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* and other supporting documents provides the basis for a Marine Corps organized, trained, and equipped to conduct maneuver warfare in a joint and multinational environment within the complex spectrum of 21st century conflict.

MAKING AMERICA'S MARINES, WINNING OUR NATION'S BATTLES, AND CREATING QUALITY CITIZENS

MARINE CORPS GOALS AND AIMS

The Marine Corps has three major *goals* to realize our vision. Associated with each of these goals are a number of *aims* that focus efforts toward achieving our goals. Our goals and aims are founded on our philosophy of maneuver warfare—they state desired "ends" and a direction without stating "ways" or "how" we intend to get there. The supporting documents to the *Marine Corps Strategy 21* address the "how."

To achieve our vision, it is imperative that *all Marines* understand the roles their commands or organizations are to play and that *each Marine's* contribution is fundamental to achieving the Corps' goals and aims.



Our *goal* is to make America's Marines who comprise the premier expeditionary "Total Force in Readiness."
Our *aims* are to—

- Recruit, develop, organize, and sustain a quality Total Force with the proper mix of educated and trained active and reserve Marines and civilian personnel.
- Create a dynamic training and education system that prepares Marines and Marine Forces to succeed in the chaotic environment of the littorals.
- Make every Marine a rifleman.
- Strengthen trust, reward performance, accept mistakes and learn from them, enhance retention, and develop the full potential of our Marines and civilian work force.
- Upgrade the quality of service and life for our Marines, their families, and our civilian employees.
- Cultivate the best possible environment for training and ensure long-term access to U.S. and overseas training areas that provide capability for air, land, and sea maneuver, and seek to influence access to these types of training areas wherever Marine forces are stationed or deployed.
- Strengthen and exercise integrated active and reserve training plans to enhance Total Force mobilization readiness.
- Create a distributed planning, training, and rehearsal capability for the MAGTF at the tactical and operational levels of war to include enhanced amphibious capability.
- Expand our participation in science and technology developments to enhance the capabilities of the Total Force.
- Make America's Marines who remain quality citizens imbued with our core values of *honor*, *courage*, and *commitment*.

"To prevail on the complex battlefields of the future, Sailors and Marines will require judgment, strength of character, and the ability to make sound, timely, independent decisions."
—Department of the Navy Posture Statement 2000

Optimize

Our *goal* is to optimize the Corps' operating forces, support and sustainment base, and unique capabilities to respond to the complex spectrum of crises and conflicts. Our *aims* are to—

- Provide combatant commanders with scalable, sustainable, interoperable, expeditionary, combined-arms MAGTFs—ready to fight and win America's battles—and shape the international security environment across the complex spectrum of crises and conflict.
- Enhance Marine Corps service component, functional component, and joint task force headquarters command and control capabilities to ensure procedural and equipment interoperability with joint, allied, and coalition forces and interagency organizations.
- Enhance strategic response and operational reach to support and enable joint, allied, and coalition operations and interagency coordination.
- Increase integration and interoperability with allied and coalition amphibious, land, and air forces.
- Enhance the MAGTF's interoperability with joint and multinational forces through an efficient command and control system combined with a seamless, organic intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability linked to national and theater agencies.
- Expand capabilities to observe, visualize, and shape the operational area and to attack enemy critical vulnerabilities leading to the defeat of the enemy's operational and tactical centers of gravity.
- Enhance responsive, integrated, and balanced expeditionary fires leveraging improvements to organic surveillance, target acquisition, aviation, and indirect fires; naval fire support and joint fires.
- Enhance capabilities to operate in urban and austere environments across the spectrum of conflict while simultaneously further reducing our dependence on existing infrastructure.
- Enhance and expand offensive and defensive information operations capabilities.
- Provide DoD a fully integrated and coordinated Non-Lethal Weapons Program based upon flexible and selective engagement capabilities.

"[A] Naval expeditionary force, that while deployed unobtrusively in international waters, is instantly ready to help any friend, defeat any foe, and convince any potential enemy of the wisdom of keeping the peace."
—Operational Maneuver From the Sea

Capitalize

Our *goal* is to capitalize on innovation, experimentation, and technology to prepare Marine Forces to succeed in the 21st century. Our *aims* are to—

- Evolve maneuver warfare tactics, techniques, and procedures to fully exploit the joint operational concepts articulated in *Joint Vision 2020*.
- Evolve our warfighting concepts to enhance our ability to participate as partners in joint and allied concept development and experimentation.
- Incorporate 21st century operational-level amphibious, maritime prepositioning, aviation, and land mobility, maneuver, and sustainment capabilities into the operating forces.
- Ensure access to the littorals through evolving expeditionary operations (to include mine and obstacle countermeasures, naval surface fires, etc.), maritime prepositioning, national sealift, high-speed troop lift, and naval aviation capabilities.
- Provide expeditionary-based or -sited assets and forces capable of reinforcing and sustaining Naval expeditionary forces in all phases of their operations.
- Network operational communications, information, and intelligence systems with joint and allied forces and provide a global access capability to domestic and international information resources.
- Enhance experimentation to include ways to accomplish acquisition, logistic, and support tasks through technological innovations, outsourcing, and other techniques.
- Provide rapid and precise distribution of tailored expeditionary logistics to the operating forces in any operational environment.
- Tailor our supporting establishment by enhancements to training and education, inventory management, engineering, maintenance, and infrastructure.
- Assess strategy-driven force structure alternatives.

"Additionally, given, the global nature of our interests and obligations, the United States must maintain its overseas presence forces and the ability to rapidly project power worldwide in order to achieve full spectrum dominance."
—Joint Vision 2020

Marine Corps Strategy 21 is the capstone strategy of the Marine Corps and describes our axis of advance into the 21st century.

Drawn from the strategic guidance contained in the *National Security Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*, *Joint Vision 2020*, and *Forward . . . From the Sea* and crafted from the Marine Corps' Vision and the philosophy contained in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting*, *Marine Corps Strategy 21* provides the framework necessary to forge our future Corps. Building upon our heritage of operational excellence, this document describes how the Marine Corps will evolve, grow, and transition for the future. The Marine Corps' Vision and *Marine Corps Strategy 21* provide the basis for our warfighting concepts and guides the process of innovation, experimentation, change, and adaptation to ensure the Corps is the most ready when the Nation is the least ready.

As we have since 1775, the **Marine Corps** will stand **ready** to promote peace and stability and **to defeat our Nation's foes.**