

# Leaner Marine Corps Faces Meaner Global Challenge

*Victory will hinge on "911" response teams armed with timely, accurate intelligence.*

By Robert D. Steele

A premium is being placed on small, powerful, highly mobile Marine Corps teams that are prepared to strike within a matter of hours at crises as they develop around the world. U.S. Navy/Marine units are being equipped to handle everything from bomb-wielding terrorists to foes armed with, and prepared to use, nuclear weapons.

At least five nations—including South Africa and India—possess nuclear devices within the Marine Corps global area of operations, senior Marine officials contend.

The Corps is developing an infrastructure to reinforce these mobile reaction units in rapid order, these officials say.

Planning also is taking into account potential foes who possess state-of-the-art weaponry and related systems that are proliferating in the Third World. Weapons sources include the Commonwealth of Independent States, Western Europe and major arms suppliers in Asia and elsewhere.

The Marine Corps also is paying attention to geography and the envi-

ronment. Up-to-date maps and precision location data are critical ingredients to modern weapons systems and small unit operations. Recent studies conducted for the Marine Corps demonstrate that a decided vacuum exists in this area—especially in those countries that are within the Marine Corps' area of responsibility.

In what appears to be an extended period of low-intensity conflict, the Marine Corps also must focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The Corps currently does not have enough engineering, attached medical, military police and foreign area specialists in the base force structure, officials agree.

## **Thinking Small**

The Marine Corps also needs smaller, less expensive platforms and systems of every kind to resolve the smaller scale conflicts anticipated during the remainder of this decade. Some officials believe that platoon-size operations will be the norm. Over-the-horizon lift, over-the-horizon fire support and a much more robust command, control, communications, computers and intelligence architecture is necessary to support dispersed forces engaged in joint and combined operations.

If expeditionary forces are to provide "911" emergency services for U.S. citizens and installations around the globe, then the Marine Corps requires a global fleet of modest sea-based rescue teams able to move quickly, to hit hard, to heal the innocent, to leave no logistics structure and to complete the job, officials say.

The expeditionary environment comprises those countries where the Marine Corps believes a high probability of employment exists. It differs from the traditional environment addressed by conventional force planners because it is almost totally oriented toward Third World countries and peacetime engagement roles and missions for which the Navy-Marine Corps team particularly is well suited. The environment is a dynamic one with elements easily placed in order of priority.

Plans for training, equipping and organizing expeditionary forces for operations in such an environment require consideration of three aspects: the threat, the physical environment, or operational geography, and logistics factors.

The threat is not limited to the ground, air and naval orders of battle. Force commanders also must be aware of the degree to which existing conflicts are present, and whether drug trafficking, terrorism or gray arms/technology transfer are factors in the area of their operations.



*Over-the-horizon insertions will provide a critical assist to resolving terrorist activity and disorders that threaten U.S. embassies.*