

2017

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Steven Paget

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Recommended Citation

Paget, Steven (2017) "Coming Full Circle - The Renaissance of Anzac Amphibiosity," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 70 : No. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol70/iss2/6>

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COMING FULL CIRCLE

The Renaissance of Anzac Amphibiosity

Steven Paget

Australia and New Zealand should look for opportunities to rebuild our historical capacity to integrate Australian and New Zealand force elements in the Anzac tradition.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, *DEFENDING AUSTRALIA IN THE ASIA PACIFIC CENTURY: FORCE 2030*

In 2010, Rod Lyon of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute wrote: “With the return of the more strategically-extroverted Kiwi, it is a good time for Australia and New Zealand to be putting more meat on the bones of their Closer Defence Relationship.”¹ Various areas of the “closer defence relations” between Australia and New Zealand are ripe for cooperative enhancement, but one of the most obvious is amphibious operations. Both nations have recognized that their amphibious forces provide a means to further jointness among national service branches, but the current international interest in amphibiosity means they are also a tool for effective engagement and for enhancing interoperability.²

Australia and New Zealand are in the unique position of developing their own amphibious capabilities concurrently, albeit with major differences in size and scope. The process seems particularly apt, given that the Anzac (originally, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) relationship was forged during the course of one of the most notorious amphibious operations in history. The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has expressly stated: “Since

Steven Paget is a senior fellow in strategy at the University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom. He also has taught at various institutions in Australia and New Zealand. His published research in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States focuses on multinational operations, interoperability, and professional military education.

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Naval War College Review, Spring 2017, Vol. 70, No. 2

fighting side by side as ‘ANZACs’ in the Gallipoli campaign of World War I, New Zealand and Australian defence forces have forged a close relationship.”³ While it would be easy to dismiss Gallipoli as an anachronism—which, in many ways, it is, in the context of amphibious operations—the reality is that a shared interest in the South Pacific and the close defense ties that Australia and

New Zealand maintain ensure that cooperation in the area of amphibiosity is extremely important.⁴

Since interoperability is a critical concern for the Australian amphibious force, the requirement to operate alongside the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) must be considered. As Australia is New Zealand's closest ally, the former's development of an amphibious force has been a source of great interest to the latter, especially given the NZDF's concurrent development of what was referred to originally as the Joint Amphibious Task Force (JATF), but now is known simply as the Joint Task Force (JTF). A number of measures have been enacted to facilitate the interoperability of the two amphibious forces, but there is room for further progress.

This article will consider the utility of amphibious capability in Australia and New Zealand's strategic environment and trace the development of both countries' forces, including the historical influences on Australian Defence Force (ADF) and NZDF planning. The achievement of interoperability between the ADF and the NZDF, as well as with other likely multinational partners, which has been developed through various means, will be assessed. Ultimately, the article will contend that, while the ADF and NZDF maintain a relatively high level of interoperability, further enhancements in the area of amphibious capability could be achieved through greater integration, specifically through emulating the model adopted by the United Kingdom / Netherlands Amphibious Force (UKNLAF).

THE REQUIREMENT FOR AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITY: THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The Australian government has established that the nation's primary operating environment "extends from the eastern Indian Ocean to the island states of Polynesia, and from the equator to the Southern Ocean."⁵ In their comprehensive and far-reaching assessment of Australia's approach to amphibious warfare, *Beyond 2017*, Ken Gleiman and Peter Dean noted that most of the population centers and strategic infrastructure in Australia's primary operating environment are situated within twenty-five kilometers of the coastline. Although just 5 percent (approximately) of that coastline can be used to unload large ships, 75 percent can be accessed by hovercraft and 95 percent can be used by small boats. Moreover, approximately 25 percent of the beaches can accommodate landing craft.⁶ In short, the ADF's primary operating environment is "maritime and archipelagic in nature" and, as a result, is tailor-made for amphibious operations.⁷

While Australia's primary operating environment is larger in scope than that of New Zealand, it is notable that their overlapping areas in the South Pacific are characterized by "complex riverine systems and archipelagos."⁸ When the assortment of unstable countries along the Pacific Rim and the potential for

natural disasters are considered, it is not hard to envision that Australia and New Zealand increasingly may be required to respond to events in the region. Indeed, Professor Paul Dibb of the Australian National University has observed that there is likely to be an ongoing requirement for “humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, capacity building and governance, potential peacekeeping operations, and military intervention” in the South Pacific.⁹ The 2016 Australian *Defence White Paper* acknowledged: “To help countries in our immediate neighbourhood respond to the challenges they face, Australia will continue to play an important regional leadership role. Our strategic weight, proximity, and resources place high expectations on us to respond to instability or natural disasters, and climate change means we will be called on to do so more often. We will continue to play that role in close collaboration with New Zealand, France, the United States, Japan, and other partners.”¹⁰

The necessary responses to these challenges are likely to require, at least in part, a commitment of an amphibious nature. Indeed, recent experience has borne out the utility of amphibious capability, in both domestic and regional contexts. Both Australia and New Zealand contributed to the Australian-led regional assistance mission in the Solomon Islands in 2003. After Australian forces had been deployed by landing craft and Sea King helicopters from the amphibious platform (LPA) Her Majesty’s Australian Ship (HMAS) *Manoora* (L 52), it was observed that the presence of the ship, in concert with land and air power, “signalled to criminals and law-abiding citizens alike that the intervention in the Solomon Islands was to be taken seriously.”¹¹ However, while Australia’s amphibious assets were sufficient for operations in the Solomon Islands, the ADF proved to be “significantly constrained in what it could offer” to relief operations in the Aceh region of Indonesia following the 2004 tsunami, largely “because of the limitations of the amphibious vessels at its disposal.”¹²

Just a year later, the utility of amphibious capability was demonstrated by operations in both East Timor and Fiji. Following tension between the Fijian military and the civilian government, the ADF deployed three vessels, including the LPA HMAS *Kanimbla* (L 51), for a potential permissive withdrawal of Australian citizens and approved foreign nationals as part of Operation QUICKSTEP. In the end, the successful coup proved to be bloodless, but QUICKSTEP “reinforced the potential benefits expected to accrue with the acquisition of more highly capable helicopter-carrying amphibious ships in the years ahead.”¹³ During Operation ASTUTE, which was designed to restore stability to East Timor, *Kanimbla* and *Manoora* formed part of an amphibious ready group (ARG) that managed to land an infantry battalion and supporting vehicles in three days, even without the use of Dili harbor.¹⁴

Closer to home, the significance of amphibious capability was demonstrated when Tropical Cyclone Yasi hit northern Queensland on February 3, 2011. Unfortunately, the heavy landing craft (LCH) HMAS *Tobruk* (L 50) was unavailable, as were *Kanimbla* and *Manoora*. Two *Balikpapan*-class heavy landing craft were available, but they lacked vital capabilities such as enhanced communications, hospital facilities, and helicopter support.¹⁵ Following the Christchurch earthquake in the same year, Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship (HMNZS) *Canterbury* (L 421), the sealift and amphibious support vessel of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), transported personnel, vehicles, fuel, generators, and stores across a range of supply voyages.¹⁶

Whether one views the South Pacific as an “arc of instability” or an “arc of opportunity,” it is clear that amphibious capability is inherently useful in that operating environment, as has been discussed repeatedly in Australian and New Zealand policy and strategy documents.¹⁷ In *Future 35: Our Strategy to 2035*, the NZDF asserted that the “JATF will be able to conduct a wide range of tasks and meet the key requirements expected of it in the Southwest Pacific.”¹⁸ Equally, the 2013 Australian *Defence White Paper* noted that the nation's amphibious force will be the “central plank” in Australia's “ability to conduct security and stabilisation missions in the region.”¹⁹

Amphibious forces also provide an inherently useful tool for regional engagement.²⁰ Australia and New Zealand both have contributed to Pacific Partnership, a U.S.-led humanitarian and civic assistance initiative that has been supported by Canada, France, Japan, and Malaysia as well. Tellingly, both nations have contributed amphibious assets to Pacific Partnership. In 2010, *Tobruk*, one of three deployed Royal Australian Navy (RAN) ships, served as the command vessel for Pacific Partnership.²¹ During the 2011 iteration, *Canterbury* served as the headquarters for Pacific Partnership and was assisted by HMAS *Betano* (L 133) and HMAS *Balikpapan* (L 126), which provided ship-to-shore logistic and personnel transport.²² In 2013, Australia took charge of the Papua New Guinea segment, with *Tobruk* taking the lead, while New Zealand later led the phases in the Republic of Kiribati and the Solomon Islands. *Canterbury* also served as the flagship for the Solomon Islands phase of the operation. During those phases, Australian and New Zealand personnel, as well as those from other nations, provided medical and dental care, conducted engineering and building projects, led community-engagement initiatives, and cleared remaining Second World War ordnance.²³ However, Pacific Partnership is just one opportunity to generate goodwill and enhance interoperability.

Given Australia's stated desire to increase engagement with a range of regional nations, including Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Japan, amphibious forces offer a platform for increased interaction.²⁴ Notably, the

concurrent interest in amphibious operations in those nations presents a convenient and relevant avenue for engagement for both Australia and New Zealand. Ultimately, the nature of Australia and New Zealand's primary operating environments and the tasks the ADF and NZDF are likely to be required to undertake provide an obvious use for amphibious forces. Thus, national interests combine with the renaissance of amphibious capability in the Asia-Pacific region to drive the development of robust amphibious forces.

A "DISTINCTLY AUSTRALIAN" FORCE: AUSTRALIAN AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITY

Progress toward the validation of the new Australian amphibious force is well under way and is scheduled to be completed in 2017. The centerpieces of the force are the two *Canberra*-class helicopter landing docks (LHDs), HMAS *Canberra* (L 02) and HMAS *Adelaide* (L 01), which are 27,000-ton vessels that can land over one thousand personnel, their vehicles, and other logistic support by either helicopter or watercraft.²⁵ As part of Plan BEERSHEBA, the projected landing force will be drawn from 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR).²⁶ The amphibious force will be supported by Aegis-fitted all-purpose *Hobart*-class air-warfare destroyers.²⁷

Importantly, Australia has developed a scalable force that will constitute an amphibious ready element (ARE) or an ARG. The ARG is the more capable force structure, as it will comprise both LHDs, which will embark an amphibious battle group and the requisite enablers, and be supported by the Bay-class landing ship HMAS *Choules* (L 100). It is anticipated that the ARG would be an element of a joint task force made up of afloat-support ships, escorts, and mine-countermeasure (MCM) assets. The ARE most likely will be deployed for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) and stabilization operations, as well as noncombatant evacuations. The ARE will be based on a single LHD and deploy a combined-arms combat team plus medical, aviation, logistic, and prelanding force elements. Although war fighting is not the intended purpose of the ARE, it can perform that function in a limited way.²⁸ Australia already has certified the ARE, during the SEA SERIES exercises that were conducted off the coast of northern Queensland between August 17 and October 6, 2015.²⁹ The certification process will be completed when the ARG is validated in 2017.

In recognition of the importance of interoperability and to develop the most effective force possible, the ADF has sought input from both the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition to the lateral transfer of a number of senior Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel, the ADF has benefited from the input of liaison officers.³⁰ In fact, a Royal Marines colonel subsequently transferred to the RAN after completion of his liaison position in the amphibious task force

headquarters. Most notably, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) has assigned a colonel with amphibious experience to serve as “Colonel, Amphibious,” which involves acting as the amphibious capability development lead within Deployable Joint Force Headquarters.³¹

In view of the fact that Australia and New Zealand share an immediate region and that the defense relationship between the two nations is “built on deep mutual security interests” and “a willingness to make positive contributions to regional and global security and stability operations,” efforts have been made to enhance the interoperability of the amphibious forces of the ADF and NZDF.³² Specifically, the ADF has taken active steps to ensure that integration is possible with the NZDF’s JTF. Most notably, an NZDF officer is permanently present in the ADF’s deployable joint headquarters through the J35 position, which involves transitioning plans into operations. Consequently, the ADF and NZDF are “linked together” in the development of their amphibious forces and for the planning of amphibious operations.³³ Importantly, New Zealand, and particularly U.K. and U.S., input has been refined for the Australian context to ensure that, rather than replicating the force of another nation, the Australian one is, in the words of Major General Stuart Smith, Commander, Deployable Joint Force Headquarters, a “distinctly Australian amphibious force.”³⁴

FROM JATF TO JTF: NEW ZEALAND AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITY

In September 2015, Captain Mark Worsfold, RNZN, opined that the NZDF “must conduct and lead missions in the South Pacific and it must also enable New Zealand to contribute meaningfully to regional and international security with partners and friends.”³⁵ An effective amphibious capability provides an important means to respond to and shape events in the South Pacific. That notion was evident in the 2011 New Zealand *Defence Capability Plan*, which was centered on the intention to develop a JATF.³⁶ It was expected that the JATF would be operational by 2015 and would be “able to conduct a wide range of tasks and meet the key requirements expected of it in the Southwest Pacific.”³⁷ In 2013, the NZDF explicitly stated as follows:

By 2020, with the JATF at its core, the Defence Force will be capable of conducting amphibious military operations and responding to emergencies at home and abroad, and projecting and sustaining land or maritime forces with increased combat utility, either on its own or as part of a wider coalition. This combat capability will act as an effective and credible deterrent for any challenge to New Zealand’s sovereignty and to stability in the wider Southwest Pacific region.³⁸

Although it was anticipated that the JATF would be combat capable, it was acknowledged that the likely tasks required of the force would be much more diverse. It was considered that the JATF would be involved more regularly in

noncombat missions in New Zealand and overseas, including “search and rescue; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; resource protection in the EEZ [exclusive economic zone]; maritime border security; and evacuating New Zealand and approved foreign nationals from high-risk environments.”³⁹

Although the label *JATF* has been dropped, the NZDF has continued the drive to generate an effective amphibious force. The JTF will be mission specific and its composition will vary, depending on the likely requirements of the force. It is intended that the NZDF will be able to deploy a company-sized force into a low-threat environment and that the force should be self-sufficient for up to thirty days. Although the JTF is capable of undertaking a range of roles, it is likely to be used in three scenarios: in HA/DR operations, in security operations, or as a component of a multinational force.

Canterbury is the central platform for the NZDF’s JTF. Commander Andrew Law, Naval Support, Amphibious Lead in the NZDF’s Capability Branch, emphasizes: “There is more to amphibious operations than just *Canterbury*, but without *Canterbury* you don’t really have an amphibious force.”⁴⁰ The ship is notable for incorporating the roll-on/roll-off (RO/RO) designs of commercial ferries. *Canterbury* has been the subject of vociferous criticism on occasion and even was labeled the RNZN’s “problem ship” in the media.⁴¹ However, while its features differ from those of traditional amphibious vessels, *Canterbury* is actually a capable and flexible ship.

The ship can transport approximately 250 personnel (in addition to the crew) and has “the ability to land personnel, vehicles, and cargo by landing craft, helicopter, or ramps, as well as conventional port infrastructure.”⁴² The ship possesses important command-and-control (C2) facilities and also has a self-contained hospital with surgical capability.⁴³ *Canterbury* will be supported by a range of other surface vessels. The RNZN’s two *Anzac*-class frigates, HMNZS *Te Kaha* (F 77) and HMNZS *Te Mana* (F 111), are entrusted with a range of tasks, which include a force-protection role for the JTF.⁴⁴ Some support also can be provided by HMNZS *Endeavour* (A 11), a replenishment tanker, but the capability will be enhanced when the ship is replaced.⁴⁵ Currently, HMNZS *Manawanui* (A 09), the RNZN’s diving and MCM support ship, can provide limited littoral warfare support, but its replacement will offer a range of additional capabilities.⁴⁶

The landing force will be provided by the New Zealand Army, but it will not be a standing force. The composition of the force will depend on the nature of the operation. For example, a force consisting predominantly of medics and engineers could be deployed for HA/DR activities, but for security operations an infantry company could be used. Although the landing force will be combat capable, it is not expected to conduct opposed landings. Indeed, in 2015, Rear Admiral Jack R. Steer, then New Zealand’s chief of navy, affirmed: “You’ll never

see *Canterbury* storming onto a hostile beach; that's not what we do."⁴⁷ Inevitably, there is a limit to what the initial landing force can achieve, and it is likely to be set a limited objective, such as opening an airport or seaport.

In addition to capability decisions, the generation of an amphibious mind-set within the NZDF also has been an important focus and has been driven by the conduct of a range of activities, including the biennial SOUTHERN KATIPO exercises (2013 and 2015) and the JOINT WAKA exercises that commenced in 2016.⁴⁸ Given the design of *Canterbury*, a shift in mentality away from sealift and toward amphibiosity was required. Lieutenant Commander Kathryn Hill, RNZN, the amphibious operations (maritime) staff officer in the Capability Branch, has acknowledged that there has been a "culture change" over time as the army has become more accustomed to operating on *Canterbury*.⁴⁹ Rather than just bringing together single-service skills, the JTF needs to be a joint force characterized by cooperation and cohesion. Practice in the joint environment is essential to developing an amphibious mentality. Equally, the capacity for the JTF to "plug and play" in a multinational environment is extremely important.⁵⁰

Although New Zealand has not followed the Australian approach of using liaison officers from other amphibious forces, the NZDF has been involved in extensive knowledge sharing with potential overseas partners and nations with amphibious experience. Discussions have been held with representatives from a wide range of nations and organizations, including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, and NATO. Australia, as New Zealand's most likely multinational partner, has been the subject of a wider range of discussions and agreements. Initial doctrine for the development of the new JTF was based on Australian standards and an interoperability framework was agreed for other areas, such as equipment. In reference to discussions with representatives from other amphibious forces, Commodore John Campbell, the NZDF's maritime component commander, has asserted that the information is invaluable, as there is "no point in re-learning their lessons." However, at the same time, he acknowledged that there is a need to apply those lessons to the New Zealand context, as not all their experience is relevant to the NZDF, given the variances in capability.⁵¹

A PROBLEM SHARED IS A PROBLEM HALVED: THE LEGACY OF ANZAC AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITY

As Gallipoli reminds us, amphibious operations are not a new concept for either Australia or New Zealand. For the sake of accuracy, it should be remembered that, while Gallipoli has captured the historical consciousness of Australia and New Zealand, both nations conducted amphibious operations prior to the Dardanelles campaign. The amphibious expeditionary operations conducted in

1914 in German New Guinea and Samoa by Australians and New Zealanders, respectively, often are overlooked in the public discourse, but they represent important markers in the development of Anzac amphibiosity.⁵² While Australia has accumulated a more extensive amphibious history since then, both nations have been involved in operations of an amphibious nature. During the Second World War, the Australians conducted a range of amphibious operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, most notably at New Guinea in 1943 and Borneo in 1945.⁵³ New Zealand had less experience with amphibious warfare in that war, but did participate in some notable operations, not least GOODTIME, which took place in the Treasury Islands in 1943.⁵⁴

An examination of all the amphibious operations Australia and New Zealand have conducted is beyond the scope of this article, especially given that the composition and purpose of the contemporary amphibious forces differ widely from those of the Second World War. However, recent events have demonstrated an ongoing requirement for collective amphibious capability. Indeed, contemporary Anzac military cooperation is far from a novel idea. During the 1990s, the idea that Australia and New Zealand should be considered a single strategic entity was floated.⁵⁵ In retrospect, such a notion may seem excessive, but the nations undoubtedly continue to share strategic interests. The push to establish an Anzac Ready Response Force / Anzac Ready Reaction Force in 2011, to provide a joint response to emergencies in the South Pacific, demonstrated an increasing alignment in outlooks. This had been shaped by the involvement of the ADF and NZDF in a range of operations, particularly in East Timor.⁵⁶

Australia's commitment to the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) in 1999, to restore peace and security following increasing violence after the independence vote, prompted General Peter Cosgrove to describe the ADF's amphibious capability as one of "first resort."⁵⁷ However, from an amphibious perspective, INTERFET provided a number of lessons about the adequacy of the ADF's capability and the importance of having reliable and competent allies. In his overarching analysis of Australian amphibious operations between 1901 and 2001, Russell Parkin, then a major in the Australian Army, asserted that without the naval contributions from New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States, the RAN "would have been unable to cope with the complexities of the operation because of its limited amphibious and sea lift capability, especially in the areas of force protection, mobility, and logistics."⁵⁸

The determination of which NZDF force elements would be committed was conducted, in part, through consultation between the Australian and New Zealand chiefs of defense forces.⁵⁹ From a New Zealand viewpoint, Paul Sinclair of Victoria University of Wellington has summarized:

For the first phase of the initial intervention mission in Timor known as INTERFET, Australia had the full range of military capabilities, the will, and the funding to assume leadership of the multinational coalition. New Zealand could not have done so, but we did provide a wider range of capabilities than any of the 15 other countries which participated. We also brought to the table a common doctrinal basis for operations and command and control.⁶⁰

RNZN ships were placed under Australian control and played varied roles in operations. The capacity to use Dili harbor was crucial for the conduct of operations, but it did not diminish the importance of amphibious capability or the contribution of the surface vessels.

Coalition ships performed escort and close-protection functions, monitored and identified surface and air contacts, provided logistic support for forces ashore, and delivered humanitarian aid.⁶¹ The initial amphibious operations necessitated protection operations, which were conducted by a range of vessels from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, including HMNZS *Te Kaha*.⁶² Even when the initial operations were completed, the requirement for escorts remained. For example, HMNZS *Canterbury* (a *Leander*-class frigate that was decommissioned in 2005) was involved in escorting thirty amphibious and supply ships safely into Dili.⁶³

Australian naval historian David Stevens concluded that “close cooperation proved crucial to getting the best out of scarce assets,” which perhaps was characterized best by the assertion of *Canterbury*’s commanding officer, Commander Warren Cummins, that his ship effectively “became an Australian frigate.”⁶⁴ Tellingly, New Zealand strategic expert Robert Ayson has reflected, “New Zealand’s largest military deployment since the Korean War helped to underscore the value of trans-Tasman defence cooperation in the nearer neighbourhood—not on the basis of a formal agreement but, rather, in terms of real-time cooperation in regional crisis management.”⁶⁵ Operations in the region after INTERFET, particularly those of a HA/DR nature, demonstrated the ever-increasing relevance of amphibious capability.

More recently, the deployment of ADF and NZDF elements to support the HA/DR operation in Fiji following Tropical Cyclone Winston, which struck on February 20, 2016, has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to amphibious operations. From an ADF perspective, Operation FIJI ASSIST (as the Australians named it) was notable as the first deployment of HMAS *Canberra* on a HA/DR operation.⁶⁶ Robert Farley of the University of Kentucky has posited: “Relief of Fiji is precisely the kind of operation that Australia envisioned for *Canberra* and her sister [*Adelaide*].”⁶⁷ The vessel transported three MRH-90 helicopters and an army engineering element, as well as sixty tons of emergency relief supplies, which served as a supplement to the preexisting Australian relief effort.⁶⁸ The

ship was stationed off Koro Island on arrival and commenced operations on March 2, following beach-clearance activities being conducted by elements of 2RAR. The landing sites were described as “hives of activity” as “all manner of berthing and mechanised capabilities came ashore.”⁶⁹

With almost five hundred personnel being deployed, the operation constituted “one of the NZDF’s largest peacetime deployments to the Pacific.”⁷⁰ *Canterbury* was deployed with 293 personnel, two NH90 helicopters, an SH-2 Seasprite helicopter, and forty-five vehicles, as well as 106 tons of relief supplies.⁷¹ The vessel served as the “maritime base” for the NZDF’s HA/DR efforts in Fiji’s northern outer islands.⁷² HMNZS *Wellington* (P 55), an offshore patrol vessel, not only delivered sixty tons of aid and transported seventy-one military personnel; as the advance force, it also surveyed the entrances into the reef and anchorages to ensure that *Canterbury* could operate safely. The ship also identified beaches for *Canterbury*’s landing craft to use.⁷³

The assistance the ADF and NZDF provided was invaluable to residents in disaster-struck areas and demonstrated the logic of enhancing amphibious capability in the Pacific. The potential for cooperation between the ADF and NZDF is particularly pertinent, given the opportunity to operate two different response groups, with one Australian LHD working with *Choules*, the other with *Canterbury*.

INTEROPERABILITY

In 2005, Lieutenant General James Mattis, USMC, declared, “You cannot do anything today without being part of a coalition. . . . This is a military consideration, not a political one. Coalition warfare is a reality and a fact.”⁷⁴ Mattis was right to emphasize the significance of coalition warfare, but the truth is that multinational cooperation is a reality to be reckoned with across the entire spectrum of operations. Amphibious forces are certainly no exception to this rule.

Given the likelihood of Australia and New Zealand operating alongside each other, it is essential that their amphibious forces be capable of working together as effectively as possible. In September 2015, Australia’s then minister for defense Kevin J. Andrews asserted, “The bilateral relationship with New Zealand is one of Australia’s most enduring and important defence partnerships. We are committed to deepening our strategic dialogue, practical cooperation, and enhancing our interoperability with New Zealand.”⁷⁵

Equally, interoperability with other likely multinational partners in the region is a foremost consideration for both the ADF and NZDF. Historically, the United States has stood out as an important multinational partner for both nations, as they were “united by a common language, similar cultures and institutions, and the experience of the Second World War.”⁷⁶ While those factors are still relevant,

the trilateral relationship among Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS) has undergone turbulent times. Nevertheless, the three nations remain united by a common interest in the Pacific.

Australia and the United States have taken a number of noteworthy steps to improve cohesion between their militaries and to enhance amphibious capability. The 2014 Force Posture Agreement, signed by Australia and the United States, provided for the rotation of 2,500 U.S. Marines through Darwin and an increase in air cooperation.⁷⁷ The subsequent announcement by the U.S. Navy's then Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert that the United States would elevate the Marine Rotational Force Darwin to Marine expeditionary unit status and provide amphibious ships to create a U.S. ARG by the end of the decade demonstrated the significance attached to amphibious capability in the region and the importance of interoperability.⁷⁸ With the rotation of U.S. Marines through Darwin, it has been suggested that the area could become a "hub for training" alongside the amphibious forces of other nations, including New Zealand.⁷⁹

While similar advancements in relation to amphibious capability have not occurred in New Zealand, significant developments have taken place in defense cooperation with the United States more broadly, which are particularly noteworthy in the wake of the 1980s ANZUS crisis. Following the New Zealand government's decision to reject a visit from USS *Buchanan* (DDG 14) in 1985, in line with its policy of preventing nuclear-powered or -armed ships from entering the nation's ports, the United States broke off military cooperation and withdrew its security guarantee.⁸⁰ Subsequently, George P. Shultz, Secretary of State, declared: "We part as friends, but we part company."⁸¹

Recent developments have suggested that the United States and New Zealand are moving closer together again, cautiously. The Wellington (2010) and Washington (2012) Declarations provided for increased security cooperation (including in HA/DR operations) and greater defense collaboration in the Asia-Pacific (with a particular focus on maritime operations), respectively. The "warming of ties," which culminated in Condoleezza Rice describing New Zealand as "a friend and an ally," has been viewed as a reflection of New Zealand's commitment of forces to Afghanistan and the nation's willingness to "participate more widely in the post-9/11 counter-terrorism agenda."⁸²

New Zealand's return to the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise in 2012 and the NZDF's participation in a range of other exercises have provided a platform for increased cooperation with the United States. In fact, the analyst Jack Georgieff has gone so far as to suggest that "the best in bilateral defense relations may be yet to come."⁸³ Ayson has surmised that, while a "formal alliance relationship (including a return to full ANZUS relations) still seems most unlikely," it is "no exaggeration to say that New Zealand is now an informal ally of the United

States.”⁸⁴ Given the deepening defense relations with the United States and the increasing American commitment to amphibious capability in the Asia-Pacific, it would be logical for Australia and New Zealand to consider increased cooperation in the area of amphibious operations.

Furthermore, although the U.S. Pacific Command includes over two hundred vessels, questions have been raised over whether there is sufficient amphibious shipping capacity to support the rebalance toward the Pacific.⁸⁵ Fitted with advanced C2 suites, flight decks for rotary-wing operations, a well dock for waterborne craft, and storage for vehicles and logistics materials, the RAN’s LHDs could alleviate some of the pressure on the United States to deploy amphibious ships to the Pacific.⁸⁶ The recent suggestion that USMC personnel might be deployed aboard foreign vessels provided further indication that capable and reliable allies with amphibious capacity are of great value to the United States.⁸⁷ Although *Canterbury* does not provide the same range of capabilities as the LHDs, it is still a useful asset, and multinational partners are likely to value highly any increase in sealift. The increased focus on amphibious capability in the Asia-Pacific means that any capacity to contribute meaningfully in that area is of great significance.

France represents another potential focus of cooperation in amphibious operations, given shared interests in the Pacific. In reference to the Pacific, France’s 2013 *White Paper on Defence and National Security* contended: “The stakes of our sovereignty have to be defended there, just as the security of our citizens exposed to climate hazards needs to be guaranteed, notably through the FRANZ arrangements (France–Australia–New Zealand).”⁸⁸ The FRANZ arrangements, which rest on a 1992 exchange of letters, make provision for regional disaster-relief coordination. The significance of these arrangements has been demonstrated during a number of operations, including relief efforts in the Solomon Islands after the 2007 tsunami.⁸⁹

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade recognized the importance of the tripartite relationship with France and New Zealand, as well as the complementary liaison with the United States, when it stated an ambition to “[p]romote long-term strategic cooperation in the Pacific region, drawing on the Quadrilateral Defense Coordinating Group exchanges between Australia and France in liaison with New Zealand and the United States, and on preparation and implementation of joint action under the FRANZ Agreement in response to natural disasters in the Pacific.”⁹⁰

Ultimately, the nature of Australia and New Zealand’s primary operating environment means that an attentiveness to amphibious capability is entirely logical, and an ability to interoperate with friendly nations that also maintain interests in the region is a practical necessity.

MULTINATIONAL COOPERATION: THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISING

In addition to providing important opportunities for engagement, multinational exercises provide essential avenues for enhancing interoperability. The ADF and NZDF actively engage in exercises based in Australia and New Zealand, as well as farther afield. TALISMAN SABRE, a biennial exercise conducted by Australian and U.S. forces to enhance capability and improve interoperability across the spectrum of operations up to high-end combat, is a particularly important endeavor, given the ADF's expanding interest in amphibious operations.

Over thirty thousand Australian and U.S. personnel participated in TALISMAN SABRE 2015, in conjunction with forces from Japan and New Zealand.⁹¹ Interestingly, NZDF forces participated as part of the ADF element, while Japanese elements were embedded with U.S. units.⁹² Large-scale amphibious operations took center stage, and one focal point of the exercise was the amphibious landing of 250 2RAR soldiers and large numbers of U.S. Marines at Fog Bay near Darwin.⁹³ However, it is worth noting that, owing to the unavailability of *Canberra*, the ADF's amphibious contribution to the landings was somewhat more limited than would have been ideal.⁹⁴ Within the NZDF, it was acknowledged that TALISMAN SABRE 2015 had the potential to be a formative exercise. In particular, the involvement of the two NH90 helicopters was seen to be extremely significant, as it was the first time they had been deployed overseas and led to them being validated for "operations throughout the Southwest Pacific."⁹⁵ Given the shared interest in amphibious operations, the three nations were cognizant of the inherent value of the exercise. Ultimately, Commander Michael Posey, the lead USN planner, noted, "During TS15 we demonstrated our Pacific partnership with the Australians and Kiwis."⁹⁶

Exercises hosted in New Zealand also have provided worthwhile opportunities for the regular interaction of amphibious forces. During SOUTHERN KATIPO 2013, forces from New Zealand and nine other nations (Australia, Canada, France, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Tonga, the United Kingdom, and the United States) responded to a request from a fictional South Pacific nation to restore law and order, which resulted in *Canterbury* evacuating citizens.⁹⁷ The exercise was designed to assess the NZDF's ability to conduct a joint amphibious operation alongside a range of multinational partners. Colonel John Howard, New Zealand Army, exercise commander, stressed the importance of amphibious operations: "We have great opportunities here to train for beach assaults and to conduct non-opposed amphibious landings, to parachute in, and to spread out for a whole range of tactical tasks."⁹⁸

The scenario for SOUTHERN KATIPO 2015 envisioned that New Zealand was required to deploy a task force to evacuate foreign nationals and assist police in restoring security and stability. The exercise consisted of 2,500 personnel,

including from Australia, Canada, Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, the United Kingdom, and the United States, conducting HA/DR and stabilization operations.⁹⁹ As part of the exercise, *Canterbury*, with support from *Wellington*, conducted an amphibious landing of NZDF and multinational personnel and equipment, including MAN-produced medium and heavy operational vehicles, at Okiwi Bay in the Marlborough Sounds, located in the northern part of the South Island of New Zealand.¹⁰⁰ Aside from the generic benefits obtained from exercising with multinational partners, the exercise was particularly valuable in that it provided an opportunity to test the Anzac Ready Reaction Force.

While nationally based exercises such as SOUTHERN KATIPO and TALISMAN SABRE remain the principal focus of the ADF and NZDF, participation in various internationally hosted multinational exercises provides a range of benefits. The U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps host a multinational exercise that focuses on enhancing amphibious tactics, techniques, and procedures known as BOLD ALLIGATOR. The 2012 iteration, in which both Australia and New Zealand participated, involved a Marine expeditionary brigade-sized amphibious assault from a sea base in a medium-threat environment. BOLD ALLIGATOR 2014 was centered on strengthening amphibious cooperation in the areas of HA/DR operations, theater security, and noncombatant evacuations. Participants came from all over the world, including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.¹⁰¹ The benefits to participation in BOLD ALLIGATOR are twofold. First, both nations have the opportunity to observe the development of cooperation between their more experienced USN and USMC counterparts. Second, the multinational nature of the exercise provides an opportunity to enhance interoperability with a range of nations, including a number of potential partners in operations in their primary operating environment.

The U.S.-hosted DAWN BLITZ exercise offers another avenue for cooperation. DAWN BLITZ 2013 involved exercising core U.S. amphibious capabilities alongside forces from Canada, Japan, and New Zealand. The event culminated with an amphibious landing (at Red Beach, Camp Pendleton, California) by seventy amphibious assault vehicles and six landing craft, air-cushion vehicles. DAWN BLITZ 2015 incorporated forces from Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, and the United States. New Zealand's contribution consisted of 102 personnel from the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment. In addition, logistics personnel operated on board the ships. Notably, NZDF personnel conducted a beach assault in eight amphibious assault vehicles. The ADF did not participate in either exercise, but Australian observers were present to glean lessons for their own amphibious force. Rear Admiral Daniel H. Fillion, USN, commented, "It's a chance for our partners to teach us how they do amphibious operations, and hopefully, they'll learn from us how we conduct them."¹⁰² Given New Zealand's comparatively

limited resources and the likelihood of the NZDF operating as part of a multinational force, the experience obtained from participation in DAWN BLITZ is invaluable.

RIMPAC, which is conducted in and around the Hawaiian Islands, is the largest multinational maritime exercise in the world. During RIMPAC 2012, the ADF was placed in command of the maritime component—the first time a nation other than the United States had been responsible for planning and commanding the maritime aspects of the exercise.¹⁰³ Throughout the exercise, the Australian Army worked closely with the U.S. Marine Corps to “further develop” the ADF’s amphibious capability.¹⁰⁴ Notably, Captain Ken Semmens, Australian Army, was embedded with the Amphibious Assault Vehicle Platoon, Combat Assault Company, 3rd Marine Regiment (USMC) during the conduct of amphibious operations at Kaneohe Bay. The experience was considered invaluable for the exposure it provided him to mission planning and amphibious capabilities.¹⁰⁵ New Zealand also participated in RIMPAC for the first time in twenty-five years by contributing a range of assets, including two ships and a rifle platoon from the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, which was integrated with the U.S. Marine Corps aboard USS *Essex* (LHD 2), as were various headquarters staff members.¹⁰⁶ Major General A. David Gawn, New Zealand Army, described RIMPAC as a “unique training opportunity,” particularly given the ability of the infantry platoon to “embed in a U.S. Marine Corps company and conduct amphibious taskings.”¹⁰⁷

The theme of RIMPAC 2014 was “capable, adaptive partners.”¹⁰⁸ ADF elements engaged in a range of activities, including contributing to an amphibious landing. The Australian amphibious task group, which had its headquarters aboard USS *Peleliu* (LHA 5), was afforded command of an expeditionary strike group comprising thirteen warships and a multinational landing force of soldiers and marines from ten nations, including New Zealand and the United States. Ten amphibious missions were undertaken in total, including amphibious assaults, amphibious raids, and noncombatant evacuations. During those missions, Australian soldiers conducted amphibious training with U.S. forces, as well as soldiers and marines from various other nations.¹⁰⁹ Commodore Peter Leavy, RAN, reflected that the exercise provided “an exciting opportunity to prepare for the new amphibious capabilities being introduced for the Australian Defence Force over the next few years.”¹¹⁰

The NZDF deployed over 250 personnel and assets from all three service branches. The most relevant activity, from an amphibious perspective, was *Canterbury*’s contribution to the HA/DR element of the exercise, which involved transporting vehicles and supplies to shore via landing craft. The ship also was used to transport U.S. Army and USMC personnel. A light infantry platoon from the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment also assisted in a noncombatant

evacuation operation.¹¹¹ In addition, it is worth noting that *Canterbury* transported in excess of one hundred Australian Army soldiers and their kit to the exercise.¹¹² The fact that an RNZN ship docked at Pearl Harbor for the first time in over thirty years was viewed by the White House as a symbol of “renewed engagement on mutual defense and security, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.”¹¹³

Ultimately, the combination of the various exercises is fundamental to improvements in interoperability between the ADF and NZDF, as well as a range of other militaries, which is a central concern for the amphibious forces of both Australia and New Zealand.

GOING DUTCH? THE U.K.-NETHERLANDS MODEL

Australia has taken a pragmatic approach to drawing lessons from likely multinational partners, but there is an opportunity for the nation to go one step further by considering a model adopted by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The UKNLAF, which was established by the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on May 9, 1973, is an exemplar of European force integration. As Europe’s oldest integrated force, the UKNLAF has been labeled an example of defense *avant la lettre*.¹¹⁴ The UKNLAF was established to “create a combined force capable of operating together across the full spectrum of military operations from benign peacekeeping operations right up to sustained, high intensity war fighting.”¹¹⁵

More recently, its importance has been affirmed by agreement on a new MOU designed to enhance the UKNLAF, in line with the European Amphibious Initiative at the turn of the twenty-first century and the signing, on the fortieth anniversary of the combined force, of a new letter of intent on future cooperation.¹¹⁶ The UKNLAF emphasizes complete integration, with training, exercises, and operations being conducted under a unified command structure. Importantly, the UKNLAF uses common doctrine and compatible equipment and C2 facilities. Recent deployments to the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq have demonstrated the capacity of the force to engage in operations “ranging from low-level intervention and peacekeeping to high-intensity warfighting.”¹¹⁷

Inevitably, assets available for the UKNLAF have changed over time. Initially designed with the intention of integrating a single troop of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps (Korps Mariniers) and a (British) Royal Marine Commando unit, the UKNLAF now can call on a brigade-sized force. In total, the Dutch manpower contribution is approximately 1,000–1,100 personnel. In addition to increases in personnel, there also have been improvements in the platforms available for the force. Since 1998, the landing platform dock (LPD) His Netherlands Majesty’s Ship (HNLMS) *Rotterdam* (L 800) has been available to the UKNLAF. The ship is fitted with a helicopter deck and a submergible dock and is capable of deploying

approximately six hundred marines.¹¹⁸ A newer LPD, HNLMS *Johan de Witt* (L 801), offers a range of capabilities, including the capacity to act as a command ship, with facilities for a one-star joint headquarters aboard.¹¹⁹ Notably, HNLMS *Karel Doorman* (A 833), a multifunction support ship, was commissioned in 2014; it possesses both a RO/RO dock and a helicopter deck. The ship will support the *Rotterdam*-class LPDs during amphibious operations.¹²⁰

The UKNLAF model is particularly relevant for New Zealand, as the NZDF is a comparatively small force. Naval historian and strategist Geoffrey Till has appraised that small navies can “reasonably compensate for their smallness, if they feel the need to, by banding together.”¹²¹ However, they also, of course, can seek to enhance cooperation with larger militaries to generate a more effective force. In that regard, the Netherlands provides a pertinent example for New Zealand. U.K. defense strategist Sir Michael E. Quinlan assessed that the UKNLAF was created “primarily because the Netherlands could not readily afford its own specialist shipping.”¹²² A RAND study on the strengths and weaknesses of the Netherlands armed forces noted that “[t]hey cannot maintain a full suite of capabilities across the board, when you consider the scale of the country, the resources they have, and manpower required,” before observing that they were “canny” in “pooling assets” when “it suits them.”¹²³ The Netherlands approach should resonate with New Zealand, given the existence of the Anzac Ready Reaction Force, and there certainly is scope for greater cooperation with Australia in the area of amphibious capability. In reality, New Zealand’s amphibious capability is limited compared with that of the ADF and other regional militaries, so the country must consider how to maximize the effectiveness of NZDF assets.

The capacity of the UKNLAF to “nip a crisis in the bud” parallels the likely immediate requirements of the Australian and New Zealand amphibious forces.¹²⁴ Given the existence of the UKNLAF and subsequent examples of defense cooperation, an Anzac amphibious force would not prove quite so novel, but it would be just as, if not more, relevant, given Australia and New Zealand’s contemporary strategic environment.

MAXIMIZING THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

With the recent centenary commemoration of the amphibious landings at Gallipoli that forged the basis of the Anzac relationship, it would seem an apt time to endeavor to foster interoperability in amphibious operations. Both Australia and New Zealand have recognized the importance of amphibious capability in the Pacific. Although the scale and scope of the amphibious forces being developed differ widely, the impetus for amphibiosity is the same. Cooperation between Australia and New Zealand is important for both practical and political reasons. The same is true for cooperation with other Pacific players, particularly France

and the United States. Shared interests and the requirement to operate in a region that may require more amphibious capability than either nation can provide individually mean that cooperation is essential. Equally, the capacity to plug into wider multinational operations is an important driver.

If Australia is to play a leadership role in the region, it will require willing and competent partners.¹²⁵ New Zealand is a natural and logical partner for Australia. New Zealand defense analyst Peter Greener observed in 2011: “Whilst there are significant differences in the level of capability each country enjoys, and that gap is likely to become larger over time, it is clear that Australia values the contribution that New Zealand makes to combined operations.”¹²⁶ For New Zealand, operating in a coalition provides “legitimacy and capacity.”¹²⁷ Equally, since the New Zealand military is comparatively small, its enactment of interoperability with larger forces can act as a force multiplier. Indeed, Tim Wood of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at Massey University has emphasized that “the NZDF is often described as ‘punching above its weight.’ . . . Nevertheless, the simple fact remains that the NZDF is expected to do a great deal with comparatively little.”¹²⁸ When interests align, operations alongside the ADF provide the opportunity to do a good deal more with significantly greater resources.

While there are numerous aspects of the “closer defence relations” that it would be logical to strengthen, priority should be accorded to the development of interoperability between the amphibious forces of the ADF and NZDF. Progress clearly has been made, but there is still some way to go to maximize the effectiveness of Australian and New Zealand forces during the conduct of bilateral and multilateral operations. The fact that the Anzac relationship was founded on an amphibious operation is symbolic, but in a practical sense is irrelevant. That said, the nature of Australia and New Zealand’s primary operating environment and the contemporary utility of amphibious capability ensure that the prioritization of amphibiosity is not only a neat bookend but an entirely logical course of action. With that in mind, consideration could and should be given to the concept of an Anzac amphibious force that would operate analogously to the UKNLAF.

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