



# RHUMB LINES

*Straight Lines to Navigate By*



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## Expeditionary Lift: Foundation of the Navy-Marine Corps Team

*"The LPD 17 San Antonio class represents a significant commitment to recapitalizing our current amphibious fleet with modern warships that will provide our nation with expeditionary capability far into the 21<sup>st</sup> century."*

**-- Maj. Gen. T. A. Benes, Director Expeditionary Warfare**

The versatility of our amphibious ships is an essential part of our ability to perform the multiple missions required in expeditionary warfighting and the Maritime Strategy. The San Antonio-class of amphibious transport dock (LPD) ships represents our commitment to maintaining and modernizing our expeditionary lift capabilities. This week, our newest LPD, USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19), will be commissioned into Naval service.

### The five fingerprints of expeditionary lift

Expeditionary lift includes the capacity to carry and deliver troops, vehicles, cargo, aircraft, and landing craft, known as the *five fingerprints of lift*. For the total expeditionary lift capacity required to execute the Maritime Strategy, the Navy and Marine Corps co-developed these requirements:

- Ability to transport and land the assault echelons of two Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB). The MEB is the Marine Corps' principal forcible entry unit which is constructed around a reinforced infantry regiment, a composite Marine aircraft group, and a combat logistics regiment.
- The assault echelon is the element of the force that conducts and supports the initial assault. Long-term support and sustainment for the assault is provided by a follow-on echelon, which is normally required in the area within five days of assault commencement. The follow-on echelon may be transported in Military Sealift Command, commercial shipping, or pre-positioned ships when combined with their fly-in element.
- Expressed in terms of the *five fingerprints of lift*, a notional MEB assault echelon requires accommodations for 13,500 troops, 300,000 sq. ft. for vehicles, 560,000 cu. ft. for cargo, flight and hangar deck area for 185 CH-46 equivalents, and well deck space for 24 LCACs.

### Naval Forces are working together to maintain a robust expeditionary capability

The Navy and Marine Corps agree on the expeditionary lift requirement for 33 amphibious ships; specifically, 11 LHA/LHD, 11 LPD, and 11 LSDs needed to transport two MEBs of assault echelon. Meeting the requirements for transporting and landing two MEBs in our current budget climate is a challenge:

- Based on historical availability rates and maintenance requirements, 33 ships are required to ensure 30 are always operationally available.
- One MEB requires 17 amphibious warfare ships; however, given the fiscally constrained environment, the Navy and Marine Corps have agreed to assume risk by only using fifteen.
- The shipbuilding plan also provided for a Maritime Preposition Force (Future) (MPF(F)) capability, which can carry one sea-based MEB of assault reinforcement and sustainment, to be operational around 2020.

### Key Messages

- Navy and Marine Corps are committed to building and maintaining a robust expeditionary capability.
- Fiscal realities and competing priorities may result in unfunded requirements for expeditionary lift.
- The integration of Navy and Marine Corps efforts in expeditionary lift development is essential to our remaining the world's preeminent maritime force.

### Facts & Figures

- Currently, the Navy has 31 amphibious ships (7 LHD, 3 LHA, 9 LPD, and 12 LSD), as called out for by the current 30-year shipbuilding plan.
- Three of the 9 LPDs are new LPD 17 class ships.
- The oldest Austin-class LPDs are 40 years old; Mesa Verde (LPD 19) is the third San Antonio-class ship and will be commissioned in Panama City, Florida on 15 Dec 2007.